

GROWTH IN ENGLISH BAPTIST
CHURCHES: WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO THE
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
PARTICULAR BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION (1770-1830)

by

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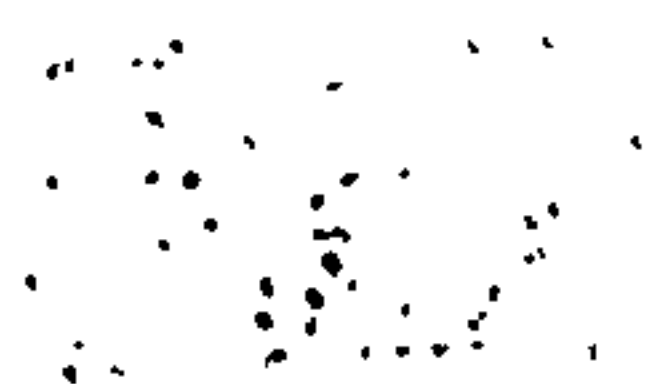
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He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.
Philippians 1:6

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Introduction

This study began when I was contrasting the decline in Baptist church attendance in the twentieth century with what I believed to be a period of growth that preceded it. I turned to Ernest Payne's *The Baptist Union: a short history* for the information I required. There I discovered that in 1798 there were 445 Baptist churches in England and Wales with 30,000 members as opposed to 2,998 churches with 418,608 members and 590,321 scholars in 1906 when the statistics reach their peak.¹ The statistics made the point more strongly than I had imagined as I realised that in the century between the dates the number of members doubled on average every twenty-five years, by 1,395% or fourteen fold.

The purpose of this study is to investigate and to substantiate the revival in the life of English Baptist churches that commenced during the last third of the eighteenth century and continued until the early years of the twentieth century. I have taken the strategically important Northamptonshire Particular Baptist Association² as my focal point and restricted myself to the key period from its formation in 1765 until 1830 when the original association covering nine counties had broken down into several county-based associations. The specific reason for the choice of the NPBA should be apparent from the research presented.

In general terms the bulk of the eighteenth century is a period ignored by Baptist historians primarily due to the prevailing assumption that it is a period of stagnation and decline following the high point of the Glorious Revolution and the subsequent Act of Toleration of 1689. The cause of this decline is firmly laid at the door of the prevalence of hyper-Calvinism and its principal Baptist proponent Dr. John Gill. The idea that from c1770 the English Baptists suddenly burst out of this decline into a century long revival was one that quickly came under scrutiny as the research progressed. Such statistical evidence as was available (see Chapter IV) began to question the reality of this supposed decline and this in turn led to further consideration of the true nature and extent of hyper-Calvinism (see Chapter III). If early to mid-eighteenth century English Baptists were not in decline and in

¹ Payne (1959), p. 267. The figures from 1798 are from the *BAR* and those of 1906 from the *BUH*. After 1906 the members and scholars decline whilst the number of churches increases to its peak in 1951 of 3,351
² Hereafter NPBA

fact growing they could not be characterised as stagnating. If this were proven to be so, then our understanding of hyper-Calvinism would need to be reconsidered for it could not be held to be the cause of something that did not take place.

For much of the eighteenth century Baptists were considered together with Presbyterians, Quakers and Independents (Congregationalists) as Dissenters. With the advent of the Methodist Revival they become part of Old Dissent. Numerically and politically the Presbyterians at the start of the eighteenth century are the dominant group. Baptists were by a small margin from Quakers and Independents the least significant numerically of the Dissenting churches. In Chapter I we are concerned to discover who the Baptists were and how from a disparate group of isolated churches they gradually came together forming common identities, with commonly recognised concerns. In so doing we seek to discover a Church not in decline but in a positive period of formation and consolidation.

There is little doubt that the primary focus of church historians in the mid-eighteenth century has been the Methodist Revival of the Wesleys and Whitefield. It was a matter of great significance to discern the relationship between this revival and what subsequently would occur amongst English Baptists, and this we seek to do in Chapter II. Once again the assumption of a direct causal relationship would need to be investigated. It would be necessary to determine the attitude of Baptists in general toward Wesley, of Wesley to Baptists, and of Baptists to the theology and practices of the revival. It is also important to place events in England in their relationship to the pan-European Evangelical Revival.

In Chapter III we look in detail at English Particular Baptists and turn to the issue of hyper-Calvinism, and we look at the ministry and the influence of John Gill. We will begin to see for the first time the crucial influence of the NPBA considering some of the principal leaders of the association and the role they play in bringing about the transformation of English Baptist Church life during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century and on into the nineteenth century.³ This includes the seminal role of men such as Robert Hall snr., Andrew Fuller, John Sutcliff and John Ryland jnr. We also in this chapter review the contribution made by the American revivalist divine Jonathan Edwards through his

³ The concept of 'Transformation' remains appropriate even if we discount the assumptions of stagnation and decline prior to 1770 because the revival entered into can be defined as dramatic.

writings, and the counterbalance to hyper-Calvinism provided by the Evangelical Calvinism of the hugely important Western Association.

Chapter IV provides the necessary statistical information to establish the reality of the revival amongst Baptists. It also provides the statistics required to examine the true numerical state of mid-eighteenth century Baptists. From the publication of the *BAR* from 1792 onwards precise statistical detail becomes more accurate and more available with the 1851 Religious Census providing the most comprehensive survey possible at the end of our period of study. Prior to this the available information requires careful handling and investigation. Attention in particular must be paid to the purpose of earlier surveys, which was never to establish the actual strength of the churches. A straightforward comparison of the Evans List of 1715 with the John Collett Ryland list of 1751 would appear to determine a decline in Baptist Church numbers until the statistics are investigated carefully when a different picture emerges.

In Chapter V we turn to the NPBA itself, which was formed in 1765 with eight member churches. At its zenith the association included churches from nine separate counties. We begin by looking at the county of Northamptonshire to establish the strategic position it holds in the life of the nation and then at the relative strength of Baptists throughout the nine counties. We investigate the motives behind the formation of the NPBA and reflect on the life of the association as it touched upon its members. Finally we take a close look at the formation and development of sixteen churches that were members of the NPBA during this period of study. Our purpose in doing this is to discover evidence of the reality of local church growth, to look for patterns and methods of growth and to discover what it was that motivated and concerned them during our period of research.

The final three Chapters are an examination of the principal practical reasons for the growth that occurred. It begins in Chapter VI with a detailed survey of the role played by itinerancy. Baptists, like other of the Old Dissenting groups, had a long established tradition of itinerancy. There is little doubt, however that it was the Methodist Revival that, to coin a phrase, made of itinerancy something of an 'art form.' Whilst Old Dissent was not welcoming of the Methodist Revival, Baptists and Independents especially were quick to adopt this method of evangelism as they began to encounter revival themselves. In this Chapter we examine the origins of, and impetus for, Baptist itinerancy and the role

played by the newly formed Baptist Missionary Society⁴ in bringing about a national Baptist Itinerant Society in 1797. We look at the early years of the Baptist Home Missionary Society⁵ including the spread of itinerancy on a national level, the methods employed, and some of the struggles encountered. We consider a different pattern as it relates to the NPBA which was sufficiently well established by 1797 as to warrant little input from the BHMS, but which nevertheless made good use of itinerancy in its evangelistic endeavours.

In 1785, inspired by the experiment of Robert Raikes in Gloucester, a group of London Baptist ministers, at the encouragement of the layman William Fox, founded the Sunday School Society. In its intent to bring basic education to the whole of society, it represented perhaps the most ambitious undertaking of the English church in the century. In Chapter VII we observe the origins of the Sunday school movement, plotting the way it moved from an essentially ecumenical and educative affair to one that supported local church evangelism using Baptist Sunday schools, such as those of the NPBA, as a focal point.

In our final Chapter we contemplate the part played by a number of other factors in the growth of English Baptists in the period under consideration. We commence by looking at the impact of changes to society, such as population growth, that lay outside the ability of Baptists to influence, but which they were able to turn to their benefit. Brief thought is given to the influence of the Bristol Academy founded in 1679 but which does not begin to make a significant contribution of ministers of the denomination until the appointment of Bernard Foskett as Principal in 1720. Although well researched by others, the birth of the BMS within the NPBA requires some deliberation, chiefly in respect of the way in which this determined commitment to overseas mission would impact thinking with regard to home mission. The nineteenth century was to become a century of great political and social reform and a large part of the motivation for this is referred to as the 'Evangelical Conscience.' The issue of slavery was one of the great issues of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and we reflect on the contribution of Baptists to this process with a view to the belief that such involvement in the great social issues of the day contributed in a not intangible way to the standing of Baptists and so to their appeal to individuals. Finally we take a look at the attitude of Baptists to the issue of church discipline as seen

⁴ Hereafter BMS

through the eyes of the NPBA. Church membership was one of the distinctives of the Baptists and the 1851 Census revealed that for every member there were four non-members attending Sunday Worship. Adult Baptism was one reason for this, but the second factor was that Baptists took the issue of membership so seriously that many were reluctant to take the step into membership. This may appear to be a negative factor acting to restrict growth but it is also possible to see that this issue points to the integrity of Baptists and to the suggestion that many were attracted by this integrity even if they were unable to commit themselves to the church concerned. These factors are not unique to Baptists; although the BMS was the first of the modern missionary societies they were quickly followed into the mission arena by the other Churches. However, the intent is to draw a picture of Baptist church life in such a way as to demonstrate why so many people found they were attracted to it. These factors are not easily quantifiable but an attempt to illustrate the tangible effect they had upon Baptist churches is invaluable.

⁵ Hereafter BHMS

Primary Source Material

The principal sources for the primary material in this thesis are the records of the churches and the associations of the Baptists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

For the most part Church Books (the ongoing record of Church Meetings) in the period under study were kept by the minister, who may often be the only church member who might be guaranteed to be able to do so. The information they contain is therefore somewhat varied. One minister may keep meticulous records only to be followed by an interregnum for which no records are kept, or by a minister less willing to maintain the records. There was no common format beyond in most cases giving the date of a meeting and the numbers in attendance. It is occasionally evident that a major event in the life of a church such as the appointment of an assistant minister and the process resulting in the opening of a new building is not even recorded in a Church Book. In general terms the further back into the eighteenth century (and beyond) one looks, the more difficult it becomes to acquire information, and few Church Books exist prior to 1750. For the same reason the older the Books the more likely they are to have suffered damage, however for the most part if a church has bothered to keep its records it has been concerned enough to preserve them well, and it was rare to find Books in a condition that rendered them unreadable. Legibility was always a constant issue as one contended with faded texts in varying hands and ancient turns of phrase, however the eye soon became accustomed to these matters.

Generally Church Books may be expected to provide information with regard to the principal events in the life of the church concerned such as changes of ministry and the construction or modification of premises. The calling of Deacons or elders, the setting aside of men for ministry or itinerancy and the planting of new churches or the beginning of new preaching stations and Sunday schools would also normally be referred to. Frequently the reports of meetings would include a reference to new members, and to the disciplining of members.

Occasionally this primary material may be found in the churches concerned as at Fuller, Kettering and Suttcliff Memorial, Olney. However, for the most part Church Books and other source materials are to be found in the relevant County Record Office.

Three other principal sources of interest to the Baptist Historian that should be mentioned are the Angus Library at Regent's Park College, Oxford, the Dr. William's Library in Gordon Square, London, and the British Library. Regent's houses the archives of the Baptist Union and the BMS as well as many other collections, papers and association records relating to Baptists. The Dr. Williams Library is a major treasury of historical material relating to Dissenters, as is the British Library and they are handily placed a few minutes walk apart close to the major rail terminals at Kings Cross/St. Pancras and Euston.

Abbreviations

AFBC	Archive of Fuller Baptist Church, Kettering
AL	Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford
AOBC	Archive of Olney Baptist Church
<i>BAR</i>	British Library, London, <i>Baptist Annual Register</i> , Volumes 1-4, 1791-1802
BHMS	Baptist Home Missionary Society
<i>BHMS Minutes</i>	The Angus Library, Regent's Park College, Oxford, The original minute book of <i>The Proceedings of the Baptist Society in London for the Encouragement and Support of Itinerant Preaching (Jan 1797-April 1812)</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester</i>
BLRB	British Library Rare Books Section
<i>BM</i>	The Angus Library, Oxford, <i>The Baptist Magazine</i> , Volumes for the years 1809-1830
BMS	Baptist Missionary Society
<i>BQ</i>	<i>Baptist Quarterly</i> , the journal of the Baptist Historical Society
<i>BUH</i>	<i>Baptist Union Handbook or Directory</i> , Baptist Union Publications, Baptist House, Didcot
<i>CL</i>	<i>Circular Letter</i> . It was customary practice of each association to print and distribute a <i>CL</i> following the annual assembly. Written usually by the incoming moderator it was agreed by all ministers at a special session at the assembly. The name of association and year of letter follows.
DWL	Dr. William's Library, London
GUL	Glasgow University Library
GULSp.Coll.	Glasgow University Library, Special Collections
GB	General Baptist(s)
HMS	Home Missionary Society
<i>Journal</i>	Wesley, John, <i>The Journal of John Wesley</i> ,

Volumes I-VII

<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> (Standard Edition), Curnock, Nehemiah (ed.), Charles H. Kelly, London, 1909-1916
<i>LA</i>	<i>Letter to the Association</i> . It was customary for each member church to send a brief annual report to their association in time for the annual assembly. It contained news of the church and the statistical returns for the year. The name of church and year of letter follows.
LCRO	Leicestershire County (Public) Record Office
<i>Letters</i>	Wesley, John, <i>The Letters of John Wesley, Volumes I-VIII</i> , Telford, John (ed.), Epworth Press, London, 1931
LMS	London Missionary Society
<i>NBM</i>	The Angus Library, Oxford, <i>The New Baptist Magazine, 1825-1826</i>
<i>NBMsc</i>	The Angus Library, Oxford, <i>The New Baptist Miscellany, 1826-1829</i>
NCGB	New Connexion of General Baptists (formed in 1770)
<i>NDCT</i>	<i>A New Dictionary of Christian Theology</i>
<i>NIV</i>	<i>New International Version of the Bible</i>
NottCRO	Nottinghamshire County (Public) Record Office
NPBA	Northamptonshire Particular Baptist Association
NthCRO	Northamptonshire County (Public) Record Office
ODCC	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (third edition)</i>
PB	Particular Baptist(s)
PP	Parliamentary Paper
<i>PRO</i>	Public Record Office, Kew
QR	Quarterly Register of the BHMS
<i>THBS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society</i> the precursor to the <i>BQ</i>
WCRO	Warwickshire County Record Office
<i>Works</i>	Wesley, John, <i>The Works of John Wesley Volumes I-II</i> , Cragg, Gerald R. (ed.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975

I. The English Baptist Church in 1770

A. *Who were the Baptists?*

In the eighteenth century the terms Nonconformist and Dissenter were the most common designations for churches in England apart from the Church of England and the Roman Catholics. Principal amongst these groups were the Presbyterians, the Congregationalists, the Quakers, and the Baptists.¹

Amongst the earliest Baptist churches there was virtually no pattern of inter-relationship. Baptist churches sprung up around the country often without reference to one another or any causal relationship. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that without George Fox (1624-1691) there would have been no Quaker movement. However, Baptist churches cannot look to such a founder to explain their initial appearance, nor can they be traced directly to any identical movement on the continent of Europe.

This isolationism is short-lived, most especially in the cities where the need for fellowship with like-minded believers, and the need to support each other through persecution, and to combat persecution, naturally drew Nonconformists of all persuasions together. By the turn of the eighteenth century the two distinct Baptist groupings of General and Particular Baptists² were well established, though a large number of Baptist churches remained independent of both groupings retaining their isolation as much as any independence. The 1851 Census identifies the following groupings of Baptist churches:³

- General (Unitarian) Baptists
- General (New Connexion) Baptists
- Particular Baptists
- Seventh Day Baptists
- Scotch Baptists

¹ This work is concerned with England and English Baptists and not Britain as a whole. Unless otherwise indicated all references to church, politics and society should be seen in this context.

² Hereafter GB(s) for General Baptist(s) and PB(s) for Particular Baptist(s)

³ PP, 1851 Census, vol 33, p. lix

As can be seen on Table 1, the latter two are so small in number as to have little impact on our study. Of more significance are the five hundred and twenty-six undefined (or unaffiliated) Baptist churches, almost 20% of the total, but who may not be deemed a denominational grouping. In the report Horace Mann, its compiler, fairly traces the origins of the Baptists to the early seventeenth century and notes that as far back as Tertullian (150-220AD) the Baptists make claim to support for their views within the church. He makes brief mention of the Reformation and highlights the unfair association made between Baptists and Continental Anabaptists.⁴

Mann describes the PBs as Calvinistic in that they "...hold that a *particular portion* of mankind has been from all eternity predestined to be saved."⁵ He traces their views to the thirty-two articles of the PBs 1689 Confession,⁶ which he considers to agree in all respects with the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration, except on the point of baptism. The GBs he defines by their initial evangelical Arminianism but recognises that by the end of the eighteenth century they became increasingly 'impregnated' with 'anti-trinitarian sentiments.' The New Connexion he describes as the successors to the original evangelical Arminianism of the GBs from whom they emerged in 1770 under Dan Taylor.⁷ The Seventh Day Baptists are essentially GBs who held that the proper day to worship was Saturday not Sunday, but by 1851 they were virtually extinct. The Scotch Baptists are those Baptist churches in England who drew their origin from the Scot Archibald McLean. They were Calvinistic in theology differing from the PBs only in the way they practised some of the ordinances such as 'communion and washing each other's feet.'⁸ Mann is correct to point out that in virtually all matters of church polity there is little to distinguish Baptist and Congregationalists or Independents though he neglects to state that it is again the issue of the 'subjects and mode' of Baptism that is the dividing factor.

The GBs were more connexional in their thinking than their PB brethren meeting in assembly from as early as 1654.⁹ In 1651 the thirty GB churches in the Midlands produced

⁴ PP, 1851 Census, vol 33, p. lx

⁵ PP, 1851 Census, vol 33, p. lix

⁶ Formulated by the London PBs in 1677 and republished at the first General Assembly in 1689. See White, B. R. (1996), p. 119

⁷ See p. 18

⁸ PP, 1851 Census, vol 33, p. lix

⁹ Underwood (1947), p. 77

a Confession of Faith, and in 1679 the GBs established an Orthodox Creed.¹⁰ However they were much smaller than the PBs by a ratio of some 1:7 churches, and so their impact was reduced.

The PBs first met in a national assembly in 1689,¹¹ although seven London churches published the first PB Confession of Faith in 1644.¹² Following this assembly the PBs began to gather formally in associations where both the desire and numerical strength permitted. By the end of the eighteenth century it is possible to speak in terms of a truly national network of PB churches.

Baptists in the mid-eighteenth century are portrayed by historians as being at best lacklustre and at worst in a state of stagnation. Halévy is typical in his belief that Baptists in the run up to 1770 were on the verge of extinction.¹³ The reasons given are various though foremost was that PBs were locked into a hyper-Calvinism, which denied the need to seek converts, and to engage in proactive evangelism. In the case of the GBs it was that they were moving from evangelical orthodoxy to Unitarianism. As evidence of the decline amongst GBs Michael Watts cites the Kent GB Assembly which in 1704, 1711, 1714, 1719, and 1724 referred to the decaying state of religion and called for days of prayer and fasting to halt the decline.¹⁴ What gives some credence to this negative strain of thought is the reality that for some of the GB churches in question the slide into Unitarianism was not halted and to all intents and purpose they became extinct as Baptist causes.¹⁵

It is also said that a passion for mission was replaced by a passion for theological disputation, and that by distancing themselves from the Methodist or Wesleyan Revival Baptists appeared to cut themselves off from the one obvious means of re-establishing their fortunes.¹⁶ W. R. Ward, Emeritus Professor of Modern History at Durham University, writes “...few Englishmen had ever cherished the scruples which sent the Dissenters into

¹⁰ Underwood (1947), p. 119 and 120

¹¹ Underwood (1947), p. 129

¹² Underwood (1947), p. 73

¹³ Halévy (1924), p. 355. See also Alan Gilbert (1976), p. 32

¹⁴ Watts, Michael (1978), p. 384

¹⁵ The compiler of the report on the 1851 Census, Horace Mann, designates the GBs as Unitarian for the purposes of his report. PP, 1851 Census, vol 33, p. lix.

¹⁶ See Chapter II for a full discussion of this point.

the wilderness, and, despite the multiplication of chapels, their numbers probably diminished throughout the first half of the eighteenth century.”¹⁷

Alan Gilbert, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Tasmania, provides evidence of the growth in chapel numbers for Baptist Churches using the returns for ‘Dissenter places of worship certified by Registrar General.’¹⁸ These were licences granted for temporary meeting-houses, and during the same period only eleven permanent chapels were registered, though this may comment more on the nature of dissenting existence rather than on their decline.¹⁹ However Gilbert is convinced of the decline stating that between 1700 and 1740 the numbers associated with dissenting communities halved to 150,000 (2.5% of the population).²⁰

B. The Development of early Baptist Ministry

To a great extent the early story of Baptists is a tale of churches and ministers. This is not a result of the failure of the laity in Baptist churches, but an absence of information. It is also due to the initial blurred distinction between ministers and laity so something must be said about the development of Baptist ministry.

1. Who were the early ministers?

In 1606 John Smyth separated from the Church of England and established a separatist community in Gainsborough, Nottinghamshire. In 1608 the group fled to Holland *en masse* to avoid persecution, thanks to the personal generosity of one of the group’s members Thomas Helwys. In Amsterdam Smyth made the progression to a Baptist position and took his church with him. Smyth, the first Baptist, died in 1612 and under the leadership of Helwys the group returned to England shortly afterwards. At Spitalfields outside the walls of the City of London, Helwys founded what is generally acknowledged

¹⁷ Ward (1994), p. 269

¹⁸ See Table 19

¹⁹ See Watts (1978), p. 303ff

²⁰ Gilbert (1976), p. 16

as the first Baptist church on English soil.²¹ Helwys led the church as a layman, and by dint of the Arminian theology gained in Holland it would also be designated the first GB church. Helwys died in 1616 and was succeeded by John Murton, another layman. He had also been part of the church since its Gainsborough days. In 1624 the Spitalfields church excluded one Elias Tookey and some others, for reasons unknown, who under Tookey's leadership established a Baptist church in Southwark.²² This reveals two things about early Baptist church life. The first is that initially there was no ordained ministry and that the pastors or leaders of the churches were found from within the congregations. The second is that new churches were often formed out of disputation, which resulted in a group of expelled people establishing their own church more to their own liking!

For their part the PBs represent the final stage in the evolution of Separatism. They derived their name from their acceptance of the Calvinistic doctrine of 'particular atonement.' The first PB church evolved from the 'Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey Church' founded in London in 1616 and named for its first three pastors all of whom had been ordained clergyman in the Church of England. From surviving records it is clear that at some point between 1633 and 1638 a PB church emerged led by John Spilsbury (c1593-1668) and Samuel Eaton.²³ In 1641 the Dutch speaking Richard Blunt went to Holland where he was baptised, and upon his return fifty-one members of the Spilsbury/Eaton church were also baptised. In 1643 a further group led by Hanserd Knollys (1599-1691), formerly an Anglican clergyman, had left the church now pastored by Henry Jessey (1601-1663) establishing another PB church. In 1645 Jessey himself was baptised, and then by degrees he baptised many of his own church members. William Kiffin (1616-1701) joined Spilsbury's church before appearing with Thomas Patient in 1644 as leader of the new Devonshire Square Church where he remained as pastor for sixty years. So, within a short space of time London had some five or six PB churches, all of which flowed, from the original 'Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey Church.'

The new factor introduced into the equation by the advent of the PBs is that of former Anglican clergymen who either by personal choice or by ejection had become first separatists and then Baptists. Maintaining their Calvinist theology those clergymen who

²¹ Underwood (1947), p. 33-46

²² Underwood (1947), p. 50

²³ Underwood (1947), p. 58. It is possible that two congregations formed one in 1633 led by Eaton and one

became Baptists would nearly all become PBs, which alone explains why it is the PBs who became the larger grouping. Throughout the rest of the seventeenth century and on into the eighteenth the ranks of Baptists were swelled in this manner by Anglican priests who became Baptists and brought their congregations with them as they formed new churches. The ejection of 1662 saw some 1800-2000 priests lose their livings providing for the Dissenters a generation of well educated ministers.

The Civil War also provided a boost to Baptist growth as well as an encouragement of the spread of Baptist churches in Ireland and Scotland.²⁴ It served to replace the Church of England as the state church with Presbyterian Puritanism.²⁵ In truth this was only a little more palatable to Baptists, but nevertheless they ranged themselves on the side of Parliament and flocked to join its army. As men and armies moved across the country in a political dispute with an important religious element, those men took their beliefs with them. Churches founded during the Civil War were subject to the vagaries of military dictate and often lost the men who had been responsible for their founding. Whilst the spoils of war truly went to the Presbyterians, Baptists did take advantage of hitherto unknown freedoms to preach and to publish their writings.

Ordination though rare was not unknown amongst early Baptists as in 1655 the PB Western Association appointed and ordained Thomas Collier as 'General Superintendent and Messenger to all the Associated Churches.'²⁶ Around 1756 John Spilsbury took up an invitation to lead the Baptist church at Wapping, possibly adding to the distinction of being the first minister of a Particular Baptist church, that of being the first minister to move from one church to another by invitation. On 20 June 1745 Philip Doddridge, the Northampton Congregationalist minister, preached at the ordination of Abraham Tozer at Norwich. As part of his charge to the minister he explained the normal processes whereby a man may find himself in the pastoral office.²⁷ Doddridge described a training process of four to five years involving assessment by older ministers before being allowed to preach, and an enquiry into their character and general suitability for ministry. He suggested that it was common for a man to live and work for some months, even years, amongst a

in 1638 led by Spilsbury.

²⁴ Whitley (1932), p. 78ff

²⁵ Underwood (1947), p. 63

²⁶ Underwood (1947), p. 110

²⁷ Harris (1971-1972), p. 126-129

congregation to prove himself before ordination. Once a call was issued Doddridge pointed to the role of other ministers in affirming the call, and then in conducting the ordination. Given that Tozer was a Baptist, and that Doddridge's hearers were in the main Baptists, it is fair to assume that the process Doddridge described was on the whole applicable to Baptists as well as Congregationalists.

2. *Baptist Livings*

Baptist ministers did not live well, at least on any remuneration received from their congregations. Thomas Helwys of Broxtowe Hall, Nottingham, was an exception due to his independent means, as was William Kiffin who was a successful merchant. John Murton, who succeeded Helwys, was a furrier and like many of the early ministers supplemented his income by publishing, in his case a treatise on the liberty of conscience, a popular theme amongst early Baptist authors. Thomas Lamb (d1673) who pastored a London GB church earned his living as a soap-boiler.²⁸ A. C. Underwood, an eminent Baptist historian of the mid-twentieth century, writes, "All the first GB ministers were untrained and unpaid men. Many earned their living by manual labour."²⁹ PBs also were reluctant to pay their ministers adequately, though they did more than their GB brethren. Underwood writes, "Nevertheless, their ministers were so badly paid that not a few kept schools to eke out a livelihood."³⁰

Writing of the period 1640-1660 the Baptist historian W. T. Whitley says,

Baptists put in practice the priesthood of all believers, and had no paid ministry released from the discipline of ordinary life. In the country, the typical minister was a thatcher, a farmer, a maltser, a cheese-factor; in the town the preacher had been during the week making shoes, pins, buttons, collars, hats, clothes, had been dyeing or upholstering or selling such wares; here and there might be found a scrivener, a writing-master, an apothecary, even a doctor.³¹

²⁸ Underwood (1947), p. 87

²⁹ Underwood (1947), p. 125

³⁰ Underwood (1947), p. 128

³¹ Quoted by Robinson (1927), p. 125

The Civil War brought about a revolution in the organisational structure of the country and enormous numbers of opportunities were provided to Nonconformists in all areas of life that had previously been the preserve of the aristocracy and the Church of England. There were even some who accepted the livings of vacated Anglican parishes, but there was a general opposition to ministers accepting such public offices.³² W.T. Whitley concluded that of the 1800-2000 incumbents ejected by the Act of Uniformity in 1662 following the Restoration only twenty-six were Baptists, and most of them were in Wales.³³

The situation was such that few aspired to be ministers. The GBs had exacerbated the problem by stating in the sixty-first Article of their 1651 Confession that, "...the ministers of the Gospel ought to be content with necessary food and raiment, and to labour with their hands, that they may not be over-chargeable."³⁴ The 1704 GB Assembly agreed to a fund for the sustenance of 'needy and approved' ministers, and it was not until 1790 that they first addressed the issue of ministerial education in assembly.

The PBs gave the matter more serious thought. The letter sent out to encourage attendance at their first assembly in 1689 expressed that the 'raising up of an able and honourable ministry for the time to come' was the principal question with which they should concern themselves. A fund was established to help churches maintain their ministry, to send preachers into barren areas, and to assist ministerial candidates in their education. There was an increasing awareness of the need to encourage young men with the requisite gifts to consider the possibility of ministry.³⁵ Frank Robinson (1859-1947), tutor at the Bristol College from 1896-1938 writes, "Non-conformity rests upon personal conviction, not upon inherited tradition. Therefore an educated ministry is a necessity."³⁶ Funding this ministry remained a problem as is made clear by the diversity in ministerial salaries at this time.

The Baptist historian Henry Foreman provides evidence of this diversity³⁷ and he notes that, "Of these stipends all but one are attributed to the poor economic standing of the churches concerned."³⁸ The exception was John Turner who ministered in a wealthy

³² Underwood (1947), p. 81

³³ Whitley (1923), p. 160

³⁴ Underwood (1947), p. 125

³⁵ Moon (1979), p. 3

³⁶ Robinson (1929-1930), p. 292

³⁷ See Foreman (1978-1979), p. 359 and Table 2

³⁸ Foreman (1978-1979), p. 359-360

church in Bristol, but who did not see it as necessary to make further provision for him. On the whole Baptist ministers were expected to undertake other paid work to eke out their stipends. The Broadmead Church, Bristol, was amongst the wealthiest in the land and it paid its ministers accordingly. Thomas Hardcastle (1636-1678) and George Fownes (d.1685), were both Anglican priests before the ejection, and who ministered at Broadmead from 1671-1678 and 1679-1685 respectively for the then princely sum of £80.00 per annum. The newly instigated PB Fund of 1717 made one hundred grants to ministers (out of some three hundred in service) on salaries below £25.00 per annum.³⁹

Some ministers came from families of independent means and from a social position that allowed them to mix with the powerful and influential in the land. One such family was the Stennett family who provided the denomination with several ministers in the course of the eighteenth century. The funeral of the Rev. Dr. Joseph Stennett in February 1758 cost £114.00 at a time when a craftsman in London might earn £45 per annum.⁴⁰ This was an enormous sum and indicative of the great wealth of the Stennett family. Champion suggests that this discrepancy in income enjoyed by some Baptist ministers served also to indicate that the same social barriers prevalent in eighteenth century England as a whole existed within Baptist church life as well.⁴¹ This is not at all unlikely in a society where birth, wealth, education and personal relations determined one's place in society. The Stennetts came from the higher strata of society numbering amongst their acquaintance bishops, senior politicians and even kings.⁴² Did this cause them to look with disdain upon their poorer and less well-connected ministerial colleagues? The fact that successive generations of the family chose to serve as pastors of Baptist churches, when quite apparently they had the means to live otherwise, would suggest this was not the stuff of which the Stennetts were made. Leonard Champion, Principal of the Bristol Academy from 1953-1972, is correct when he writes of Joseph Stennett (1692-1658) that he was:

A man in favour with the royal house and with the supporters of that royal house, both political and ecclesiastical, a man of considerable learning and yet a man of public affairs, he clearly possessed considerable financial means and held a good social

³⁹ Foreman (1978-1979), p. 360

⁴⁰ Champion (1973-1974), p. 10

⁴¹ Champion (1973-1974), p. 13

⁴² Champion (1973-1974), p. 12

position. Yet amid all this he continued as a diligent and faithful pastor of the church meeting in Little Wild Street.⁴³

C. The emergence of the New Connexion of General Baptists

Although our main concern is with PBs something must be noted of the advent of the New Connexion of General Baptists (NCGB) for a full understanding of the situation in 1770 to be gained.⁴⁴ Dan Taylor was a child of the Methodist Revival. As such, he represents perhaps the principal way in which the revival was to impact Baptists. It was through men like Taylor and the influence they would assert over their church groupings that the revival can conceivably be argued to have had an influence on the revival in Baptist church life that commenced in the late eighteenth century.

Taylor was born into a mining family at Sourmilk Hall, Northowram in the West Riding of Yorkshire on 21 December 1738. At the age of fifteen, he was converted at a Methodist class meeting. Five years later he formally joined the Methodists and soon after he became a circuit preacher. He preached his first sermon aged only sixteen in a dwelling house in Hipperholme in September 1761.⁴⁵

His dalliance with the Methodists was short-lived. Such was his strength of character he would not long be able to reside within a system over which John Wesley was already exerting tight control. Indeed one of his problems with Methodism was Wesley's scheme of discipline, which Taylor considered unbiblical.⁴⁶ During his itinerancy as a Methodist preacher, Taylor met in the village of Wadsworth, near Halifax, four friends with whom he decided to cast his lot, become their pastor, and reject Methodism.

Together they sought an acceptable group identity, which through a process of study led them to a Baptist position. However, they retained their Arminian views and were refused baptism by the nearby Calvinist PBs, despite Taylor's strong personal links with them.⁴⁷

⁴³ Champion (1973-1974), p. 12

⁴⁴ See Rinaldi (1996)

⁴⁵ Taylor (1818), p. 69

⁴⁶ Rinaldi (1996), p. 13. cf. Taylor (1818), p. 9 and 70; also Brown, Raymond (1986), p.68

⁴⁷ Taylor (1818), p. 72

He had studied theology and classical literature under John Fawcett at Hebden Bridge. John Fawcett (1740-1817) was himself a figure of some importance in the North of England for PBs during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁴⁸ This contact aided Taylor's move to a Baptist position and gave him insight into the likely response of PBs to the prospect of baptising him.⁴⁹

Fawcett, however, did inform Taylor of the presence of GBs in Lincolnshire who shared Taylor's Arminian theology. In February 1763, Taylor, accompanied by J. Slater, en route to the GBs heartland of Lincolnshire, discovered the GB Church at Gamston in Nottinghamshire. After persuading the minister, John Dossey, that he was a genuine and suitable candidate for baptism, he was baptised in the River Idle by Dossey's associate minister, Jeffries, on Wednesday 16 February 1763.⁵⁰

Taylor threw himself into GB church life, joining the Lincolnshire Association and forming a life-long friendship with the minister at Boston, William Thompson. Thompson came to Wadsworth in May 1763 to baptise fourteen believers and help form them into a church under Taylor's leadership. Outgrowing its original home, a new meeting place was erected on a steep rocky declivity covered in birch trees from which it derived its name 'Birchcliff.'⁵¹ In the autumn of 1763, Gilbert Boyce⁵² and John Dossey ordained Taylor.

In 1765 and 1767 Taylor was the Lincolnshire representative to the GB Assembly in London. This exposed Taylor to the weaknesses of GB life that his insularity in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire had kept from him, in particular the lack of evangelistic zeal and the drift to Unitarianism. In a letter to Gilbert Boyce, Taylor blamed the decline of the GBs on the acceptance of Arianism and Socinianism and a consequent laying aside of the Gospel.⁵³ Taylor must also have been disturbed by the evident disunity of the GBs. When he accompanied Boyce to London in 1765 it was the first time in forty years that the Lincolnshire Association had been so represented. It seems that the difficulties endured half a century earlier were quickly in evidence. The NCGB Historian J. H. Wood writes,

⁴⁸ See the *BM*, March 1819, p. 97-106

⁴⁹ Haykin (1994), p. 44

⁵⁰ According to Adam Taylor Jeffries was the Pastor at Gamston and there is no mention of John Dossey. Taylor (1818), p. 73-74

⁵¹ Taylor (1818), p. 76

⁵² Gilbert Boyce was the Lincolnshire messenger. See p. 39 below

⁵³ Wood (1847), p. 147

“In 1769, the disputes were so violent, both at the Lincolnshire association and the general assembly, and some circumstances occurred of so unpleasant a nature, that the friends of the great truths of the gospel were led to conclude that a separation was necessary for the support of the faith; they therefore determined to withdraw from their present associations.”⁵⁴

Dan Taylor’s disaffection with the GBs was also fuelled by contact he had made in 1764 with the Barton Fabis group of churches that had their origins with the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion.⁵⁵ In the twenty-five or so years to 1770, the original seven members in one church had grown to 900 members in six churches, each with two pastors, working in close association with one another.⁵⁶ During this period they had also adopted the practice of believers baptism, but due to what they believed to be the evangelical shortcomings and outdated traditions of the GBs they had remained separate from them. Boyce had attempted to persuade the Leicestershire churches to join the Lincoln Association without success. Taylor writes that they had, “...expressed their opinion very freely that all true friends of the genuine doctrines of Christianity ought to separate from all who opposed them: at the same, stating their readiness to unite with the ministers whose sentiments they approved.”⁵⁷

Dan Taylor increasingly shared their concerns and showing the same ‘godly opportunism,’ which took him via Wadsworth from the Methodists to the GBs, he formed the NCGB in the summer of 1770. The original members of the NCGB consisted of the Barton Fabis churches and those GB Assembly churches that shared Taylor’s concerns about the decline of evangelicalism within the assembly.⁵⁸ Raymond Brown, an eminent Baptist historian, writes of the NCGB that it “...was the fruit of revival.”⁵⁹ However, whilst Dan Taylor may have been a convert of the revival it must be remembered that he rejected Methodism. By the time of the formation of the NCGB he had been for seven to eight years in fellowship with Baptists whose objection to the revival he must at least have become comfortable with, and may well have come to endorse.

⁵⁴ Wood (1847), p. 175

⁵⁵ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 69

⁵⁶ Wood (1847), p. 171

⁵⁷ Taylor (1818), p. 134

⁵⁸ Not all evangelical GBA churches immediately joined the NC.

D. Comparative Statistics

The NCGB maintained good membership records from their origins. In their study Currie, Gilbert and Horsley provide the complete series of records from 1770 until 1891 when the NCGB amalgamated with the PBs to form the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.⁶⁰ They serve to illustrate that as exciting and as vibrant as the NCGB was, it was a relatively minor story numerically. In 1770 the NCGB had a total membership of 1,221, which then built slowly year on year until in 1891, on the eve of its Union with the PBs, it had 26,805 members.

The GB Historian J.H. Wood provides comprehensive information regarding the growth of GB Churches from 1770-1846.⁶¹ In 1770 the original twenty-one member churches of the NCGB has an average of eighty-seven members. By 1845, the number of churches in existence had grown to 126 with an average of 133 members. Table 4 illustrates that the average membership of the churches varies greatly according to the length of their existence. The original member churches of the NCGB had existed before its creation and it would appear that the longer a church was established the greater its potential for growth. Additionally within the period in consideration, the original members of the NCGB planted eighteen new churches.

National statistics for the PBs do not exist before 1891, however, Currie et al state that in 1750 there were 10,000 PBs in England; in 1790, 17,000 (compared to 2,843 NCGB); in 1838, 86,000 (13,947 NCGB) and in 1851, 122,000 (18,277 NCGB).⁶² These figures indicate that the PBs throughout the existence of the NCGB from 1770-1891 maintained superiority in numerical terms of around 7:1. Table 5 shows the membership of the Baptist Union at its inception in 1891. Ernest Payne, using the same sources states that in 1891 there were 334,163 adults in membership of the Baptist Union.⁶³

In considering Baptist membership statistics, we must also be aware of the distinction between membership and church attendance. If Baptists maintained their records in terms

⁵⁹ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 69

⁶⁰ Currie et al (1977), p. 147-151

⁶¹ Wood (1847), pp. 181-233. See Table 3

⁶² Currie et al (1977), p. 147-151. PBs statistics given on p.151 in Notes and Sources no. 1

⁶³ Payne (1959), p. 267

of communicants, as do the Church of England, these figures would be much higher. This is perfectly illustrated in records available for 1851, the year of the Religious Census. Currie et al show that in 1851 Baptist churches had 122,000 members⁶⁴ whilst Watts, using the Census returns, shows that on 30 March 1851 there were 499,604 people in attendance at Baptist Churches, a ratio of attendees to members of 4:1.⁶⁵

E. Shared Concerns

Although the GBs and the PBs existed as quite separate entities there were during the eighteenth century happenings on the wider scene that would affect them both, though not necessarily in the same way.

1. Toleration

To understand this issue for the Baptists of 1770 we must go back a full century to the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the subsequent 1689 Toleration Act. J.H. Wood wrote in 1867, “By this Act a legal termination was put to the persecution of nonconformists: some respect was shown for the rights of conscience; and Dissenters obtained liberty to worship God without exposing themselves to civil penalties.”⁶⁶

Roland Bainton similarly writes, “At the close of the Cromwellian period England was more disposed to tolerance, if for no other reason on account of fatigue and yearning for tranquillity.”⁶⁷ Charles II himself gave every indication that he was so disposed. Christopher Falkus writes in his biography of the King, “...Charles produced a Declaration from Breda to remove any lingering doubts. He pardoned his enemies, promised to uphold the Anglican Church, but to grant ‘liberty to tender consciences’; and to leave all difficult questions to the will of Parliament.”⁶⁸ Even the inevitable retribution dealt out to those responsible for the execution of Charles I was little to Charles’ liking and he urged that the

⁶⁴ Currie et al (1977), p. 151 in Notes and Sources 1.

⁶⁵ Watts, Michael (1995), p. 28

⁶⁶ Wood (1847), p. 145

⁶⁷ Bainton (1951), p. 231

⁶⁸ Falkus (1972), p. 65 and Manning (1952), p. 2

questions of further execution be allowed to sleep for he could not pardon the guilty.⁶⁹ However, the Restoration concerned not only the fortunes of the monarchy but also the Church of England, which had every intention of seeking retribution from Dissenters who had been strong in their support of Cromwell. Ian Green writes that after the Restoration there was, "...a greater inclination to regard all forms of Dissent as not merely unnecessary but unnatural."⁷⁰ The Church of England was equally determined that a Catholic King would not advance the cause of Catholicism. The 1673 Test Act excluded from public life all those who did not disclaim the doctrine of transubstantiation, and was directly aimed at Catholics and the King's supporters,⁷¹ and the 1701 Act of Settlement stipulated that no future monarch or consort could be a Catholic.⁷²

Measures were also brought against Dissenters who were treated with great mistrust by the Church of England backed Parliament. However, the ire of the re-established Church of England was directed in the main against the Presbyterians.⁷³ Attempts were made in 1661 at the Savoy Conference to reconcile Presbyterians to the Church of England but they failed.⁷⁴ Had they succeeded Baptists and Independents might have been left alone, as their numbers were so few. However, the result of the failure at Savoy was the passing into Law between 1661 and 1665 of the Clarendon Code.⁷⁵ First in 1661 came the Corporation Act, requiring members of municipal bodies to swear the oaths of allegiance and in the year prior to their election to have taken communion according to Anglican rites. The 1662 Act of Uniformity obligated all 'beneficed clergymen' to consent to all contained in and proscribed by the Book of Common Prayer. Additionally all involved in education signed a declaration 'abhorring all claim to offer any armed resistance to the King or his representatives, and to conform to the liturgy of the Church of England.' Most dissenting groups met in private homes and the 1664 Conventicle Act allowed for family worship to extend to no more than four adult guests and made it illegal for other persons aged sixteen or greater to be present with a punishment for a third offence of transportation for seven years or a fine of £100. The 1665 Five Mile Act legislated that displaced clergy could not come within five miles of any place in which they had formally ministered. A measure

⁶⁹ Falkus (1972), p. 84

⁷⁰ Green (1994), p. 177

⁷¹ Bainton (1951), p. 231

⁷² Green (1994), p. 178

⁷³ Bainton (1951), p. 231

⁷⁴ Underwood (1947), p. 95

⁷⁵ For Clarendon Code see Underwood (1947), p. 95-96; Bainton (1951), p. 232 and Manning (1952), p. 3

that gains importance when it is realised that as a result of the Act of Uniformity up to 2,000 incumbents were expelled from their living on what was known as 'Black Batholomew's Day' in 1662. The very thing the authorities wished to prevent they had secured for as Manning writes, "...the division of English life into Church and Dissent was set."⁷⁶ Whilst the code was aimed primarily at the Presbyterian Church and at Puritans within the established church it also had its affect upon Baptists. John Bunyan is perhaps the best known of those who spent much time in prison as a result of the Clarendon Code. Bainton indicates that in the course of the twenty years following its implementation eight ministers died in prison and many more suffered a loss of living, the seizure of their property, and long periods of imprisonment.⁷⁷ This was not solely an attempt to punish Dissenters and restrict Roman Catholics; it was also an attempt to cling on a national scale to the ideal of one state, one church.⁷⁸

William III, an avowed Protestant and a Calvinist to boot, brought in an age of toleration that saw the worst of the penal codes against Dissenters removed - though not all of them. Underwood writes:

Compulsory attendance at the services of the Church of England was abolished. Dissenters were allowed to worship provided they did so behind unlocked doors. The Conventicle Act and the Act of Uniformity were not repealed but it was enacted that they did not in future apply to Dissenters who proved their loyalty by taking the oaths of allegiance and supremacy before the justices of the peace. Those who objected to the oaths, as did the Quakers, and not a few Baptists, were allowed to make declarations.⁷⁹

The 1673 Test Act and the 1661 Corporation Act also remained on the statute books and they were not finally repealed until 1828. However, it would be foolish to assume that with the advent of William and Mary all advocates of the suppression of Dissenters withered away. William and Mary introduced a climate of toleration that whilst never reversed has had its difficult moments. Queen Anne, who succeeded William III, proved less tolerant and in 1711 allowed the passing of the 'Occasional Conformity Bill.' The 1661 Corporation Act laid down that only communicant members of the Church of

⁷⁶ Manning (1952), p. 3

⁷⁷ Bainton (1951), p. 233

⁷⁸ Bainton (1951), p. 232

⁷⁹ Underwood (1947), p. 116 and Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 1 and Naylor (1992), p. 20

England could hold public office, but some Dissenters circumvented this law by attending communion prior to election or appointment and the 1711 Bill prevented this.⁸⁰ On the very day that Anne died in 1714 the Schism Act, designed to curb the growing and important influence of the Dissenting Academies by making the separate education of Dissenters illegal, was due to be passed, and so lapsed.⁸¹ Lord Hardwicke's Act of 1753 aimed against 'clandestine marriages' also served to make illegal all weddings 'except those celebrated by the clergy of the established church.'⁸² Other battles remained hard fought such as the battle over burial rites, and education, which were not yet on the horizon but would prove to be equally as vexed.

Those early eighteenth century Baptists lived with the knowledge that at any moment the gains of 1688/9 might be lost. Brown quotes the Independent minister Philip Doddridge from a 1745 address, "we have long enjoyed halcyon days...how soon clouds may gather...younger brethren may live to see...our religious liberties trampled underfoot, and with them undoubtedly our civil, for they are twins that will live and die together."⁸³ This was the year of the Jacobite Rebellion that would have placed a Catholic Stuart back on the throne, a fear of which Dissenters shared with the Church of England. Richard Brown writes:

The Jacobite threat ended in reality on Culloden Moor in 1746 but it did not finally disappear from the minds of those in government until Charles Stuart died without issue in 1783. Even then old memories died hard, as Catholic emancipation was not to come until 1829 when it remained a political hot potato bound up with the Irish question still capable of causing much political ferment.⁸⁴

The kind of toleration that William brought to England had been won at terrible cost. Britain's internal conflicts had followed similar lines to those of the continent whilst remaining separate from them, and the freedoms gained by William's accession were in their own way gained through much cost. It is then no wonder that the task of zealously

⁸⁰ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 53 and Naylor (1992), p. 60-61 who also notes the Bill was repealed in part in 1718.

⁸¹ Brown, Richard (1991), p. 109 and Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 53

⁸² Manning (1952), p. 5

⁸³ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 3 from Doddridge's "*Charge preached at the ordination of the Rev. Abraham Tozer.*"

⁸⁴ Brown, Richard (1991), p. 203-207

guarding and maintaining their religious liberties was one that motivated Baptists and other Dissenters well into the nineteenth century.

2. Rationalism

As the eighteenth century passed its mid-point the fear of Roman Catholicism had receded but a new threat now arose to the church, one that Raymond Brown considered to be even greater. He writes, "...Baptists were to encounter a more sinister force within their own ranks. Eighteenth-century rationalism was more perilous than Roman Catholicism."⁸⁵

Rationalism in one sense had 'found out' the church of the eighteenth century. Rupp accuses them of foolishly exhorting their own theological prowess to the abandonment of what had gone before. In particular he writes, "At the moment when the Church had to face an intellectual assault of power and gravity, it abandoned an impressive armament of medieval rationality."⁸⁶ The medieval church drew its authority from a combination of the interpretation of Scripture and church tradition. The reformers rejected the latter insisting on the supremacy of the revelation of Scripture alone. A battle so recently won by the reformers now was to be fought again, on a different battleground, for the rationalists believed that the basis for truth was reason without appeal to revelation. David Pailin writes "In matters of religious belief an authority is authoritative only so long as it is accepted to be such."⁸⁷ Rationalists in challenging the authority of scripture looked for a higher authority and discovered reason. Whether this was in fact an appeal to a higher authority, or the rejection of an unacceptable one for one more palatable is a matter the mid-eighteenth century church was ill prepared to debate. Pailin identifies three factors that lay behind this appeal to reason.⁸⁸ Firstly, a sense of need to control bigotry and fanaticism, arising from the recent history of religious strife and persecution, fuelled by the revival. Secondly, the opposite extreme of the challenge of scepticism and unbelief, though with its continental influence this was perhaps the preserve of an intellectual elite. Thirdly "...was the way in which the religious controversies that had begun in the sixteenth century undermined confidence in the traditional authorities for deciding such

⁸⁵ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 5

⁸⁶ Rupp (1986), p. 243

⁸⁷ Pailin (1994), p. 211

matters.”⁸⁹ Agreed creedal statements, church practice, the decisions of ecclesiastical bodies and the witness of experience remained important in the Protestant world. However, although the Reformation had elevated the Scriptures above all other authorities the difficulty arose because appeals to Scripture failed to produce harmony in belief and practice but rather dissension.

The basic problem was that whilst Protestants in general could agree that the Scriptures were the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct, they all too frequently could not reach common accord on how they should be interpreted or applied. Generations of religious disputation seemed only to prove to many Rationalists that even the acceptance of Scripture as the ultimate authority was unable to deliver anything in terms of solutions. It appeared to them that an authority without the ability to produce harmony and agreement, and allowed so many different interpretations and positions was no authority at all.

One thing is clear, and it is that the Protestant church was unprepared for the challenge of the Rationalists. Raymond Brown concludes, “The supernatural dimension of the Christian Faith gradually became an intellectual embarrassment.”⁹⁰ Rupp writes that, “Thus both believers and unbelievers accepted that the Christian case stood or fell by the ‘proofs’ from miracle or prophecy. Only slowly and reluctantly did Christians re-examine their assumptions and come to understand that their massive fortifications - bastions and ravelins and all - were as out of date and irrelevant as those of My Uncle Toby.”⁹¹

Underwood also perceives the challenge in a similar vein when he writes, “The deists whittled down the supernatural element in Christianity and reduced its fundamentals to the mere essentials of natural reason.”⁹² David Bebbington writes, “Reason was banishing superstition. The new prestige of science associated with the name of Isaac Newton inspired the ambition to investigate all aspects of the world with the aim of dispassionately establishing truth.”⁹³

What was almost undeniable, except perhaps by hyper-Calvinists, was that the mind, intellect, will or reason of man had a part to play. Certainly hyper-Calvinists when faced

⁸⁸ Pailin (1994), pp. 211f

⁸⁹ Pailin (1994), p. 212

⁹⁰ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 5

⁹¹ Rupp (1986), p. 244

⁹² Underwood (1947), p. 117

by Rationalism had a tendency to retreat into isolationism and independence.⁹⁴ Edward Stillingfleet the Bishop of Worcester was amongst many to see the ‘assent of faith as a rational act.’⁹⁵ The essential question remains, is it the authority of Scripture that compels the believer, or the authority of reason that releases a response of faith? Early Rationalist thinkers such as Edward Herbert (1583?-1633) and William Chillingworth (1602-1644) recognised the importance of reason in ‘discerning what actually is revealed’⁹⁶ and taking a ‘discriminating approach to Scripture.’⁹⁷ There is at times a thin line between those who would argue that it is for reason alone to determine the truth of Scripture and those who say that the truth of Scripture is so entirely reasonable that it must be accepted. Stillingfleet in Pailin’s view takes both positions to suit his need.⁹⁸ John Locke was amongst those who believed that the credibility of the reality of God and His revelation had nothing to fear from the proper application of reason. He writes, “He that believes, without having any reason for believing, may be in love with his own fancies; but neither seeks truth as he ought, nor pays the obedience due to his Maker. Who would have him use those discerning faculties he has given him.”⁹⁹

Locke in writing *The Reasonableness of Christianity* was amongst those Rationalists who attempted to show that the Christian faith was indeed reasonable. However, his definition of the basic constituents of a Christian’s faith fell too far short for Stillingfleet who accused him of denying the Trinity. John Edward was a vigorous opponent of Locke, who considered that the Bible was the only basis of Christian authority, and he was representative of those who believed that the realm of the divine was beyond the competence of human reason. Edward considered that Locke’s views marked him out as a Socinian. Other Rationalists came to be referred to as Deists, displaying more interest in the nature of God than the essentials of a Gospel faith. Theirs, however, was a mix of views, and Samuel Clarke, thought by many to be the natural successor to Locke,¹⁰⁰ identified four kinds of Deists. The more heated debate was to surround those who applied their rational thinking to the Scriptures themselves. There were three central issues.

⁹³ Bebbington (1989), p. 50

⁹⁴ Ward (1994), p. 270

⁹⁵ Pailin (1994), p. 218

⁹⁶ Pailin (1994), p. 214

⁹⁷ Pailin (1994), p. 216

⁹⁸ Pailin (1994), p. 218

⁹⁹ Pailin (1994), p. 219

¹⁰⁰ Bebbington (1989), p. 51

Firstly, the necessity of revelation. Secondly, the reliability of the Scriptural records. And, thirdly, issues of the authentication of ongoing revelation. Samuel Clarke was typical of the rational defenders of the Christian faith when he wrote:

The Christian Revelation is positively and directly proved, to be actually and immediately sent to us from God, by the many infallible *Signs and Miracles*, which the Author of it worked publickly as the Evidence of His Divine Commission. Besides the great Excellency and Reasonableness of the *Doctrine* considered in itself...God has given us all the Proofs of the Truths of our Religion, the Nature of the Thing would bear, or that were reasonable either for God to give, or man to expect.¹⁰¹

Rationalism, therefore, also found a home within the church itself. Some welcomed the notion that revelation alone was an insufficient basis for faith that required the application of reason. It would especially have had an appeal to those, like William Carey, who would be taking the Christian Gospel into the non-Christian world at the turn of the eighteenth century. These missionaries would value the application of reason to their faith knowing that in non-Christian lands an appeal to revelation alone would be unlikely to gain much ground. The leaders of the Methodist Revival, with their Arminian emphasis on the importance of free will, would also give a cautious welcome to those aspects of rational thinking that gave support to their views.

3. Socinianism

Socinianism was a child of both humanism and the Reformation. Its immediate origin was in Italy with Lelio Sozini (1526-1562) who travelled widely in Poland and England before spending time in Zurich where he was in contact with Calvin. Lelio died at the early age of thirty-seven and his papers passed to his nephew Fausto Sozzini (1539-1604) who was to develop his uncle's ideas and incorporate them into his system of doctrine.¹⁰² It was from the Sozzini's that Socinianism derived its name. It spread to England through John Biddle (1615-1662), and it was Stephen Nye (1648-1715) who identified Socinianism with

¹⁰¹ Pailin (1994), p. 226, Pailin quotes from Samuel Clarke (1732), *A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God, The Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation* (8th Edition, London)

¹⁰² McLachlan (1951), p. 7

Unitarians with his 1687 tract *A Brief History of the Unitarians, Called also Socinians*.¹⁰³ Bebbington names Joseph Priestly as the foremost of the ‘rational Dissenters’¹⁰⁴ who had given in to the secular learning of the day. Socinians denied the divinity of Christ and allowed for a general liberalising of thinking.

McLachlan in his comprehensive study of Socinianism notes the near paranoia with which the Christian church, in all its forms, approached the heresy.¹⁰⁵ Of its origins he writes, “Socinianism may be regarded as a blend of Italian rationalism with Polish Anabaptist tendencies. Its roots go down into the soil of Spain and the person of Michael Servetus...They also reach into Italy in the persons of those whom Calvin in scorn once called the academic sceptics.”¹⁰⁶

Fuasto Sozzini,¹⁰⁷ like his uncle, travelled widely, ending up in Poland along with a number of other Italian exiles some of who had befriended Lelio. There amongst a group known as the Minor Reformed Church he was able to fully develop his doctrine on the twin pillars of the Bible and the human mind. He believed in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and he believed in the power of reason. “Right reason and divine truth must, of necessity, agree,”¹⁰⁸ is the way in which McLachlan summarises Sozzini’s position. The innate contradiction in these two pillars became apparent in the enforced manner in which they attempted to explain the miracles of Scripture. It was a later generation of Socinian teachers such as Johann Crell (1590-1633) and Jonas Schlichting (1602-1661) who would complete the journey into heresy by proclaiming the clear supremacy of reason in religion, though it would never fully reject the authority of Scripture.

Fausto Sozzini sought a middle way between traditional Catholic dogma and Rationalism and while he did refrain from proclaiming the supremacy of reason he nonetheless fell into heresy. For Sozzini the doctrine of the Trinity passed neither the test of being supported by Scripture nor the test of reason. In its place Sozzini placed the doctrines of the unipersonality of God and the humanity of Christ. Additionally Sozzini contended against the pre-existence and the divine nature of Christ. Though he considered Christ no more

¹⁰³ Rupp (1986), p. 245 and Toon 1967 p. 36-37

¹⁰⁴ Bebbington (1989), p. 51

¹⁰⁵ McLachlan (1951), p. 1-3

¹⁰⁶ McLachlan (1951), p. 5-6

¹⁰⁷ In later times he was known as Fausto Socinus but we retain the original here to avoid confusion

than a man in nature he was a man granted divine function and so worthy of adoration. Thirdly Sozzini denied the orthodox doctrine of the atonement, portraying Christ not as the Reconciler but the Revealer. McLachlan writes, "For weal or woe he promulgated a new conception of the Christian religion as primarily the saving knowledge of God, mediated through Christ, which gives to me eternal life. To learn God's will, as it is revealed by Christ, and to obey it is the sum and substance of the Christian Life."¹⁰⁹

The challenge of Socinianism was perhaps more insidious with its heretical form of 'evangelical rationalism,'¹¹⁰ or 'rational supernaturalism.'¹¹¹ In one sense the Dissenters were less affected by Rationalism. For, by dint of their own struggle for acceptance, they were far less guilty of the charge of maintaining their people in ignorance. Indeed the educative role of Dissent in the life of the nation is one that should not be underestimated. However, in that Rationalism created a climate of scepticism in the nation, the dissenting churches were affected in their ability to recruit new adherents as much as the established church. In general terms, men like Priestly were the exception, as the essential evangelicalism of the Dissenters served to shield them from the rising tide of Rationalism. A reliance on reason was seen as a form of spiritual deadness and Abraham Booth's contention that, "...the Gospel is contrary to every scheme of salvation which reason suggests," echoed the feelings of many.¹¹² The challenge of Socinianism was far subtler upholding as it did the authority of Scripture it could be seen as a challenge to traditional dogma rather than a challenge to faith. It was not God or the Bible that were wrong but the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, a position already adopted by the Protestant Reformers who themselves considered the Roman Catholic Church to be guilty of heresy on a number of its teachings. It was precisely because the teachings of the Socinians could be seen as an extension of the work of the Reformers that opposition to them was so extreme.

Socinians were not alone in wanting to view the Bible in the light of contemporary thinking and understanding. David Bebbington argues that John Wesley led the revival

¹⁰⁸ McLachlan (1951), p. 12

¹⁰⁹ McLachlan (1951), p. 15

¹¹⁰ Rupp (1986), p. 245

¹¹¹ McLachlan (1951), p. 12

¹¹² Bebbington (1989), p. 51. Bebbington quotes from the Baptists minister Abraham Booth's work *Reign of Grace*, p. 9

not, as often assumed, in resistance to the Enlightenment but rather in step with it, as a thinker in his own right. Bebbington writes of John Wesley:

The sceptical enlightenment of the continent he certainly rejected, but the whole cast of his mind was moulded by the new intellectual currents of his time. Supremely he was an empiricist. He drew out the implications of his position in many fields alongside the area of epistemology...His beliefs in religious tolerance, freewill and anti-slavery have rightly been identified as enlightenment affinities. So was his antipathy to enthusiasm.¹¹³

The effect that Rationalism and Socinianism had on the Baptists was two-fold. First, they lay behind the drift amongst GBs towards Unitarianism who had begun to address issues of the Trinity from a Rationalist and Socinian viewpoint. Underwood writes, "...their vitality was drained away when their body was pervaded by Socinianism."¹¹⁴ Unable to formulate any rational theology of mystery they began to abandon their acceptance of supernatural revelation as an intellectual embarrassment and replace the quest for God with the quest for 'good.' Second, amongst PBs it drove them toward the hyper-Calvinism that became their distinguishing feature, as they came to interpret their beliefs with a quite simplistic logic.¹¹⁵ The effect of Socinianism was not short-lived and the leaders of the NCGB were still concerned about the spread of the heresy as late as 1813.¹¹⁶

4. Moralism

Green notes that, "It has been suggested that one of the hallmarks of later Stuart and early Hanoverian religion was the rise of 'moralism' - a stress on 'holy living' which came dangerously close to undermining Christ's role in justification by returning to a works-righteousness approach to salvation."¹¹⁷ This emphasis on morality had several causes, among them the challenge to traditional Christian morality by Rationalism, a perceived general decline in national morality, and the re-occurrence of Antinomianism amongst both

¹¹³ Bebbington (1989), p. 52

¹¹⁴ Underwood (1947), p. 127

¹¹⁵ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 5

¹¹⁶ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 108

¹¹⁷ Green (1994), p.172

Arminian and Calvinist believers, in the latter case, especially amongst hyper-Calvinists, though by no means all.

Raymond Brown¹¹⁸ indicates the effect of the perceived decline in moral standards on GBs who were inclining anyway toward a more ethical faith. The effect upon PBs was less, as they retained a greater emphasis on doctrinal matters. The problem faced by the PBs was a renewal of the Antinomian controversy that persisted into the latter half of the eighteenth century. Underwood describes Antinomianism as “...the dark shadow cast by the more extreme forms of Calvinism,” and goes on to define it as “...the belief that the moral law is not binding on Christians who are under grace.”¹¹⁹ Robert Hall Snr. wrote the 1768 *Circular Letter*¹²⁰ for the NPBA ‘Against Antinomianism.’¹²¹ He described Antinomianism as an attitude that denied the validity of law to believers asserting that believers under grace were no longer bound by moral law.¹²² Green notes that from the earliest days of the Restoration that, “Restoration churchmen were certainly worried that people might conclude from the Calvinist idea that the elect were justified once and for all *before* they were sanctified that there were no need for them to be good thereafter.”¹²³

Whilst it is true that the eighteenth century had its particular moral problems, such as drunkenness, it would not be true to argue it was any more or less moral than any century before or after it. There are perhaps two interrelated explanations as to why morality became such a concern. The first is that society had reached that point in its development where it was possible to view it as a whole and talk of it as a whole through ‘spectacles’ no longer clouded by religious divides. By the mid-eighteenth century, despite the terrifying scare of the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion, England had been free of war and of questions of the Catholic succession for over fifty years. Although the 1745 Rebellion came close to succeeding it barely affected society beyond its life-span, though the dreadful consequences in the highlands of Scotland would be played out for some years to come. The unifying factor, the glue, so to speak, that held together society was the Protestant church in all its forms, not simply the Church of England.

¹¹⁸ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 6f

¹¹⁹ Underwood (1947), p. 133

¹²⁰ Hereafter *CL(s)*

¹²¹ The *CLs* were not given titles by the association until 1777 but they were in nearly all cases written with one dominant theme by which they may be identified

¹²² *CL* (NPBA, 1768)

¹²³ Green (1994), p. 173 author’s italics.

The second explanation lies in the fact for so long morality in England had been the sole preserve of the Christian church. Unhampered by the need to propagate the faith the role of the church had been to maintain moral order. The Church was completely unprepared for the assault on the Gospel that came with Rationalism and for the subsequent challenge to its moral authority. For, whilst it possessed a clear ethical code it neither possessed the means of disseminating it, nor the agencies that would be necessary to take up single issues. From the late eighteenth century onwards a process began by which the church (in all its forms) was to create agency after agency whose role would be to tackle the great issues of the day and who would transform society. However in the middle of the eighteenth century these agencies did not exist and so the main avenue of addressing moral issues nationally was through the pulpit. With church attendance on the wane and biblical authority under scrutiny this avenue was losing its effect. Additionally as a result of the Industrial Revolution the population was shifting from the countryside to the cities and towns. The Church of England with its well established parochial system was slower to adapt than the dissenting churches, and in particular than the Methodists to this population shift. However, whilst the churches did adapt with more alacrity than they are generally credited with, there was a period when yet more of the population found themselves outside of the Church's sphere of influence.

In addition there were those Rationalists, who with their denial of the truth of the Christian Gospel, had discovered the need to find a basis for moral conduct other than the Christian faith. Indeed so high-minded were the advocates of Rationalism they expected to find a superior morality. Bebbington writes, "As wisdom spread from the enlightened elite, it was believed, tyranny in church and state would be put down and humanity would progress to a happier future."¹²⁴ Underpinning this was the belief amongst Rationalists that morality was an area on which there was common agreement. If it is true that there was such common agreement, which is itself an interesting study, what was the basis of it? Was it not still the revelation of Scripture? We would do well to recall that the early eighteenth century was also the era of Isaac Newton and the opening of new vistas into science that was to change our understanding of the world as it was thought to be. It was the dawning of a scientific age in which it was believed all mysteries would be revealed, because so

¹²⁴ Bebbington (1989), p. 50

many already had been. Science was not only showing old understandings to be wrong but it was revealing new and greater truths. What greater mystery was there than the mystery of life and God, and how life should be lived? It was not difficult, given the record of the church, to see that for the Rationalists this age offered the possibility of solving religious mysteries and the discovery of higher truths about the nature of life and how it should be lived.

F. Theological Differences

Although the GBs and the PBs existed until the late nineteenth century as separate entities, they held in common a fundamental belief in believers' baptism as the only mode of baptism and a commitment to a congregational form of church governance. Their beginnings as we have seen were quite separate. The GBs emerged via exile in Holland whilst the PBs emerged essentially from Puritanism and Protestantism via separation and the Independents.

The main difference however was theological. The GBs were Arminians and the PBs Calvinists. This was a distinction that mattered greatly in the eighteenth century. Our understanding of the differing fortunes of the two Baptists groupings would benefit from a basic awareness of this distinction.

The first thing to be clear on is that the debate was not about inconsequential issues but went right to the heart of the Christian faith. It was a debate about the true nature of salvation. Both sides accepted that God had a role to play in bringing man to salvation and the issue surrounded whether or not man had any role or responsibility in return. Arminians believed in the ability of man to use his free will to make the appropriate choice, Calvinists believed man incapable of exercising free will and that the choice resided with God.¹²⁵

Whilst all views may be taken to extremes, and religious views seem to lend themselves all the more easily to this process, it should in fairness be said that Arminians, in general, consistently maintained a middle ground in which the ongoing involvement of God in the

salvation of a man was acknowledged but the importance of a man's free will response never denied. Within Calvinism, however, a wide variety of views were expressed and held.

Arminianism arose not in reaction to Calvin but in reaction to Calvin's successor Theodoe Beza (1519-1605). Born a Frenchman, Calvin ended his days in Geneva, where he held considerable power over the whole city, as well as over the Geneva Academy, which he founded. Beza became Rector of the Academy in 1559 and the natural successor to Calvin's authority. Beza, however, was the first to push Calvinism towards its extremes when he developed belief in the sovereign grace of God into 'supralapsarianism.'¹²⁶ Jacob Arminius reacts, therefore, not to the views of John Calvin, but to those of Theodore Beza. Indeed, Alan Sell points out that Arminius never forsook his personal belief in predestination.¹²⁷ So, we should understand that the battle lines of the eighteenth century debate owe as much to the followers or disciples of Calvin and Arminius as they do to the views of the two men themselves.

¹²⁵ For a full treatment of these issues see Sell (1982). He gives a similar basic explanation on p.1

¹²⁶ This is the view held by most reformed theologians at the turn of the seventeenth century and is the notion that 'God decreed the fall as a means to the end of saving the elect from sin.'

¹²⁷ Sell (1982), p. 5. However, p. 11 reveals that his understanding of predestination differs from Calvin *et al* in that Arminius places the emphasis on God's foreknowledge of events rather than his proactive choice or causation.

II. English Baptist Churches, the Methodist Revival, and the Protestant Awakening

Having considered the context in which Baptists found themselves in 1770 our purpose in this chapter is to place the revival in their fortunes in the specific context of the Methodist Revival¹ that began in 1740 and the wider continental and trans-Atlantic revival of this same period.

A. Baptists and the Methodist Revival

1. Unprepared for, and unwilling to face, the challenge of the Revival?

We have already noted the importance to Dissenters of the passing of the 1689 Toleration Act. How would they react to this liberty? A. C. Underwood writes, “By the middle of the eighteenth century the Methodist Revival was in full swing, but unfortunately Baptists viewed it with suspicion, as did most of the old Dissenters.”² This was despite the fact that, as the American Baptist historian Jack Hoad indicates, the revival recovered many biblical principles that the Baptists claimed for themselves.³ However by the latter third of the century the situation had altered dramatically and Baptists begin to enjoy a revival of their own. Michael Haykin states, “While nowhere near as dramatic as that which issued from the ranks of the Church of England in the mid-eighteenth century, this revival was just as deep and profound.”⁴

¹ Referred to variously as the Great Awakening, the Evangelical Revival, the Methodist Revival, and the Wesleyan Revival. Each term refers to a different perspective of what may be considered the same event.

² Underwood (1947), p. 149. See also Hoad (1986), p. 111 and Rupp (1986), p. 129. From W.T. Whitley *History of the British Baptists* p. 166

³ Hoad (1986), p. 115

⁴ Haykin (1994), p. 13

2. *Suspicious of Revival*

Our task here is to ask why it is that Baptists in particular found it so difficult to embrace the Methodist Revival.

a. *The aftermath of intolerance*

It is necessary to recall that Baptists were Dissenters from the Church of England. In 1740, the Baptist historian Thomas Crosby completed his *History of the English Baptists*. In the preface to volume IV he feels the need to establish clearly the reasons for Baptist separatism. Unlike many of his eighteenth century colleagues his tone is truly conciliatory as can be seen when he introduces this section by stating, “It is lawful, just, and needful to maintain, a prudent, and friendly separation from the Church of England.”⁵ Crosby gives three reasons for the separation of Baptists being the stance of the Church of England on Infant Baptism, her attitude toward church discipline, and the manner in which she seeks to impose her ceremonies on others.⁶

Having separated from the Anglicans, Dissenters were not disposed to accept the fruit of a movement they perceived to be essentially Anglican. Haykin supports this view when he writes, “...in the early years of the revival all of the key leaders...were members of the Church of England, which most Baptists regarded as an apostate institution.”⁷ For over a century the shadow of the Church of England had darkened the existence of the Dissenters. The Glorious Revolution brought toleration and respite to Dissenters but this did not mean they could now in the form of the Methodist Revival accept that same state church as the source of all light and truth.

⁵ Crosby (1740), preface p. x

⁶ Crosby (1740), preface pp. xi-xvii

⁷ Haykin (1994), p. 27

b. The issue of paedobaptism

Gilbert Boyce (1712-1800), the Messenger of the Lincolnshire GBs, epitomised mid-eighteenth century Baptists with his suspicions of the revival. Although the GBs found the revival's Arminianism to their liking, they could not reconcile themselves to Wesley's continued paedobaptist views. Believer's Baptism was the true distinctive of a Baptist church, and was for them the authenticating mark of a biblical church.⁸ The official report for the 1851 Religious Census considers it to be held commonly by all Baptists, that "The distinguishing tenets of the Baptists relates to two points upon which they differ from nearly every other Christian Denomination: viz. (1), the proper *subjects*, and (2), the proper *mode*, of baptism."⁹

John Wesley may have been Arminian in his theology and he may have been encountering severe problems from within his own church, but to Gilbert Boyce and many of his fellow Baptists his adherence to the practice of paedobaptism placed him beyond their acquaintance. In 1770 Boyce went as far as to place his objections into print with his *A serious reply to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley*¹⁰ which challenges Wesley quite vociferously from beginning to end.

Wesley's attitude toward Baptisms conducted by Dissenters is also revealing. In a discussion with the Bishop of London Wesley stated that he would consider it his duty to re-baptise someone who was dissatisfied with lay-baptism should they desire Episcopal baptism.¹¹ This is a reference to all baptisms carried out by Dissenters for in Wesley's views only those ordained by the Church of England were true priests. In the event, the Bishop did not favour Wesley's view and urged him to reconsider, but the fact that shortly afterwards, against the Bishop's advice, he did re-baptise such a person gave added cause for Dissenters to be wary of him.

⁸ Underwood (1947), p. 37

⁹ PP, 1851 Census, vol. 33, lviii

¹⁰ A copy of this work can be found in the British Library. Wesley did stay with Boyce (*Journal* Vol. III (1912), p. 360) and a correspondence took place between them (*Letters* Vol. III (1931), p. 35: see his introductory comments to the letter from Wesley to Boyce dated Brandon, 22 May 1750).

¹¹ Kenyon, Edith (1891), p. 181

c. *The slander of Anabaptism*

To further exacerbate the situation it did not help that Wesley persisted in referring to Baptists as Anabaptists,¹² knowing full well that they did not choose to be known as such.¹³ The link between Baptists and the continental Anabaptists is more tenuous than might be apparent. However it was not the issue of origins that was of concern but the suggestion that Baptists were the counterparts of a continental movement that had led to the debacle at Münster in 1535.¹⁴ Despite the fact that the Anabaptists and the Baptists shared a common belief in Believer's Baptism and founded their churches on similar grounds, the evolution of Baptists must be considered separately from the continental Anabaptists. The events of Münster may have been some two hundred years distant at the time of the revival but the mud attached to the name persisted. Its use by Wesley of Baptists was both deliberate and unfortunate, and we should not be surprised that it served to help alienate them from him.

d. *The Particular Baptists and hyper-Calvinism*

The PBs naturally shared the distaste of the GBs for Wesley's paedo-baptist views and for his designation of them as Anabaptists. Additionally, as Calvinists they considered the Arminian principles upon which Wesley based his work to be false. Those given to hyper-Calvinism would especially have opposed the manner in which Wesley and others would make to their hearers 'offers of salvation.' Bebbington is clear that "The Methodists were set apart from other groupings by both doctrine and discipline." He goes on "The essence of their distinct doctrinal position, however, was Arminianism."¹⁵ It should also be noted that a strong adherence to a strict discipline code was not unique to the Methodists but also characterised the PBs.¹⁶ Haykin also stresses that it was Wesley's Arminianism that set Calvinistic Baptists against the revival. He states "...up to the death of Whitefield in 1770, the majority of British Calvinistic Baptists stood aloof from this great work of God the

¹² See *Journal* Vol. II (1911), p. 35; Vol. III (1912), p. 232, p. 296; Vol. V (1914), p. 195 for examples

¹³ See *Works* Vol. II (1975), p. 252

¹⁴ See Underwood (1947), p. 25 and *The Chronicle of the Hunterian Bretheren* (1987), p. 133.

¹⁵ Bebbington (1988), p. 27. Though it should be noted that Whitefield and his immediate successor Howell Harris both took a Calvinist position.

¹⁶ See p. 242 below

Holy Spirit, and were largely untouched by it.”¹⁷ For his part John Wesley was well aware of the theological position held by the PBs. In a letter to Mary Bishop, a Quaker, from London dated 18 October 1778, he argues that neither the Independent nor Anabaptist ministers preach the Gospel. He writes, “Calvinism is not the Gospel; nay, it is farther from it than most of the sermons I hear at church. These are very frequently un-evangelical; but those are anti-evangelical. They are (to say no more) equally wrong; and they are far more dangerously wrong.”¹⁸ If the PBs knew these views they would not help to encourage a positive response to Wesley.

e. Wesley and the Dissenters

If it was a problem for the Baptists that Wesley represented the state church and upheld what was for them the nefarious doctrines and practices of that church it is fair to say that Wesley was no more enamoured of them. Wesley found Dissenters¹⁹ generally irritating and tiresome. Their predisposition toward disputation was especially irksome. He said of the Baptists that from their very appearance in England, “They immediately commenced a warm dispute, not concerning the vitals of Christianity, but concerning the manner and time of administering one of the external ordinances of it. And as their opinion hereof totally differed from that of all other members of the Church of England, so they soon openly declared their separation from it, not without sharp censures of those that remain therein.”²⁰ To Gilbert Boyce Wesley wrote, “I wish your zeal was better employed than in persuading men to be either dipped or sprinkled. I will employ mine by the grace of God in persuading them to love God with all their hearts and their neighbour as themselves.”²¹ In a letter to James Clark he repeated some welcome advice received from his father, “You may have peace with the Dissenters, if you do not so humour them as to dispute with them; if you do, they will outface and outlung you, and at the end you will be just where you were in the beginning.”²²

¹⁷ Haykin (1994), p. 26, 27

¹⁸ *Letters* Vol. VI (1931), p. 326

¹⁹ There are references in his *Letters* and in his *Journal* to Baptists (Anabaptists), but on the whole Wesley tends to lump Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and others together as dissenters.

²⁰ *Works*, Vol. II (1975), p. 319

²¹ *Letters*, Vol. III (1931), p. 37

²² *Letters*, Vol. III (1931), p. 202; see also *Journal* Vol. III (1912), p. 518-519 where he reports that the disputations of Baptists, the only time he uses the term, hampered the work at Wednesbury

Although Baptists did not occupy any prominent place in any of Wesley's writings, or in his public ministry, he did at times, show a reasonable understanding of what they stood for. He quoted one of the Baptists leading principles as being, "That no man ought to be admitted to baptism till he has that repentance whereby we forsake sin, and living faith in God through Christ." As Cragg points out in his footnote to this quotation Wesley here gave a faithful rendering of the Baptist Confessions of Faith of 1677 and 1679.²³

However, Wesley's purpose in quoting it was to shame existing Baptist leaders who despite such high ideals, and despite being responsible for only a small, and therefore more easily policed, church, had failed so miserably. He writes, "There are unholy, outwardly unholy men, in your congregations; men that profane either the name or the day of the Lord; that do not honour their natural or civil parents; that know no how to possess their bodies in sanctification and honour; that are intemperate either in meat or drink, gluttonous, sensual, luxurious; that variously offend against injustice, mercy or truth, in their intercourse with their neighbour, and do not walk by that 'royal law...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'" ²⁴ By setting these comments in the context of a published essay, and thereby characterising all Baptists in this manner, Wesley revealed the depth of his antagonism toward them. Wesley was constantly being faced by the charge that he and his Methodists were in fact Dissenters. It is a charge he refutes time and again.²⁵ In one letter he goes as far as to deny that there is a single book in his own library that contained even one word from dissenting sources.²⁶

Something must be said of what we know of the personal contacts that existed between Wesley and Baptists. Gilbert Boyce's contact we have already mentioned, and whilst it was essentially friendly, Wesley's letter does betray a little frustration with Boyce. He records in his journal on Monday 13 January 1746 his meeting with with Mr. S., "...an honest, zealous Anabaptist teacher. Finding he would dispute, I let him dispute, and held him to the point till between eleven and twelve o'clock. By that time he was willing to take breath. Perhaps he may be less fond of dispute for the time to come."²⁷ On Friday 8 May 1747 Wesley writes of an encounter with the famous Anabaptist teacher Joseph Pickup whose report of their meeting he simply describes as untrue. Wesley also suffered

²³ See *Works*, Vol. II (1975), p.253 and footnote 3.

²⁴ *Works*, Vol. II, p. 253

²⁵ See for example his letter to James Hargrave, Constable of Borrowford, *Letters* Vol. 11 (1931), p. 155, and his letter to Thomas Adam, Rector of Wintringham, *Letters* Vol. V (1931), p. 97

²⁶ *Letters*, Vol. IV (1931), p. 122

a brief but confused encounter with Caleb Evans, minister of Broadmead, Bristol and principal of the Bristol Academy, one of the most prominent PBs of the mid part of the century. This was at the time of the American War when Wesley's support of the British establishment would have done little to endear him to Dissenters who on the whole sympathised with the colonists. Bebbington asserts, "Most Baptist ministers in the provinces and all but two of them in London were believed to have taken the American side."²⁸ Wesley had issued a tract entitled *A calm address to our American Colonies* and Caleb Evans, writing under the pseudonym 'Americanus,' had written against it. This encounter was confused because Wesley had only the vaguest recollection of it, and could not recall discussing the American War with Evans, or reading Evans response to his tract. He did, however, recall a letter received from Hugh Evans, who was to be as prominent a Baptist as his father. Of the younger Evans Wesley wrote, "Some of our friends at Bristol should tell him that he has quite lost himself; that he has forgotten all decency and good manners, and writes like a pert, self-conceited young man. I think a man of sense that should command his temper would make him a little ashamed."²⁹

Few women of any note had an impact on church life in the eighteenth century and one of the few who perhaps did so was Anne Dutton (1692-1765) a native of Northampton where for a time she was a member of the Baptist Church at College Lane.³⁰ Whitebrook³¹ describes her as something of an eccentric, albeit it a 'pretty one,' who wrote some fifty tracts and pamphlets and left behind correspondence contained in twenty-eight volumes. She corresponded regularly with George Whitefield (1714-1770) for many years until the death of her second husband in 1747 though Whitebrook suggests the fact that she also began to correspond with John Wesley at this time might have been in part the cause of the cessation of their correspondence.³² Whitebrook says of this correspondence that whilst the contents are unknown, "...Mrs. Dutton's views on Election are antithetically opposed to Wesley's and the warmth of his feelings upon that subject would probably have

²⁷ *Journal*, Vol. III (1912), p. 232

²⁸ Bebbington (1988), p, 73

²⁹ *Letters*, Vol. VI (1931), p. 180-181

³⁰ According to Powell (1996), p. 13 sometime during William Gray's pastorate from 1825-1843 the name of the church changed to College Street from College Lane. In this study we retain College Lane as it is the name by which the church is known throughout the period under consideration.

³¹ Whitebrook, J. C., *TBHS* 7, pp. 129-146

³² Whitebrook, J. C., *TBHS* 7, p. 139

prevented any approach to amicable relations.”³³ It is doubtful on the evidence that Wesley counted even one Baptist amongst his friends.

3. Conclusion

The American Baptist historian A.H. Newman writes, “The Methodist Revival, led by the Wesley’s and Whitefield, was of momentous importance to the Baptists, as it was to the established church and to the various dissenting bodies.”³⁴ It is a statement that he does not justify but presents as a truism that to the casual observer seems perfectly acceptable. However, it is a statement, which upon investigation, is found to be seriously wanting. The truth is that the Methodist Revival had at first no positive impact on Baptist churches in either of their two major incarnations. At the end of a long hard journey to an acceptable degree of toleration, they were too weary to respond to the rigorous challenge of the revival. Theologically they could find insufficient identity with the leaders of the revival. Socially they found themselves in opposition to the fervour generated by the revival. Personally they found it virtually impossible to relate to a movement whose leader held such a poor opinion of them. However, if the revival left the Baptist churches untouched as institutions, the effect on individuals who were to rise to importance within the churches was to prove very different, with Dan Taylor leader of the NCGB perhaps the most prominent example.³⁵

B. Baptists and The Protestant Awakening

For all that the Methodist Revival of the mid-eighteenth century might be considered the centrepiece of worldwide revivalist activity it was by no means isolated. It may be that the Baptists revival is not a child of the Methodist Revival, but in the context of the wider Protestant revival of the eighteenth century is it a younger cousin? W. R. Ward in his book

³³ Whitebrook, J. C., *TBHS* 7, p. 139

³⁴ Newman (1901), p. 12

³⁵ See also Lovegrove (1988), p. 15-16 who presents a slightly more positive picture of the influence of Methodism on Baptists, though primarily of Calvinistic Methodists (the minority owing allegiance to Whitefield) upon their Calvinistic Baptist counterparts. Also. Martin (1978), p. 172

The Protestant Evangelical Awakening gives this context a pan-European as well as an American flavour.

There should be no surprise in this as all students of the Methodist Revival will be aware that John Wesley's own journey of faith took him to America where he met the Moravians. Shortly after returning to England he wrote of his time in America, "But what have I learnt myself meantime? Why - what I least of all expected - that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God."³⁶ Nevertheless he continued in ministry and with some forty others, including some Moravians, established in London his first 'Society,' an extension of the work begun at Oxford with the Holy Club. Soon afterwards on the evening of 24 May 1738 John Wesley attended a meeting of the Society in Aldersgate Street. Listening to someone read Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans he recalls in his journal, "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ - Christ alone for salvation..."³⁷ Though already a well-known figure Wesley now considered himself just a babe at the outset of his real work. Consequently he determined that he was in need of a pilgrimage to the original Moravian settlement at Hernhuth³⁸ in Germany where he met Christian David their leader. Along the way to Hernhuth Wesley met with other Moravians in particular the renowned Count Ludwig Zinzendorf at Marienburg.

The importance of the Moravians in Wesley's life was profound. He was deeply moved by their faith and by their community life, but he was not blind to their weaknesses, as he perceived them. Wesley did not slavishly attempt to emulate their ways in his own societies, the principles for which were established in Oxford before he ever met any Moravians. In the end the differences between Wesley and the Moravians came to a head at the Fetter Lane chapel, London, from which they had worked in harmony together until their differences could no longer be ignored. Wesley met Zinzendorf in London in late September 1741, but they could not resolve their difficulty and the split between them was effected.

³⁶Kenyon (1891), p. 137

³⁷Kenyon (1891), p. 152

³⁸ Alternate spelling 'Hernhut'

W. R. Ward traces the origins of the Awakening to the unlikely province of Silesia, north of the Austrian and Hungarian borders, and the immediate aftermath of the Thirty Years War (1620-1650). As part of the Peace of Osnabruck provision was made for the exercise of worship by those Protestant groups who fell outside of the main provision of the peace settlements.³⁹ Silesia was at the confluence of the Protestant and Catholic states of central Europe and had suffered heavily during the war and contained many minority populations. It was a natural choice for the location of the three 'free worship' centres created in the duchies of Brieg, Liegnitz and Munsterberg-Oels. However, as the seventeenth century progressed the plight of these Silesian Protestants worsened considerably as the province was increasingly catholicised by neighbouring Austria. By the end of the century only the city of Breslau could be said to have retained its Protestantism openly and even this might have been lost but for the intervention in 1707 of Charles XII of Sweden.⁴⁰ Charles was unable to reverse entirely the situation in Silesia, but by his military successes he was able to force the Emperor to relax most of the severest measure enacted against Silesia's Protestants. It was the intervention of Charles XII that led directly to the outbreak of revival. As the Catholics had confiscated all but a few churches in Breslau, Charles' troops held their church parades in the open air. They attracted huge gatherings (much like later Methodist field preaching) and inspired across Silesia similar happenings, notably amongst children in what became known as 'the uprising of the children.'⁴¹ Teschen, in south eastern Silesia, quickly became the centre for the revival following the construction there by Charles XII of a Protestant centre and then a church to reach out to the estimated 40,000 Protestant population of the area.⁴² Once again the absence of any churches saw a break out of camp style gatherings with all the wild happenings and ecstasies and visions associated with later awakenings in England and America.⁴³ From Teschen the revival spread into Bohemia where the conditions for Protestants were still extremely severe.

A second result of the Thirty Years War was death and destruction of people and property on a huge scale that was to leave the Germanic states at the heart of the war vastly underpopulated. Even in 1725 the Prussians were seeking to fill annually some 3,000 farming plots in Brandenburg alone. It was to the Protestant minorities in Moravia and Silesia, and

³⁹ Ward (1992), p. 63

⁴⁰ Ward (1992), p. 71

⁴¹ Ward (1992), p. 71

⁴² Ward, (1980-1981), p. 241. When the 'Jesus Church' was finally constructed and dedicated at Teshcen a congregation of 40,000, of whom 75% were poles, gathered for the ceremony.

to the Czech and Slozaks that they were looking to fill these vacancies. One of the most significant of the communities formed by migrating Protestants was to be the religious community of the Moravians at Herrnhutt under Christian David, on the estates of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf at Berthelsdorf, Bohemia.⁴⁴

At the heart of the continental revivalist movement were Augustus Francke and the University of Halle from whence the Pietist nature of the revival was derived and an influential network spread across Europe.⁴⁵ Ward traces Pietism directly to the work of Philipp Spener at Frankfurt (1660-1686) at the heart of which is the doctrine of 'New Birth' and a quest to realise the priesthood of all believers.⁴⁶ In 1686 Spener became court chaplain to the elector of Saxony a position that made him virtual primate of Lutheran Germany. Augustus Francke was a student of Spener's principal opponent, Johann Benedict Carpzov a Leipzig Orthodox theologian, yet he came to be the most powerful advocate of the Pietist movement.⁴⁷ A great hue and cry followed Spener's appointment and were it not for the protection of the Reformed elector Frederick III of Brandenburg, who in 1701 became King of Prussia as Frederick I, the Pietist movement may have floundered. Frederick's motives were bound up with his political ambitions rather than his religious convictions but the move suited the Pietists also. In 1691-1692 matters were resolved as Spener was given a senior position in Berlin and Halle attained University Status with Francke appointed to lead the faculty, which he did until his death in 1727. Ward describes Francke as "...one of the great visionaries, and one of the most remarkable organisers in the whole history of Christianity."⁴⁸ Francke had been instrumental in attaining the Silesian Settlement under Charles XII and in establishing the Teschen centre to replicate the work at Halle.⁴⁹ That work was notably more than theological in its outlook as Ward writes, "He also established characteristic forms of charitable and educational activity which marked the whole subsequent development of evangelical

⁴³ Ward (1992), p. 75

⁴⁴ Ward (1992), p. 80-81, and Watts (1976), p. 395

⁴⁵ Watts (1976), p. 395, and Ward (1992), p. 72. This included Zinzendorf who had studied at Halle under Francke. Francke was also responsible for the Tranquebar Moravian Mission in India under the patronage of the Pietist monarch of Denmark that would have such an effect on William Carey and the Serampore missionaries, cf. Stanley (1992), p. 39

⁴⁶ Ward (1992), p. 57

⁴⁷ Ward (1992), p. 59

⁴⁸ Ward (1992), p. 61

⁴⁹ Ward (1992), pp. 71-73

religion.”⁵⁰ Francke also brought Swedish army chaplains to Halle and succeeded in imbuing them with the Pietism of the revival that they in turn brought to Sweden.⁵¹ In 1709 the Russians crushed Charles’s army at Pultava taking 20,000 soldiers and 10,000 camp followers into exile in Siberia. Francke championed their cause and was instrumental in facilitating the revival that broke out amongst these exiled prisoners.⁵²

By 1740 Europe was seeing Protestant revival in the Austro-Hungarian empire, in Switzerland, in the Germanic States, and in England. At the heart of the revival were émigrés from Silesia and Bohemia and in particular the Moravians. It had also spread to America where Jonathan Edwards is remembered as the great divine of American revivalism, though as Ward notes Edwards acknowledged his debt to Augustus Francke.⁵³ Ward elsewhere also notes that when revival first came to America it was through those émigré German communities most closely in touch with Halle.⁵⁴ Francke, the Halle network, and mass emigration of Protestants from disputed territories and Catholic controlled Europe, not just within Europe but also into America, all have been seen to play their part in the first phase of the European Protestant Awakening up to 1740. In the second phase it is the spreading influence of the Moravians and the work of Zinzendorf that drives the revival.⁵⁵ Ward in an article entitled ‘Power and Piety: The origins of Religious Revival in the Early Eighteenth Century’ paints a complex picture of central Europe in the mid-eighteenth century. Religious developments are set against a background of political turmoil. In the Germanic states the rivalry of Saxony and Prussia sees the gradual emergence of the latter as the dominant power, and Sweden’s challenge to become the dominant Protestant power on the continent also recedes. The Pietist movement and its call to reform Lutheranism, based now in Prussia, provided further impetus against Saxony the champion of Lutheran Orthodoxy. However, an emerging Prussia was a poor champion for Protestantism against the established giants of Catholic

⁵⁰ Ward, (1980-1981), p. 236. This would include the Halle Orphan House that provided for some 3,000 children and workers, medical dispensaries, schools, a teacher training colleges, a Bible Institute, and printing presses. This vast enterprise was funded in part by state aid, and charitable collections, but in the main it was commercially self-sufficient marketing its products across Europe and to the Far East.

⁵¹ Ward (1992), p. 73

⁵² Ward (1992), p. 84

⁵³ Ward (1992), p. 241

⁵⁴ Ward, (1980-1981), p. 252

⁵⁵ Ward (1992), p. 296; also Ward, (1980-1981), p. 252

Europe and Saxony was the most prominent of the Protestant princedoms that would eventually go over to Rome.⁵⁶

The Methodist Revival though contemporary to the second phase of the continental revival must be seen as a separate third phase simply because the political and church situation in England was so distinct from the continent. However, we may recognise in Wesley's Holy Club a form of continental Pietism, and note that Spener talked of New Birth, the priesthood of all believers, and established class meetings before Wesley. We might also perceive that Pietism in its attempt to reform Lutheranism but not to leave it is paralleled later by Wesley's own attitude to the Church of England.⁵⁷ However, Pietism did not come to characterise the Methodist Revival, and whilst his contact with the Moravians was influential Wesley displayed typically English characteristics by ensuring that he remained distinct and distant from this European movement. Yet, whether the influence came direct from Europe across the channel or indirectly from Europe via America across the Atlantic it must be acknowledged that what transpired in England under Whitefield and the Wesleys was related to continental and American revival movements, even if under the Methodists it was to have a life and shape of its own. Indeed it is not just the Wesleys upon whom this influence is felt for almost simultaneously in Wales through Howell Harris (1714-1773) and Daniel Rowland (1713-1790), similar but separate revivalist movements take place⁵⁸

A further factor that should be noted as a means for the spread of the Protestant Evangelical Awakening is the power of the pen. Augustus Francke had in the region of 5,000 correspondents even though he maintained regular contact with only three to four hundred of them. Similar tales can be told of many of the luminaries of the revival. For many lesser men it was through their personal correspondence, forging friendships across continents bringing knowledge of events far afield, and of the thinking behind them, that the revival was able to influence them. It was in this manner that Baptists like John Sutcliff, and John Ryland junior came to be aware of the work and writings of Jonathan Edwards.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ward, (1980-1981), p. 233-234

⁵⁷ Ward, (1980-1981), p. 235

⁵⁸ Bebbington (1988), p. 20, also Watts (1976), p. 396 and 397

It is an assumption of many writers that mid-eighteenth century Baptists were stagnating and that they were rescued from eventual extinction by the advent of the revival. What is not in doubt is that there was a drift, especially amongst GB and Presbyterian churches in the mid-eighteenth century that would lead to their virtual extinction, and that Old Dissent from about 1770 onwards enjoyed a great revival in their fortunes that would last for over a century and run parallel with the continued growth of Methodism. However, the revival of Old Dissent is as distinct from the Methodists as they were from the continental Pietists which is to say that it must be viewed as a fresh phase of the same general movement. It is marked not by Pietism but ‘evangelicalism’ and in contrast to both its continental and American cousins by longevity, and political power.⁶⁰ Bebbington notes “...the appearance of Evangelicalism was the signal for a major advance by Protestant Christianity in the ensuing century.”⁶¹ ‘Evangelicalism’ came to be something that Old Dissent, New Dissent (Methodists), and many within the established church could identify with as a shared theological position, rather than one emanating from a single grouping. Bebbington is surely right to see this as the unifying factor that takes the Church, as a whole, into the expansion of the nineteenth century arrived at from a number of different starting points. Amongst these separate strands Bebbington recognises, the Arminian Methodist, the Calvinistic Methodists, Anglican Evangelicals (uninfluenced by Methodism) as well as Old Dissent.⁶²

The Evangelical Revival in Britain is marked as we noted above by its longevity. It was not an isolated incident in time such as the revival associated with Jonathan Edwards. That revival lasted no more than a few years and, whilst it did spread, it can be said by Ward to have been over for some years by 1750. Similarly the influential work of the Moravians fell into financial irregularity in 1753 and declined as a result.⁶³ Whereas in continental Europe the revivalists failed to create a place for themselves anywhere in national life the reverse was true in England where by 1851 Old and New Dissent laid claim to very nearly half of the population, and a very considerable portion of the established church would

⁵⁹ Haykin (1994), p. 139f

⁶⁰ Although Michael Watts sees the Pietist movement of the late seventeenth century inspired by Francke, “...with its emphasis on personal conversion and its appeal to the emotions rather than the intellect...” as the fore runner of the late eighteenth century evangelical movement. Watts (1976), p. 395

⁶¹ Bebbington (1998), p. 21

⁶² Bebbington (1998), pp. 27-34

⁶³ Ward (1992), p. 348

claim allegiance to the revival.⁶⁴ Protestant Evangelicalism became the characteristic of society and it gave governments its *raison d'être*. The guiding principle of successive governments in domestic policy throughout the nineteenth century was what David Bebbington described in his book of the same title as *The Nonconformist Conscience*.⁶⁵

C. Conclusion

The evidence as presented clearly serves to illustrate that the revival of Baptists at the end of the eighteenth century stands in relationship to the earlier revivals in continent Europe, in America and in England. However, just as the relationship between these movements is not causal so the revival of Old Dissent is not caused and does not result from these former Revivals. Michael Watts describes early eighteenth century Dissenters as trapped in the separatist mind set of their Elizabethan origins⁶⁶ noting that no dissenter of that era would consider the world as their parish, as Wesley famously did. It was as we have noted in this study, the discovery of 'association' and with it a return to an engagement with the world on a local, an area, a national and eventually an international basis that transforms Baptists. The importance of this voyage of self-discovery, acknowledging the many and varied outside influences should not be underestimated.

⁶⁴ Ward (1992), p. 354

⁶⁵ Bebbington (1979)

⁶⁶ Watts (1976), p. 438

III. The Particular Baptists

Having placed Baptists in the context of the pan-European and American revivals we now turn in this chapter to consider PBs in the early to mid eighteenth century from a domestic perspective, in an attempt to assess the health of the denomination in terms of its life and theology. An early indication of the development of association life is important, but the key issue in the period 1715-1770 is the theological one of hyper-Calvinism. The central figure is the Baptist theologian John Gill whose role we will look at in some depth.¹ In a later chapter we challenge the assumption that hyper-Calvinism led to a decline in Baptist numbers from a statistical point of view but here we attempt firstly to understand what is meant by hyper-Calvinism, and secondly the extent to which hyper-Calvinism really dominated the life of PBs.

A. Association Life

In 1689 delegates from 100 churches met for what was to be the first of four annual assemblies. Brown² paints a picture of a vibrant meeting, full of hope inspired by the accession of William III. From 1692 it was agreed that assemblies in Bristol and in London would be held, exchanging representatives. The Bristol Assembly would become the Western Association, but the London Assembly ceased after 1694 due to dissension. Despite the failure in London, the Bristol pattern began to be repeated across the country as churches met in association in the Midlands, Yorkshire and Lancashire.

What did develop in London was the meeting of ministers in fraternal. By 1714 a weekly meeting occurred in the Hanover Coffee House in Finch Lane, attended by both Particular and General Baptists ministers. However, the slide of the GBs toward Unitarianism meant that by 1723 an exclusively PB gathering was established. This became known as the Baptist Board and throughout the early to mid-eighteenth century it was influential on Baptist life nationally.³

¹ See p. 55 below

² Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 35

B. Hyper-Calvinism

Hyper-Calvinism was the great theological issue that PBs faced. Geoffrey Nuttall defines hyper-Calvinism when he writes, “The belief that Christ died for the elect alone seemed to demand as a corollary that none but the elect have the power to repent and believe; and if not the power, then not the duty to do so.”⁴ Where accepted the consequence was the absence of any need to preach the Gospel or to seek to win converts until an individual showed signs of repentance. Michael Haykin identifies hyper-Calvinism’s principal exponent when he writes “The marked failure of many early eighteenth century Baptist churches to evangelise aggressively in the way that their seventeenth century forebears had done was thus traced primarily to the flawed thinking of John Gill about evangelism.”⁵

This was not purely a Baptist issue and Nuttall⁶ indicates that the matter was as virulently fought out amongst Congregationalists as amongst Baptists. Roger Hayden, General Superintendent of the south western Area and Baptist historian, traces its roots amongst Baptists to, “...posthumously published sermons of Tobias Crisp (1690), in the reaction to Davis of Rothwell, and the significant effect of Joseph Hussey, minister in Cambridge, on the Baptist minister John Skepp, and his two Northamptonshire colleagues, John Gill and John Brine.”⁷ Peter Toon writes, “Crisp’s method of preaching seems to have been to offer Christ freely to men and to invite them to find in Him their forgiveness and eternal life. He had little sympathy for those preachers who waited for signs of repentance before offering grace.”⁸ As is often the case it was the pupils who took the teachings of the master to extremes

Hussey (1660-1726), a Presbyterian minister based in Cambridgeshire, adopted his own somewhat unique theology, which he passed to Skepp (1675-1721). Skepp became a Baptist and moved to London, and was one of the few to support John Gill through the

³ Underwood (1947), p. 131f

⁴ Nuttall (1965), p. 102

⁵ cf. Haykin (1994), p. 17-19

⁶ Nuttall (1965), p. 102-111

⁷ Hayden (1991), p. 323. cf. Toon (1967), p. 49-50, who also traces hyper-Calvinism to Crisp (d1642). The sermons were published under the title *Christ Alone Exalted*.

⁸ Toon (1967), p. 63

controversy that commenced his ministry.⁹ Skepp and Gill became firm friends in the short time they knew each other and when Skepp died in 1721 Gill purchased his library.¹⁰ John Gill freely acknowledged the debt he owed, amongst others, to Richard Davis.¹¹ Davis had been from 1689 until his death in 1714 minister of the Rothwell Congregational Church. Assigning to him responsibility for the birth of hyper-Calvinism Nuttall writes, “...Davis by his preaching started a movement, which had repercussions far beyond the village of Rothwell.”¹² Gill became actively involved in the disputations that saw the publication of a series of pamphlets from both sides, addressing what became known amongst them as the ‘Modern Question.’ In 1732 Gill published *The doctrines of God’s everlasting to his elect...in a letter to Mr. Abraham Taylor* which was itself a response to a series of lectures given by Taylor. John Brine (1703-1765), succeeded Skepp at Currier’s Hall, Cripplegate, in 1729, and like Gill hailed from the Little Meeting, Kettering.¹³ Brine published *A refutation of Arminian principles, delivered in a pamphlet intitled, The Modern question concerning repentance and faith, examined with candour.*¹⁴ Gill and Brine were close friends throughout their lives and they exerted considerable influence especially on the increasingly important Northamptonshire PBs, with whom both maintained regular contact.

By 1770 both Gill and Brine had died and they did not leave behind them men of sufficient stature to maintain their cause. However, it is doubtful that their cause would have long persisted had they done so. Gill and Brine did not hold PBs enslaved to hyper-Calvinism, they were rather the main advocates of what was accepted doctrine. A sea change began to occur in PB thinking that coincided with the death of Gill and Brine, and culminated with the publication by Andrew Fuller of *The Gospel worthy of all acceptance...* in 1785. If there was not a lively debate awaiting the death of Gill and Brine the question arises as to what it was that caused this shift in PBs thinking. Ward suggests that, “...the shift arose from a transformation of the church partly affected, and partly evoked, by the transformation of the context in which it operated, and that the new frame of mind owed much to the effort to understand that transformed context.”¹⁵ Ward’s explanation of this

⁹ White (1967-1968), pp. 72-91

¹⁰ Hayden (1991), pp. 323-325

¹¹ Davis, Richard (1748), preface p. iii. Also Nuttall (1965), p. 116

¹² Nuttall (1965), p. 106 and Toon (1967), p. 51-52

¹³ Hayden (1991), p. 326 notes that Brine was converted under Gill’s preaching

¹⁴ Nuttall (1965), p. 116-117

¹⁵ Ward (1973), p. 167

transformed context would be the shift in the world-view of PBs encouraged by the writings of Jonathan Edwards exemplified in *The Millennial significance of the Indian missions of Elliot and Brainerd*¹⁶ and William Carey's call to overseas mission fulfilled in 1792. There is no doubt that many PBs under the influence of Edward's writings adopted a more expansive outlook, which in the NPBA resulted in the birth of the BMS.

C. The Influence of John Gill

The name of John Gill recurs continuously in this whole issue and it would be helpful to take a more detailed look at the life, work, and theology of a man who was without question one of the most significant and influential Baptists of the eighteenth century. Born in Kettering on the 23 November 1697, he was converted at the age of nineteen, and was baptised on 1 November 1716 by Thomas Wallis.¹⁷ He came into membership of the Little Meeting on the 4 November 1716 and preached for the first time that same evening from I Corinthians 2:2 'For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.'¹⁸ In 1719 the church at Goat Yard, Horsley Down,¹⁹ Southwark invited the still young Gill to preach for them throughout August and September. On Thursday 10 September 1719 the church invited Gill to become their pastor, and accepting their invitation he was ordained on 22 March 1720. One of Gill's first acts was the introduction of a new church covenant that provides the earliest evidence we have of his theological understanding. Rippon in his memoir of Gill's life reproduces Gill's '*Declaration of Faith and Practice*' in full from the Church Book.²⁰ One would anticipate it to be solidly Calvinistic in content but the question is: does it betray Gill as a hyper-Calvinist? In fact, it does not, and the Baptist historian Barrie White believes there to be no substantial doctrinal difference between Gill and Keach, his predecessor, to be found in their respective covenants.²¹

¹⁶ Ward (1973), p. 170

¹⁷ Rippon (1888), p. 7

¹⁸ Rippon (1888), p. 8-9

¹⁹ The church had been founded by Benjamin Keach and then was pastored by his son-in-law, Benjamin Stinton after Keach died in 1704

²⁰ Rippon (1888), p. 12-13

²¹ White (1967-1968), p. 88

Three questions need to be addressed. The first is to establish to what extent, if any, the views of John Gill may be considered to be influential on the life of contemporary Baptists? The second is to consider if John Gill is guilty of the charge of hyper-Calvinism? The third is to ascertain if Baptists were truly in the state of stagnation described by so many writers?

If Gill is to be considered influential perhaps it is his writings that will prove to be the explanation. He was without doubt an industrious author, and the fact that his works were used at the Bristol Academy long after his death would suggest he was highly regarded. Gill's greatest personal achievement was perhaps to be the first theologian to publish a substantial verse-by-verse exposition of the whole of the Bible.²² Gill's writings establish him as the pre-eminent Baptist theologian of his day and gave him great authority and influence. Here was a man who had earned and who received the respect of his peers.

1. Gill the Controversialist

John Gill was surrounded by controversy, which gave him a very public profile, though this must be seen in the context of an age in which theological controversies abounded. The American Baptist historian Timothy George argues Gill was more concerned to defend the truth of Scripture than to win friends and influence people.²³ In 1726, at the invitation of his home church in Kettering, he was asked to respond to a pamphlet published by Matthias Maurice of the Rothwell Independent Church on the subject of paedobaptism. Gill's response was entitled *The Ancient mode of Baptising*. Rippon notes that in the manner of eighteenth century 'pamphlet wars' the dispute escalated, reaching America, taking Gill's fame with it.²⁴ Gill's international influence is revealed when he returned to this issue again in 1749 at the request of Baptists in New England, USA.²⁵ In 1765, at the high profile baptism at the Barbican church of the Edinburgh minister Robert Carmichael on 9 October, Gill returned to the theme a third time.²⁶

²² Rippon (1888), p. 76, George (1990), p. 77

²³ George (1990), p. 78

²⁴ Rippon (1888), p. 21

²⁵ Rippon (1888), p. 51

²⁶ Rippon (1888), p. 78-79 and Naylor, Peter (1992)

Gill's *Exposition of the Book of Solomon's Song* and *The Prophecies of the Old Testament* (both published in 1728) brought him into dispute with the Deist author Anthony Collins and led to the establishment in London's Great Eastcheap of a regular Wednesday evening lecture by a group wishing to give John Gill a wider audience to speak to.²⁷ It was Gill's involvement in a series of lectures in 1730 designed to challenge the growing threat of Deism that first embroiled him in personal theological controversy. Gill found he was accused of antinomianism²⁸ following a dispute with one of his fellow lecturers, Abraham Taylor. The published papers from the lectures contained passages in Taylor's writings that Gill had thought were to be omitted. The issue surrounded the timing of the efficacy of salvation, was it at the moment of God's election before time, or the moment of man's response? This was coupled with Gill's understanding of the necessity of good works. Rippon is in no doubt that the charge of antinomianism is unfounded and that Gill's letter to Taylor stated clearly that good works are the fruit of salvation and not its cause.²⁹

In 1752 Gill attempted to draw John Wesley into a debate on predestination and the perseverance of the Saints but Wesley proved elusive, due to his conviction of the ultimate fruitlessness of such theological debates, and also of the greater importance of the work God had called him to. Rippon notes that Wesley considered Gill all too ardent a 'disputer' for him to be embroiled with.³⁰

John Gill lived in an age of public disputation and amongst the freedoms the 1689 Toleration Act granted Nonconformists was the freedom to express themselves publicly, especially in print. It was an age in which the words of clergymen could command national attention, and an age in which young churches were looking to wise heads for guidance. John Gill was the principal wise head sought on matters of theological orthodoxy.³¹ Olin Robison is in no doubt of the 'seminal influence' of Gill. He quotes as evidence the widespread adoption amongst Baptist churches of Gill's own twelve point

²⁷ Rippon (1888), p. 27, George (1990), p. 82 points out that this sponsoring group were representative of London's dissenters not just Baptists and was indicative of Gill's influence beyond his own denomination.

²⁸ (1989), *OED*, Antinomian - "One who maintains that the moral law is not binding upon Christians, under the 'law of grace.'

²⁹ Rippon (1888), p. 33-34

³⁰ Rippon (1888), p. 65

³¹ See Robison, Olin (1971-1972), p. 112; and Peter Naylor (1992), p. 147

Declaration of Faith and Practice used at Carter Lane as the basis of a church covenant, to such an extent that it became almost a standard Baptist doctrinal statement.³²

2. John Gill and hyper-Calvinism

George Ella argues that Gill should be seen as, "...a great Reformed, eighteenth century defender of orthodoxy."³³ His view is that Gill is found guilty of being a hyper-Calvinist by association rather than by hard proof.³⁴ The heart of the issue, as Ella is right to spell out, is whether Gill's views meant that he and the churches who looked to him for leadership, had lost, 'their evangelistic impulse.'³⁵

We must remember here we are attempting to distinguish 'shades of grey' not 'primary colours.' Gill does not at any time see fit to label himself for the convenience of later generations and Ella's defence of Gill in this matter places him, at least in current thinking, in the minority. Olin Robison is amongst the majority who do not doubt the hyper-Calvinist credentials of Gill. Robison writes, "The hyper-Calvinism which flowed from John Gill's pen was an instrument to discourage change in the conservative, isolated, rural churches. They looked to London and there received the aid of the learned Dr. Gill."³⁶

The difficulty in making 'evangelistic activity' the means by which the orthodoxy of Gill may be judged is that even amongst acknowledged 'evangelical Calvinists' a commitment to the doctrine of predestination placed severe limits on their understanding of the term. One can hardly expect Gill to prove his Calvinistic orthodoxy by demonstration of an Arminian approach to evangelism.

Ella writes of Gill that he "...believes that there is a two-fold call in evangelism. First there is the internal effectual call which is the 'powerful operation of the spirit of God on the soul,' which cannot be resisted, then there is the external call by the ministry of the Word which 'may be resisted, rejected and despised, and become useless.' Robison's

³² Robison (1971-1972), p. 113-115

³³ Ella, George (1995-1996), p. 160

³⁴ Ella (1995-1996), p. 161

³⁵ Ella (1995-1996), p. 162

³⁶ Robison (1971-1972), p. 113

conclusion as to Gill's attitude toward evangelism is blunt, "Apart then, from some of his own homiletical admonitions, Gill's theological writings present a formidable argument against open evangelism."³⁷ Yet, by contrast Ella writes, "It is difficult to conceive that anyone familiar with the ministry of John Gill could accuse him of being without vigour in preaching the Gospel to sinful man."³⁸

According to Ella, Gill's exposition of I Corinthians 2:14 makes clear Gill actually believed that such preaching could be a stumbling block to the unconverted.³⁹ Where Ella scores more highly in his defence of Gill is in presenting evidence from Gill's public sermons.⁴⁰ Ella lists a series of texts that any evangelist would be pleased to preach from and writes by way of example that, "Gill has many such direct addresses to sinful man, as in his sermon on *The Character and End of the Wicked* where he closes with the exhortation, "...there is no way of escaping the wrath to come, due to the sons of Belial, but by fleeing for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the everlasting gospel; by fleeing to Christ, turning to him, the strong hold, as prisoners of hope; and, being justified by his blood, you shall be saved from wrath through, him. It is he, and he alone, who delivers from wrath to come."⁴¹ Timothy George also points to Gill's sermons in defending him against the charge of hyper-Calvinist. According to George, Gill understood Jesus in Matthew 11:28 to issue an invitation to sinners when he said 'Come unto me,' and himself frequently exhorted young ministers to 'preach the Gospel of salvation to all men.' Further when preaching at an ordination in the mid 1750s Gill said, "Your work is to lead men, under a sense of sin and guilt, to the blood of Christ, shed for many for the remission of sin, and in this name you are to preach forgiveness to them."⁴²

There are two possible explanations to resolve the dilemma presented here. The first is that Gill did not preach in accordance with his declared theological position, but whilst all preachers may at times fall foul of this charge, it is a less than satisfactory answer. The more logical answer perhaps lies in definition. In this respect it may hinge on what is understood by the phrase 'offering Christ' and 'preaching the Gospel.' If by 'offering Christ' we mean some direct attempt on the part of the preacher to invite his hearers to

³⁷ Robison (1971-1972), p. 120

³⁸ Ella (1995-1996), p. 173

³⁹ Ella (1995-1996), p. 169

⁴⁰ Ella (1995-1996), p. 173-175

⁴¹ Ella (1995-1996), p. 175

respond, and by 'preaching the Gospel' we mean stating the truth of Scripture,⁴³ at least as far as the preacher understands it, then there is no reason why John Gill could not preach with passion and fervour from texts favoured even by such an evangelist as John Wesley. We must also remember that for the last thirty years of Gill's life and ministry this whole issue becomes influenced by the activities of the Wesleys and Whitefield and the Methodist Revival. In the revival the term 'offering Christ' gains a whole new context and one of which many Baptists did not approve. That Gill and others were motivated by a desire not to be associated with the methods of the revival is a factor that should not be dismissed lightly. Indeed it may well be, as Timothy George argues,⁴⁴ that Gill was open to accusation because he spent so much of his time and energies in defending the Gospel from attacks from one side that he consequently paid little heed to the extremes upon his own side.

By placing the emphasis on the action of God and not the inaction of man, hyper-Calvinism recedes from the extremes to which some writers have sentenced it, without necessarily denying its tenets. In fairness one would be hard put to use the word 'inaction' in any sense when applied to the life, work, writings, and preaching of John Gill. This argument holds more strength if when we look at the strength of Baptists in the mid-eighteenth century we were to discover they were not in stagnation but they were enjoying a measure of growth.⁴⁵

D. The influence of Jonathan Edwards

Jonathan Edwards was born on 5th October 1703 in the parsonage of the frontier town of East Windsor, Connecticut, that his father, Timothy, occupied for sixty-four years until his death at the age of eighty-nine. He was their fifth child and the only son amongst eleven daughters. It was there under his own father's ministry that Jonathan Edwards first experienced revival as he indicates in a letter he wrote in May 1716 to his sister Mary, who was away at college. It begins, "Dear Sister, through the Wonderful Mercy and Goodness

⁴² George (1990), p. 93-94

⁴³ The word 'Gospel' is here taken to mean the whole body of Scripture

⁴⁴ George (1990), p. 94

⁴⁵ See pp. 92ff below

of God there hath in this Place Been a very Remarkable stirring and pouring out of the Spirit of God...”⁴⁶ He wrote this shortly before he himself left home to attend College at Yale at the age of thirteen. In 1722 Edwards left Yale to take up a pastorate in New York. His stay there was brief at eight months and he left to return to Yale as a tutor in May 1724, remaining until he accepted a call from the church at Northampton, Massachusetts in February 1727.

In 1735 an intense short-lived revival swept through Northampton. Edwards’ biographer Ola Winslow believes that the revival was due to Edwards’, “...championship of evangelical doctrine and his zeal for reform in manners...”⁴⁷ The revival also resulted in parallel revivals in nearby towns. Short lived though it was Edwards found himself with three hundred converts and the need for a new meeting-house to accommodate them, which was duly completed in 1737.

The years following the end of the revival until 1748 were barren ones in Northampton with few additions to the membership of the church, though on a more positive front it was during this period that Edwards wrote *A Particular Enquiry into the Nature of the Human Mind, with respect to its Faculties - the Understanding and the Will - and its various Instincts, and Active and Passive Powers*. It was a work that would gain him a learned audience on both sides of the Atlantic. His most influential work flowed from the personal tragedy that assailed Edwards when in October 1747 David Brainerd, fiancé to his daughter Jerusha died of tuberculosis at the Edward’s home after a long illness. Jerusha who nursed him throughout died herself four months later. Edwards assuaged his grief in part by publishing in 1749 *An account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd - chiefly taken from his own diary and other private writings, written for his own Use and now Published*.⁴⁸

In May 1751, after being dismissed amidst some acrimony by his Northampton church, he accepted a call to Stockbridge, a small Indian mission church a day’s journey from Northampton, on the frontier. Perhaps the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of David Brainerd was too much to resist. There he served for seven years until unsought for he

⁴⁶ Winslow (1940), p. 49

⁴⁷ Winslow (1940), p. 159

⁴⁸ Hereafter, *Life of David Brainerd*

was invited to become President of Princeton, the New Jersey College. Edwards was reluctant to move to Princeton but was persuaded to do so, and in February 1758 he was inducted to the office of President. Perhaps he knew something others did not for within weeks Edwards was stuck down with small-pox dying on 22 March 1758 at the age of fifty-four.

The long-term significance of Edwards is too well documented to be denied. The question before us here is to what extent Edwards' life and writings may be said to influence the revival in Baptist life in the late eighteenth century? Edwards died in 1758 and whilst leaders of the Methodist Revival had met him none of those involved in the later Baptist revival had. Whitefield had returned from America with news of the revival associated with Edwards' work and in 1737 *A faithful narrative of the Surprising Work of God* was published by Isaac Watts and John Guyse.⁴⁹ This would suggest an early impact on the Evangelical Revival; however, as the revival amongst Baptists was some forty years into the future the direct affect of this publication on Baptists would appear to be less immediate. We must turn now to see the extent of the influence that Edward's writings had upon the men responsible for the formation and development of the NPBA at the end of the eighteenth century.

E. Leadership in the Northamptonshire Particular Baptist Association

The NPBA in the period 1770-1830 was fortunate to have at its centre gifted and determined leaders. The names that stand out are those of Robert Hall snr. (1728-1791) and the triumvirate of Andrew Fuller (1754-1814), John Sutcliff (1752-1814), and John Ryland jnr. (1753-1825).⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 77

⁵⁰ However, in Ryland's case his immense contribution to Baptist life comes after his move from Northamptonshire to become Principal of the Bristol Academy. He was present at the founding of the BMS and part of the Home Triumvirate, but his contribution to the NPBA is less marked than Fuller and Sutcliff so will not be considered here.

There were of course many other gifted leaders throughout the denomination at this time who in any comprehensive study of Baptist leaders of the eighteenth century would receive due attention. Men such as John Gill⁵¹ (1697-1771), Andrew Gifford (1700-1784), John Brine (1703-1765), Benjamin Beddome (1717-1798), John Collett Ryland (1723-1792), Abraham Booth (1734-1806), John Fawcett (1740-1814) John Rippon (1750-1836), William Carey (1761-1834), Robert Hall jnr. (1764-1831), and Samuel Pearce (1766-1799). Additionally, one would not forget the Principals of the Bristol Academy Bernard Foskett⁵² (1685-1758), Hugh Evans (1713-1781), and Caleb Evans (1737-1791). In an age dominated by ministers the name of one layman, William Fox⁵³ (1736-1826), the founder of the Sunday School Society, stands out as worthy of mention.

1. Robert Hall of Arnesby

In 1753, Hall, a Northumbrian by birth, settled as minister of the Baptist church in the village of Arnesby, near Leicester. There he remained until his death in 1791. Hall's importance in our context is to be found in two things. First in the fatherly way in which he encouraged younger ministers such as Fuller, Carey and Ryland, and second through the publication in 1781 of his work *Helps to Zion's Travellers*. It is also significant to note that Hall and his Arnesby church were founding members of the NPBA in 1764. Hall contributed the *CLs* of 1768, 1770, 1776, 1780, 1781, 1788, and 1789.⁵⁴

a. Hall the Father Figure

On Sunday 13 March 1791 Robert Hall snr. died at Arnesby. John Ryland jnr. preached at his funeral mostly through tears; Fuller also preached. Ryland had known Hall all his life and considered him one his mentors so his sadness was understandable.⁵⁵ Although, it had been Ryland who had introduced Hall to the works of Jonathan Edwards, which subsequently led Hall to finally reject hyper-Calvinism.⁵⁶

⁵¹ See p. 55 above

⁵² See p. 231 ff below

⁵³ See p. 209 below

⁵⁴ See p. 99 below for a detailed explanation of the purpose of the *Circular Letters*

⁵⁵ Haykin (1994), p. 205-206

⁵⁶ Watts (1976), p. 458

Fuller's acquaintance with Hall was briefer but no less important. In 1784, Fuller accepted a call to the church at Kettering first issued two years previously. It was Hall's influence that lay behind the decision. Hall had recommended Fuller to the Church as he had been aware of Fuller's struggles at Soham and because he believed Fuller capable of greater things. This move to a larger church at the heart of the NPBA ensured that Fuller would maintain and develop his friendship with Hall. Hall, who had proof read the manuscript, was instrumental in persuading the young Fuller to publish his *Gospel worthy of all Acceptation* also in 1784.⁵⁷

Hall also developed a strong relationship with William Carey. In 1783 at a time when William Carey was already formulating his own thinking with regard to foreign mission a friend gave him a copy of Hall's *Helps to Zion's Travellers*. Carey's biographer Pearce Carey notes, "Carey was overjoyed that his own careful findings were Hall's confident pronouncements."⁵⁸ Underwood records Carey as writing, "I do not remember to have read any book with such raptures."⁵⁹ Carey regularly walked fourteen miles from Moulton to Arnesby to hear Hall preach. Haykin writes, "Hall became like a spiritual father to the budding pastor, helping him with the composition of his sermons and giving him advice about pastoral ministry and his own personal walk with God."⁶⁰

By the time that Fuller, Ryland and Carey came into contact with Robert Hall he was already an established figure. Within the confines of the NPBA he was certainly a man of influence. He had proven himself at Arnesby, and within the association, to be an excellent preacher and leader. His name would have readily been recognised by Baptist and other dissenting ministers. Yet, he was also a man who in his dealings with younger ministers at the formative stages of their ministries was able to offer support and encouragement, that for Ryland, Fuller and Carey was essential. Both Fuller and Carey encountered difficulties in their early ministries that would have caused many to stumble. Hall did not single-handedly prevent this but his help was a major factor.

⁵⁷ Haykin (1994), p. 147

⁵⁸ S. Pearce Carey (1923), p. 34

⁵⁹ Underwood (1947), p. 161

⁶⁰ Haykin (1994), p. 193

b. Hall the Theologian

Halls' first contribution to the theological life of the NPBA came in 1768 when he was asked to prepare the *CL* for that year under the now accepted title *Against Antinomianism*.⁶¹ Writing on behalf of the association⁶² Hall explains his purpose, "It is not only our desire that peace and truth may be in our day, but that you may, as the pillar and ground of the truth, maintain the gospel in its glory, the ordinances in their purity, and the orders of Christ in his house in their native beauty and simplicity, when we are no more."⁶³ In fact Hall does not mention Antinomianism *per se* but this is clearly his intent in a repudiation of Antinomianism that is expertly crafted. This is followed in 1776 with a *CL* defending the Trinity and then two in succession in 1780 and 1781, concerning the 'Doctrine of Repentance' and the 'Nature of Faith.' Hall writes two more *CLs* in 1788 on the 'Evil of Sin and the Dignity of Christ' and in 1789 on 'Communion with God.'

In the *CL* of 1781 that coincides with publication of his work *Helps to Zion's Travellers* Hall writes powerfully about faith as something that is clearly (even rationally) apparent from the pages of the Bible for all to see and comprehend. However, he does not, therefore, conclude that those who so comprehend the Bible can apprehend faith. He may be abandoning the hyper-Calvinism of his youth but not Calvinism *per se*. He clearly maintains his Calvinistic credentials when he asserts, "Those only are the heirs of salvation to whom the Lord it's author declares it belongs. Consequently none are warranted by the scriptures to believe the blessings of the gospel are their own, any further than as their characters answer to the descriptions given of those who shall be saved."⁶⁴

c. Help to Zion's Travellers

Finally we need to consider Hall's major contribution to late eighteenth century church life, his *Helps to Zion's Travellers*. In his preface or 'Advertisement' to the treatise he states that it originated as a sermon preached to the NPBA Assembly at Northampton on

⁶¹ Although Antinomianism is the target of Hall's attack it should be stated that he was equally opposed to Nomianism, a belief in the merits of the Law to gain salvation.

⁶² A just claim as each *CL* was submitted to the ministers and messengers at the annual assembly for their approval before publication.

⁶³ *CL* (NPBA, 1768), p. 1-2

⁶⁴ *CL* (NPBA, 1781), p. 11

26 May 1779. The sermon was received well enough for the assembled ministers to urge Hall to expand on it and have it published. It took Hall two years to complete the work and to find sufficient subscribers⁶⁵ to enable publication. Hall, however, makes clear that he was not willing to publish without the further approval of the NPBA for his expanded work, which he gained at the 1780 Assembly.⁶⁶ Michael Watts says of Hall's sermon that it "...was greeted with relief by PBs trying to reconcile their Calvinism with the evangelistic commands of the New Testament.

The treatise is based upon Isaiah 57:14 "Cast Ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people." It is 256 pages long and so a considerable extension to the original sermon.⁶⁷ The treatise lacks clear chapter and section headings rendering it difficult to analyse but Hall turns after a brief introduction to consider stumbling blocks under three headings, Doctrinal, Experimental and Practical followed by a short conclusion.⁶⁸

In his introduction Hall exegesis of Isaiah 57:14 sets the scene describing the Christian life as a journey in which Christians are frequently cast as strangers and pilgrims. He writes, "...that the way in which they are to walk is not at all times easy to be discovered, and which obscurity attends the path, hesitation prevents a progress. Hence the servants of the Lord are called upon to cast up and prepare the way, to render it more visible and obvious to every spiritual passenger."⁶⁹ For Hall this involves a removing of the stumbling blocks to faith that may be encountered on any such journey.

In the section on doctrine it is with Hall's comments on the doctrine of election that we must concern ourselves here. Hall defines election as a choice made with an end in view over which the object of the choice has no sway. In theological terms it applies to the 'election of grace,' the choice made by God determining the salvation of a man over which the man has no sway.⁷⁰ Hall also distinguishes between the election of grace and God choosing men to hold certain offices that may not in and of themselves infer the election of

⁶⁵ Hall (1781), pp. 8-27 the list of subscribers contains the names of four hundred and sixty-nine individuals who order a total of eight hundred and fifty copies of Hall's Treatise See also Watts (1976), p. 459

⁶⁶ Hall (1781), preface p. iv

⁶⁷ This may have been some twenty to thirty pages long in common with other sermons of the day

⁶⁸ Hall (1781), pp. 5-107, 107-178, 178-250, and 150-256 respectively.

⁶⁹ Hall (1781), p. 2

⁷⁰ Hall (1781), p. 42

grace. Hence Judas could be chosen one of the twelve but not for salvation.⁷¹ The purpose for which God chose Israel, or Saul, or Judas was not for the purpose of adoption as sons, it was a different choice with a different and equally distinct purpose. Hall defends the doctrine of election which for him consists “...in God’s choosing of a person in Christ Jesus, or setting them apart as in connection with him, to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.”⁷²

In his second major section Hall is concerned with what he describes as “...certain injudicious and dangerous maxims relating to *experimental religion*.”⁷³ Hall considers here as stumbling blocks, the duty of the unconverted to pray (p. 108ff), the prerequisite of assurance (p. 110ff), and personal knowledge of Jesus (p. 115ff). In response he concludes that Scripture does not require any man to display evidence of faith prior to their coming to Christ, and that such evidences do not exist. Hall explains the essence of the evangelical Calvinistic position when he writes, “Their right to come to Christ does not in the least depend upon, or arise from a prior knowledge of interest in special blessings, or feeling themselves the subjects of supernatural principles.”⁷⁴ He goes on, “If any should ask, have I a right to apply to Jesus the Saviour, simply as a poor undone perishing sinner, in whom there appears no good thing? I answer yes, the gospel proclamation is, Whosoever will, let him come...The way to Jesus is graciously laid open for every one who chooses to come to him, his arms of mercy are expanded to receive the coming soul, he will not on any account cast thee out.”⁷⁵ He then adds, “However remote you are, however great the distance from him, he kindly invites you to view him as the almighty saviour...The gracious grant is indefinite, the way to Jesus is open and free to whosoever will without exception...”⁷⁶ There can be little doubt that Hall distances himself from those Calvinists who, in their adherence to the doctrine of election, have so placed into the hands of God the salvation of a man that they no longer attempt to influence it. Hall, however, retreats from the any apparent Arminianism in his arguments when he states that having the right to choose freely to come to Christ to seek salvation, and even to be encouraged by Christ to do so, is no guarantee of it being given to you.⁷⁷ This perspective opens up for Calvinists

⁷¹ Hall (1781), p. 44 and 48

⁷² Hall (1781), p. 44

⁷³ Hall (1781), p. 107. Hall’s italics.

⁷⁴ Hall (1781), p. 116

⁷⁵ Hall (1781), p. 117

⁷⁶ Hall (1781), p. 118

⁷⁷ Hall (1781), p. 119

of his day, caught up in hyper-Calvinism, the possibility of adopting a more evangelical Calvinism.

In his third main section Hall considers the stumbling blocks found in the way of practical religion. He considers how the behaviour of some Christians is a barrier to others,⁷⁸ the demands of the Cross,⁷⁹ a false sense of Christian obligation to the law,⁸⁰ neglecting the ordinances of faith,⁸¹ and the difficulty of obeying the requirements of discipleship.⁸²

Hall in his conclusion hopes that his argument will enable his readers to disentangle their faith and understand it aright. Hall wants his readers to behold and admire the equity and justice of Jehovah's government and the necessity of the almighty operations of the Holy Spirit of changing the bias and disposition of men by regeneration.⁸³ He wants them to grasp that by the distinction between natural and moral ability, sovereign grace is not only defensible against every artful attack, but it appears infinitely great and absolutely free, and that thereby scriptural exhortations to repentance and faith, appear quite consistent.⁸⁴ Finally, Hall hopes they will understand that the doctrine of natural and moral ability, is calculated to afford and administer much encouragement to seeking souls, and to comfort those who are really devoted to Christ, and that the strong believer, however enriched with gifts and grace, is thereby led to various humbling, and profitable considerations⁸⁵

2. Andrew Fuller and Fullerism

Andrew Fuller was born on 6 February 1754 in the village of Wicken near Soham in Cambridgeshire. The details of his life are well documented.⁸⁶ Fuller reveals in letters to Charles Stuart of Edinburgh that his upbringing was amongst Baptist Dissenters of the high-Calvinist persuasion, which he describes as 'false Calvinism'.⁸⁷ The feature of the

⁷⁸ Hall (1781), p. 178ff

⁷⁹ Hall (1781), p. 184ff

⁸⁰ Hall (1781), p. 189ff

⁸¹ Hall (1781), p. 201ff

⁸² Hall (1781), p. 206ff

⁸³ Hall (1781), p. 250

⁸⁴ Hall (1781), p. 251

⁸⁵ Hall (1781), p. 253-254

⁸⁶ See for example Fuller, A.G. (1852)

⁸⁷ Fuller, A.G. (1852), p. 1-2

preaching he heard as he grew into a young man was that it had nothing to say to unbelievers causing him to give little thought to his own salvation.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, he was converted in 1767 at the age of thirteen and in April 1770 became a baptised member of the Soham Church. In October 1771 the pastor, John Eve, left providing Fuller with his first opportunities to preach. However, he felt himself so unsuccessful that he did not preach again for over a year.⁸⁹ His second attempt proved more successfully and he began to preach regularly at Soham until on 26 January 1774 the church formally set him aside to minister amongst them.⁹⁰

Fuller had received little formal education and no ministerial training. Indeed the distinction at this time in Baptist circles between one who ministers to, and one who is the ordained pastor of, the church is made clear in that it was not until the spring of 1775 that Andrew Fuller is ordained as Pastor of the Soham Church. Fuller undertook to educate himself, he writes, "Being now devoted to the ministry, I took a review of the doctrine I should preach and spent pretty much of my time in reading, and in making up my mind as to various things relative to the Gospel."⁹¹ Prior to his conversion his reading included Bunyan's *'Grace Abounding'* and *'Pilgrim's Progress'*, and Erskine's *'A Gospel Catechism for young Christians, or Christ All in All is our complete Redemption'*.⁹² Amongst the books he turned to in his studies was John Gill's *'Cause of God and Truth'*.

The focal point of Fuller's study became the 'system of doctrine' that he had been used to hear from his youth. Describing it he writes:

...it was in the high Calvinistic, or hyper-Calvinistic strain, admitting nothing spiritually good to be the duty of the unregenerate, and nothing to be addressed to them in a way of exhortation, excepting what related to external obedience...nothing was said to them from the pulpit in the way of warning them to flee from the wrath to come, or inviting them to apply to Christ for salvation.⁹³

⁸⁸ Fuller, A.G. (1852), p. 2

⁸⁹ Fuller, A.G. (1852), p. 16-17

⁹⁰ *BM*, July 1815, p. 266, A Memoir of the Rev. Andrew Fuller

⁹¹ Fuller, A.G. (1852), p. 18

⁹² Fuller, A.G. (1852), p. 3

⁹³ Fuller, A.G. (1852), p. 19

He was unhappy with this teaching, which equated neither with his personal experience nor his growing understanding of doctrine. Whilst Fuller admits to learning a great deal from the writings of Bunyan, Gill, and Brine, he was not unaware of the theological differences between Bunyan and the others, especially in that Bunyan ‘held with the free offer of salvation to sinners without distinction.’⁹⁴ Fuller found support for Bunyan amongst other writers of the sixteenth century, but acknowledges that he gave more weight initially to the teaching he had grown up with, especially the writings of Gill and Brine. He writes, “The effect of these views was, that I had very little to say to the unconverted, indeed, nothing in a way of exhortation to things spiritually good, or certainly connected with salvation.”⁹⁵ However, the seeds had clearly been sown in Fuller’s mind before his ordination in 1775 brought him into contact with Robert Hall, and a year later with John Sutcliff and John Ryland.⁹⁶

The fact that Fuller knew little of Jonathan Edwards’ writing is clear from an amusing anecdote, told by Fuller, at his own expense. At his ordination, “Mr. Robert Hall, of Arnesby...recommended Edwards *On the Will* to my careful perusal, as the most able performance on the power of man to do the Will of God. Not being much acquainted with books at that time, I confounded the work of Dr. John Edwards, of Cambridge, an Episcopalian Calvinist, entitled *Veritas Redux* with that of Jonathan Edwards, of New England. I read the former, and thought it a good book; but it did not seem exactly to answer Mr. Hall’s recommendation. Nor was it till the year 1777 that I discovered my mistake.”⁹⁷ From this humorous beginning friendship and understanding developed. In 1784, Fuller accepted a call to the church at Kettering.⁹⁸ The move to Kettering eased Fuller’s financial situation as the church was larger, more established, and possessed wealthier members. Whatever problems may have laid in store for Fuller at Kettering his removal immediately released him from those he faced at Soham, bringing him much needed respite.

⁹⁴ Fuller, A.G. (1852), p. 20

⁹⁵ Fuller, A.G. (1852), p. 21

⁹⁶ Soham’s membership of the NPBA dates from 1775, which explains why Fuller would not previously have met Ryland, Sutcliff did not arrive at Olney until the summer of 1775 after Fuller’s ordination. It is quite probable that Soham’s membership of the NPBA and Fuller’s ordination are directly linked to the extent that the Soham church recognised that authority to ordain lay in the association.

⁹⁷ Fuller, A.G. (1852) p. 20

⁹⁸ See p. 64 above for the part played by Robert Hall snr. in this

a. *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*

The next event of major significance on the horizon for Fuller was the publication in 1784 of *The Gospel worthy of All Acceptation*. The manuscript was prepared by Fuller during the last two turbulent years of his ministry at Soham, although his son A. G. Fuller points to the existence of an earlier unpublished manuscript of 1777-1778 that served as a forerunner of the published work.⁹⁹ Fuller delayed publication probably due to his reluctance to enter the great doctrinal debate of his era on the side of the ‘new thinking.’ Three things convinced Fuller to publish. The first was the affirmation and encouragement of his friends, and the second was the receipt of a new publication of Jonathan Edwards’ pamphlet *A Persuasive to Prayer for the Revival of Religion* and what flowed immediately in the NPBA as a result of this. Since his early confusion as to who Jonathan Edwards was Fuller had come to greatly treasure his writings.

The third reason was Fuller’s own passion for his subject. In his preface Fuller describes the change of heart that has led to the publication of his treatise as being determined by a study of those passages of scripture, especially in the Gospels, where the unconverted are addressed and exhorted to repent. Fuller writes, “...it appeared to me there must be a most unwarrantable *force (sic)* put upon these passages, to make them mean any other repentance and faith than what are connected with salvation.”¹⁰⁰ He goes on “...my mind was led further to suspect my former sentiments concerning faith not being the duty of unconverted sinners...If true faith is nothing more nor less than a heart or cordial belief of what God says, surely it must be everyone’s duty where the gospel is published, to do that.”¹⁰¹

The ideas that Andrew Fuller was to place into the public domain with the publication of the *Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation* were not unique to him although they had been formed in the relative isolation of Soham. As influential as the writings of Jonathan Edwards were, Fuller did not become aware of the American divine until after he had written the first draft.¹⁰² Fuller had formulated much of his thinking before he had met Robert Hall, John Sutcliff or John Ryland, though, he does acknowledge the influence of

⁹⁹ Fuller, A.G. (1852), p. 32

¹⁰⁰ Fuller, Andrew (1785), preface p. iii

¹⁰¹ Fuller, Andrew (1785), preface p. iv

Edward's writings. Fuller shows particular gratitude to the distinction drawn by Edwards in his Treatise *Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will*, between 'natural and moral ability, and inability.' He writes, "I always found great pleasure in this distinction, as it appeared to me to carry with it its own evidences, was clearly and fully contained in the scriptures, and calculated to disburden the Calvinistic system of a number of calumnies with which its enemies have loaded it, as well as to afford clear and honourable conceptions of the divine government."¹⁰³ Phil Roberts is surely right when he says that the *Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation* "...brought together the best of the ideas of evangelical Calvinism and served as its definitive apologetic in its conflict with its hyper-counterpart."¹⁰⁴

Fuller is anxious to distance himself from Arminians and to assert his Calvinism. Whilst he advocates the encouragement of sinners, and the extension of invitations, he qualifies this by saying that, "...it is to a sinner considered as penitent, that the Gospel holds out its golden sceptre; and to him, and him only, that is convinced of sin, and of his lost condition through it, is the promise of salvation to be presented."¹⁰⁵ This is not too distant from the hyper-Calvinist belief that the gospel should only be presented to those who have begun to show evidence of repentance. The distinction is found in the moment of presentation, and it is a vital distinction, but both are agreed that the object of the invitation is the genuine penitent. Whereas Fuller advocates preaching to unearth the penitent, hyper-Calvinists waited until the penitent revealed himself before preaching to him.

Fuller is also concerned with the question as to whether or not it is the duty of a man to respond to what may plainly be known about God. He writes, "Men are unable, in their present state, to keep God's law; but it does not thence follow that it is of no use to vindicate its authority, and ascertain its extent."¹⁰⁶

Fuller's position as opposed to the hyper-Calvinists is in essence one of approach or practice rather than doctrine. Whereas hyper-Calvinists feared the consequences of attempting to usurp the prerogative of God, Fuller and other evangelical Calvinists believed it was their duty to provide the opportunity for God to exercise his prerogative.

¹⁰² See also Roberts in George and Dockery (1990), p. 126

¹⁰³ Fuller, Andrew (1785), preface p. v

¹⁰⁴ In George & Dockery (1990), p. 125. Roberts, however, perhaps overplays the extent to which Fuller was influenced to reach his conclusion by Hall, Ryland and Sutcliff

¹⁰⁵ Fuller, Andrew (1785), preface p. viii

He believed that through preaching men could be convinced of their sin and of their obligations to God but that it lay with God to bring them from understanding to repentance and so to faith.¹⁰⁷

Fuller divided the *Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation* into three distinct parts as follows:

- Part 1 The Subject stated, defined and explained pp. 1-35
- Part 2 Arguments to prove faith in Christ the duty of all men who hear the sound of the gospel, reduced to *fix propositions (sic)* pp. 37-108
- Part 3 Objections considered 109-196

It was in Part 2 that Fuller laid out his views through the following six propositions:

- Proposition 1: Faith in Christ is commanded in the scriptures to unconverted sinners (p. 37-49)

Fuller is in no doubt that what God commands man must do, and so if God commands belief in his son man must believe. He writes, “That this [command] is to be found, appears evident both from the old and new testament.”¹⁰⁸ Fuller argues that every man has from scripture a warrant to trust in Christ and to receive Christ.¹⁰⁹

- Proposition 2: Every man is bound cordially to receive, and heartily approve, whatever God reveals (p. 49-56)

To disapprove of what God reveals is to Fuller so unthinkable that he believes this proposition to be a truism. He can conceive that the mind of man can be so turned against Christ as to deny him everything save for an act of God to change his will, but he contends that as such a mind set is manifestly unjust it is logically unsustainable. Thus Fuller, who once did believe that only God could so change a man’s mind, now believes the opposite,

¹⁰⁶ Fuller, Andrew (1785), preface p. xi

¹⁰⁷ Fuller, Andrew (1785), preface p. x

¹⁰⁸ Fuller, Andrew (1785), p. 37

¹⁰⁹ Fuller, Andrew (1785), p. 47 and 49

and that it is possible to bring about a change in a man's thinking by exposing him to the truth of the gospel and the truth about God.¹¹⁰

- Proposition 3: The gospel, though it be no law, but a message of pure grace, yet virtualey (*sic*) requires such an obedience to it, which includes saving faith (p. 57-65)

Fuller is clear that there is an authority invested in scripture that requires man to submit to it but he questions how far that authority reaches? Does it go beyond acceptance of truths to incorporate living faith in Christ?¹¹¹ In as much as scripture can be seen as the embassy from a rightful ruler to a rebellious people it must in Fuller's view be seen as requiring a total surrender and end to rebellion.¹¹² In this sense the scriptures demand obedience as a duty upon all in rebellion.¹¹³

- Proposition 4: The want of faith in Christ is ascribed in the scriptures to men's depravity, and is itself there represented as a heinous sin (p. 65-74)

Fuller states at the outset, "It is here taken for granted, that whatever is not a sinner's duty, the omission of it cannot be charged on him as a crime, nor imputed to any depravity in him."¹¹⁴ Fuller states that "...Unbelief is expressly declared to be a sin, of which *the Spirit of Truth has to convince the world* (John 16:8-9). But unbelief could not be a sin, if faith were not a duty."¹¹⁵ Fuller's clear conviction is that the truth of scripture demands a response of faith from all men, and that if it demands it, it must be possible.

- Proposition 5: God has threatened and afflicted the most awful punishments on men for their not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ (p. 74-79)

Fuller pursues this theme with the same unerring logic employed thus far. If faith in Christ is not an obligation upon man its absence cannot be a sin. If, however, it is apparent that

¹¹⁰ Fuller, Andrew (1785), p. 50

¹¹¹ Fuller, Andrew (1785), p. 57

¹¹² Fuller, Andrew (1785), p. 58

¹¹³ Fuller, Andrew (1785), p. 59

¹¹⁴ Fuller, Andrew (1785), p. 65

¹¹⁵ Fuller, Andrew (1785), p. 73. Italics original.

scripture accounts unbelief a sin then faith must be an obligation.¹¹⁶ He goes on to argue that this is exactly how scripture portrays the matter.

- Proposition 6: Seeing other graces, or spiritual dispositions, with which salvation is connected, are represented as the duties of men in general, there is no reason why faith should not be the same (p. 79-97)

Fuller now turns to a key point when he considers that the duty to respond to scripture with belief, repentance, and a seeking after God, equates to a duty to come to faith in God. Hall in his Treatise *Help to Zion's Travellers* held back at this point by arguing that coming to Christ is no guarantee of receiving from him,¹¹⁷ but not Fuller who take his argument to its logical conclusion. If God requires something of man he does so with a purpose and what other purpose could he have for requiring a man to seek salvation if it is not to grant it to him.

In his concluding remarks on the second part of his treatise Fuller acknowledges the 'two grand springs' from which our obligations to God develop. One is 'what God doth for us,' and the other 'what God is in himself.'¹¹⁸

Roberts summarises Fullers thesis when he writes, "Simply put, it states that human unwillingness to believe stems from a perverted moral nature and not from any physical or natural incapacity, as high Calvinists often argued." In the final section of his treatise Fuller turns to a number of specific issues that he believes require clarification. These include election, particular redemption, and human inability to come to Christ.¹¹⁹

b. The response to Fuller's Treatise

The reaction to Fuller's treatise was intense. William Button, pastor of the Dean Street Church, London produced a classic hyper-Calvinistic refutation of Fuller arguing that saving faith is for the elect alone, and that man lacks the moral capacity to discover saving

¹¹⁶ Fuller, Andrew (1785), p. 74

¹¹⁷ See Hall (1781), p. 119

¹¹⁸ Fuller, Andrew (1785), p. 97-98

¹¹⁹ See Watson, T.E. (1960, p. 27-28

faith on his own.¹²⁰ He considers that Fuller's treatise is an appeal to popularity holding out hope to all men that they might have faith in God. He considered that in the work of Gill, Brine and others Fuller's treatise is countered conclusively even before it is published.¹²¹ Button offered nothing that was new to Fuller but Fuller dutifully replied in 1787, though this time he took more of the offensive against some of the assumptions and poor exegesis, as he saw it, of those passages of the Bible that clearly encouraged universal faith. Fuller is more circumspect in his remarks to the response under the pseudonym 'Philanthropos' that is usually attributed to Dan Taylor, leader of the NCGB. Fuller may have been eager to show his respect for Taylor, whose approach to his thesis from an Arminian standpoint, was less threatening than that of Button, a fellow PB. In respect of both Button and Philanthropos he wrote, "In the publications of both my opponents I see different degrees of merit, and for each of their persons and characters I feel a most sincere regard."¹²²

At any rate the issue would not rest, Archibald McLean a Scots Baptist and a Sandemanian also entered the debate, though again from a different angle, questioning Fuller's understanding of faith. Then in 1796 Fuller once more found himself challenged, though this time his assailant was from within the ranks of the PBs, from a man who was a strong supporter of the BMS, Abraham Booth, in a work entitled *Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners*. Booth's concern was to defend the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he felt Fuller's work, threatened.¹²³ As is the manner of such theological debates involving Arminians and Calvinists, and Calvinists of one hue or another, the issues became increasingly detailed.

c. Concluding remarks on Fuller's Treatise

Despite these disputes the essential tenet of Fuller's treatise remained unchallenged, indeed the issue was no longer whether or not the Gospel should be offered to all, but rather how

¹²⁰ It is interesting to note that Button had been at school with John Ryland jnr. in Northampton where he was taught by John Collett Ryland, the hyper-Calvinist pastor of College Lane. However, where the son forsook the theology of his father, the pupil retained it. See John Ryland jnr. 'History of the Baptist Churches in Northampton', *BAR*, Volume IV, p. 770

¹²¹ Button (1785), preface p. iv. Button's attacks upon Fuller are in the form of a series of letters.

¹²² Fuller, Andrew (1787), preface p. iii

¹²³ See Roberts in George and Dockery (1990), p. 128

best to do this.¹²⁴ It is also worth noting that the debate would not appear to have carried the destructive undertones of earlier encounters, Booth and Fuller took different positions on the issue but happily worked together for the sake of the BMS. Indeed it was Booth who in 1793 had urged Fuller to publish *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Compared*.¹²⁵

Fuller seemed to gain something of a taste for tackling heresies as he saw them. The publication of *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Compared* was followed in 1797 with *Socinianism Indefensible*, and after his earlier debate with Archibald McLean he published in 1810 *Strictures of Sandemanianism*. In 1799 Fuller was drawn briefly into debate with the PB turned Universalist, William Vidler and he published in 1802 *Letters to Mr. Vidler, on the Doctrine of Universal Salvation*.¹²⁶ For Fuller the heart of the matter always seemed to concern salvation.

In the final analysis Fuller's view, and that of his friends, would win the day, and his writings laid the crucial doctrinal basis for the shift in Baptist thinking that would lead them into a century of growth and expansion. He did this not by defending his own understanding of Calvinism, but by becoming an 'apologist for the Gospel.' Roberts concludes on Fuller "...it is clear that his main work and contribution was soteriological, with emphases on its practical application for evangelism and missions."¹²⁷ It would never do when considering Fuller's writings to forget that the focal point of his life after 1792 was the promotion and development of the work of the BMS. The triumph of evangelical Calvinism was also a necessary adjunct to the success of the BMS. Perhaps the final word on this should go to Fuller himself who wrote, "I feel more attached to the great doctrines of Christ's deity and atonement, together with those of salvation by grace alone, from first to last: these truths are not merely the objects of my faith, but the ground of all my hope; and administer what is superior to my daily bread."¹²⁸ The evidence that Fuller maintained this hope to the very end of his life on 7 May 1815 at the age of sixty-two is revealed in a letter he wrote to his long time friend John Ryland jnr. on 28 April

¹²⁴ See Roberts in George and Dockery (1990), p. 129

¹²⁵ *BM*, November 1816, p. 454

¹²⁶ Fuller was a prolific writer his works combined stretching to nearly 2,500 pages.

¹²⁷ See Roberts in George and Dockery (1990), p. 132

¹²⁸ *BM*, November 1816, p. 455. Fuller's letter to Rev. Stevens of Colchester dated 18 May 1793

1815. He says, “I have preached and written much against the abuse of the doctrine of grace; but that doctrine is all my salvation, and all my desire.”¹²⁹

The foundations that Fuller laid would also succeed in putting to rest theological arguments between Arminians and Calvinists by establishing the pre-eminence of the Gospel. Fuller established the common ground that would later in the nineteenth century allow PBs and GBs to set aside any differences they once thought important and join together in forming the Baptist Union. In the multi-media age of the twenty-first century it is difficult, perhaps, to fully appreciate the ability of the printed word to excite and influence men’s minds and the extent to which it could bring changes of great magnitude. For all that Fuller lived in such an age it still needs to be stated that had his words not been affirmed by the personal experience of many around him, they would have had short-lived impact. That men of the next century, and this, would speak of ‘Fullerism’ implies as clearly as anything could, that what he encouraged was a shift in theological understanding that went hand in hand with a revitalisation of Baptist life and experience, the one being of little value without the other.

3. *John Sutcliff and the Prayer Call*

John Sutcliff arrived at Olney in 1775. His personal pedigree was impressive. Born in 1752, his parents worshiped at the Wainsgate Baptist Church to which John Fawcett came as Pastor in 1764. Fawcett was committed to evangelical Calvinism and as a result his congregation enjoyed a revival in the late 1760’s, which included the conversion of the young John Sutcliff.¹³⁰ On 28th May 1769 Sutcliff joined the Wainsgate church.¹³¹ By 1772 Fawcett had taught Sutcliff all he might in the Academy he ran at Wainsgate and with the approval of the Wainsgate church Sutcliff departed for the Bristol Academy. He departed in January walking the whole two hundred miles in an endeavour to save money to spend on books.

¹²⁹ *BM*, May 1815, p. 248

¹³⁰ Fuller says in his funeral address that it was either 1767 or 1768 and that Sutcliff was either sixteen or seventeen when he was converted

¹³¹ Brief biographical details appear in Andrew’s Fuller’s ‘Memoir of the Rev. John Sutcliff, of Olney, Bucks’ which appeared in the *BM*, February 1815, p. 45-53

Sutcliff was to spend two years studying at Bristol under Hugh and Caleb Evans. Pre-eminence was given at the Academy to the writings of Jonathan Edwards. Haykin writes, "...it was the evangelical Calvinist Jonathan Edwards, not Gill the High Calvinist, to whom [Caleb Evans] gave the highest praise as being the, 'most rational scriptural divine, and the liveliest Christian, the world was ever blessed with'."¹³² Sutcliff came, therefore, to Olney as a convinced evangelical Calvinist to an association in which hyper-Calvinism remained the norm. Indeed Sutcliff encountered considerable difficulties with hyper-Calvinists in his own congregation as late as 1779-1781.¹³³ Sutcliff died at about 5.00am on 22 June 1814. He was sixty-two years of age and had served the Olney church for thirty-two years as their pastor.

If a man's life and work can ever truly be isolated in its significance to one moment in time then for John Sutcliff that moment came in 1784 when he issued his famous 'Prayer Call.' He understood as well as any man the proper place of prayer in the life of the individual and the church. He had especially been impressed by the story of the 'prayer saint' Thomas Hooker.¹³⁴ On 23rd April 1784 Sutcliff received in the post a copy of Edwards' treatise dealing with corporate prayer and revival, its compilation having been inspired by a concert of transatlantic prayer that had sprung up in the 1740's.¹³⁵ Sutcliff read Edwards' *Humble Attempt* in late April just prior to the NPBA Assembly and he immediately shared it with Fuller and Ryland who proved to be as moved by it as he had been. Within a few days of reading it Sutcliff, Fuller, Ryland, and some of their colleagues had committed themselves to meet the second Tuesday in every month to pray for the 'revival of religion'.¹³⁶

Fuller was due to preach at the June assembly and he arrived there after narrowly avoiding a fatal accident caused by heavy rainfall. His mood was greatly affected and he changed his sermon. In a highly charged address he spoke much of the value and importance of walking in faith and prayer, with clear echoes of Edwards' writings. Sutcliff was the first to react with a proposal accepted by all present, that as an association they should respond

¹³² Haykin (1994), p. 55

¹³³ See Haykin (1994), p. 151-152

¹³⁴ Haykin (1994), p. 157

¹³⁵ *An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion & the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on earth.* Hereafter, *Humble Attempt*.

¹³⁶ Haykin (1994), p. 163

by turning to prayer according to the pattern he and his colleagues had already agreed.¹³⁷ Sutcliff was also motivated by concerns resulting from his own experiences at Olney where the years from 1778 to 1784 when the 'Prayer Call' was issued had been lean ones.¹³⁸

The matter was not allowed to rest after the 1784 Assembly. In 1785 John Ryland jnr. was asked to prepare the *CL* on the related theme 'An enquiry into the causes of declension in religion, with the means of revival.' Further the 1785 Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to the 'Prayer Call' when "It was resolved, without any hesitation, to continue the meetings of prayer on the first Monday evening in every calendar month. We have heard with pleasure that several churches not in the association, and some of other denominations, have united with us in this matter. May God give us all hearts to persevere."¹³⁹ In 1786 Sutcliff wrote the *CL* on 'The authority and sanctification of the lord's-day explained and enforced.' In it he makes reference to the ongoing progress of the 'Prayer Call' when he writes, "May the Lord make thankful, and keep humble! The monthly meetings of prayer, for the general spread of the gospel, appear to be kept up with some degree of spirit."¹⁴⁰ When eight years later, in 1792, the NPBA returned to Nottingham for its assembly Sutcliff commented in his report to the association how pleased he was at the 'gradual revival' that had followed the 'Prayer Call' issued when last they NPBA assembled in Nottingham.¹⁴¹

The resolution passed at the 1785 NPBA Assembly gave the first hint that the 'Call' was being taken up more widely than just the association. By 1789, the response to the 'Prayer Call' had been so great that Sutcliff had Edwards' *Humble Attempt* published in a pocket-sized edition to further encourage revival prayer meetings. In his preface to this edition Sutcliff acknowledges the widespread response to the 'Prayer Call' when he writes, "If such in some respects entertain different sentiments, and practise distinguishing modes of worship, surely they may unite in the above business. O for thousands upon thousands, divided into small bands in their Respective cities, towns, villages, and neighbourhood, all

¹³⁷ See Appendix VII for the full text of this proposal.

¹³⁸ See p. 144 below

¹³⁹ *CL* (NPBA, 1785), Breviates, p. 8

¹⁴⁰ Sutcliff adds here a footnote that reads, "For an account of them, see our letter for the year 1784. And brother Fuller's sermon, entitled, "The Nature and Importance of walking by Faith." Sold by Buckland, London, price 6d."

¹⁴¹ NthCRO, LA - 1792, Olney

met at the same time, and in pursuit of one end, offering up their united prayers, like so many ascending clouds of incense before the Most High!”¹⁴² Writing some sixty years later A. G. Fuller notes that churches were still praying in direct line of response to that Call.¹⁴³

It is not for us to judge here the spiritual value and result of the ‘Prayer Call.’ Rather we may note the human response as the challenge to gather in prayer was taken up by Christians across the denominational divide in England and beyond into Europe and North America. The decision to pray for revival did more than express a faith in the power of prayer. It also acknowledged, especially amongst Old Dissent and evangelical Anglicans, the perceived need for revival within the church. By gathering at the set times each month the participants sense of being part of a great multitude embarked on a common cause would have been powerfully encouraging, aiding and abetting the phenomena of self-fulfilment that accompanies earnest prayer. The knowledge that so many were joining them served to galvanise the participants into even greater action in response to their own prayers.

What we may state as fact is that this ‘Prayer Call’ comes immediately prior to a burst of intense activity by evangelicals that lasts well into the nineteenth century contributing to a radical change in the social and political climate of England. At the same time the church enjoys previously unheard of numerical growth. We may not fully assess the impact of prayer on these events but we should not underestimate its potential for gathering people with a common purpose and producing a common response.

4. *John Ryland jnr.*

The name of John Ryland jnr. (1753-1824) is one that has appeared constantly throughout this study, most especially in connection with the names of Sutcliff and Fuller. He was born on 29 January 1753 in the rectory of Warwick Church, which his father was renting whilst pastoring the Baptist church in Warwick. Some parishioners complained to the rector Dr. Tate at allowing a dissenter into the rectory and he replied, “What would you

¹⁴² Quoted in Haykin (1994), p. 170

have me do? I have brought the man as near the church as I can, but I cannot force him into it.”¹⁴⁴ John Ryland was thirteen years old when he was baptised at College Lane, Northampton on 13 September 1767 along with William Button, a pupil in his father’s school, who also went on to be a Baptist minister. Soon after this he began preaching to his fellow school pupils and then on 3 May 1770, still only seventeen he preached for the first time to the College Lane church. Approved by them he began regularly preaching at College Lane, and in the villages surrounding Northampton until in 1781 he was called to the office of co-pastor to his father. It was around 1775 when he first came into contact with the writings of Jonathan Edwards that the younger Ryland abandoned the hyper-Calvinism of his upbringing becoming an evangelical Calvinist. His father J.C. Ryland was a personal friend of John Brine and had been a hyper-Calvinist all his life but there is little indication that this was a contentious issue between father and son. The fact that the son readily came to work alongside his father and then to succeed him is another indicator that within PB churches the distinction between hyper-Calvinists and evangelical Calvinists was far less tangible than might be thought. In 1783 Ryland baptised William Carey and the move toward the establishment of the BMS in 1792 principally through the great friendship between Carey, Ryland, Sutcliff and Fuller began in earnest. In 1792 Rhode Island University, which in 1773 had granted him an M.A., conferred upon Ryland the degree of D.D. In what was a momentous period for Ryland he also left Northampton, after much heart searching, to take up the post of Principal of the Bristol Academy in December 1793.¹⁴⁵ He remained in that office until his death on 25 May 1824.

5. Conclusion

We began the previous section by asking the question, ‘to what extent Edwards’ life and writing may be said to influence the revival in Baptist church life in the later eighteenth century?’ The answer must be to varying degrees. The influence on Sutcliff and Ryland is stronger and easier to discern. On Hall the influence of Edwards is less clear whilst on Fuller who is arguably the more significant from a theological perspective it is clear Edwards, at least initially, had only minimal impact. Fuller did not read Edwards until the

¹⁴³ Fuller, A. G. (1852), p. 33

¹⁴⁴ *BM*, 1826 January, p. 1-9 is the Memoir of Ryland’s life. This quote from Dr. Tate is contained in a footnote on p. 2.

year he had completed his first manuscript of *The Gospel worthy of all Acceptation*. It is more than probable that Fuller had formulated his views on hyper-Calvinism before he read Edwards and almost certain he found in Edwards a kindred spirit rather than a conversion. If, as Haykin states, Fuller's work shows evidence of Edwards' influence we must at this point conclude that it was because Fuller found in Edwards a clearer understanding of what he had already come to believe.

Of Edwards' impact upon Baptists of the late eighteenth Hayden writes that it, "...is almost incapable of exaggeration. Out of his experience of revival and through his theological and narrative writing he produced evidence for a vital evangelical Calvinism which could stand side by side with the vitality of the Wesleyan movement."¹⁴⁶ In 1749 Edwards published his biography of David Brainerd, and Edward's account of his life and death was to deeply move evangelical Calvinists in England some thirty to forty years later. The following note taken from the breviates of the *CL* for the NPBA of 1780 demonstrates this:

N.B. Agreed to recommend to all that love evangelical, experimental and practical religion, and especially to our younger brethren in the ministry, The account of the life of the Rev David Brained, published by the Rev. Jonathan Edwards, of New-England, as eminently calculated to display the nature of true religion, and promote the power of godliness.¹⁴⁷

It was to prove a powerful example of the theological position that Edward's advocated in his writings and one that the PBs were all too willing to adopt in the late eighteenth century.

F. Evangelical Calvinism

A further influence on PBs that must not be ignored is that of 'evangelical Calvinism.' It is a term best applied to those PBs who, whilst still Calvinists, did not subscribe to the tenets of hyper-Calvinism but like Richard Davis before them maintained a commitment to an aggressive form of evangelism.

¹⁴⁵ See p. 231 below for Ryland at Bristol.

¹⁴⁶ Hayden (1991), p. 344

Roger Hayden in his research¹⁴⁸ was the first to question the assumption that hyper-Calvinism was truly the predominant theology of early to mid-eighteenth century PBs. There is little doubt that the London churches were given over to it under the sway of Gill and Brine and that their influence stretched out across the land, but the assumption that what transpired in London could be taken as indicative of the nation as a whole is open to question. Hayden's analysis of the situation in London is most helpful. He writes, "The idiosyncratic theology of John Gill was possible because there were no checks and balances which association life, based upon the 1689 Confession, provided. Gill was able to preach and teach a message which produced a tragic inertia about mission that almost destroyed Baptist churches which adopted his scheme."¹⁴⁹ Hayden here presents what we might term a high view of association life and there is sufficient evidence to suggest that in the eighteenth century the associations certainly could act in the way he indicates. However, there is little reason to suspect that a London Association would have acted any differently to the London Ministers at their monthly Coffee Shop gathering.¹⁵⁰ Gill's weekly lecture at Eastcheap was organised by his ministerial colleagues to allow him to disseminate his views, and it should be noted his writings were an integral part of the curriculum at the Bristol Academy.

The second city of the nation in the eighteenth century was the vibrant seaport of Bristol and in many respects Bristol was a more significant centre of PB church life than London. At a time when the GBs were falling into Unitarianism, and some PBs were becoming locked into hyper-Calvinism, Bristol would be an oasis of evangelical Calvinism. The city was the focal point of the Western Association whose credentials as 'evangelical Calvinists' was long established and adhered to. In addition the city was home to some of the largest and strongest Baptist churches in the country and was the home of the only training academy the Baptists possessed.¹⁵¹ The Bristol Academy was led throughout the eighteenth century by men whose 'evangelical Calvinist' principles were well known and who instilled them (though not always successfully) in their students. Through the

¹⁴⁷ *CL* (NPBA, 1780), p. 9. Also quoted by Hayden (1991), p. 348

¹⁴⁸ Hayden (1991)

¹⁴⁹ Hayden (1991), p. 307

¹⁵⁰ See p. 52 above

¹⁵¹ Of the 152 ministers trained at Bristol in the eighteenth century only five went to London churches. The London churches tended to train their own ministers using the existing ministers to do so. Hayden (1991), p. 36

ministries of Bernard Foskett, Hugh and Caleb Evan's (Principals of the Academy in succession from 1720-1791) the modifying influence of evangelical Calvinism would gradually spread throughout the denomination, though it was in the Western Association and in South Wales, from where so many of the students came and returned, that this influence was most immediately felt.¹⁵²

Hayden points out that both the Midland Association and the Northern Association was formed adopting the evangelical Calvinist 1689 Confession of Faith.¹⁵³ This Confession was issued by the Western Association at its first gathering after the Glorious Revolution in September 1689. The Western Association had expressed in its Somerset Confession of 1656 a commitment to evangelism, which predated the establishment of the Bristol Baptist College.¹⁵⁴ It is perhaps article XXXIV that most clearly expresses the evangelical Calvinism of these early Baptists. It states, "That as it is an ordinance of Christ, so it is the duty of his church in his authority, to send forth such brethren as are fitly gifted and qualified through the Spirit of Christ to preach the gospel to the world (Acts 13:1,2,3; 11:22; 8:14.)."¹⁵⁵ Fully one hundred years before William Carey there can be no doubting the clear missionary obligation accepted by the churches of the Western Association.

In 1732, guided by Bernard Foskett the Western Association reformed itself adopting changes that affirmed the Calvinism of the association and effectively denied membership to any GB churches. Twenty-four churches responded to the invitation to attend the newly reformed association. John Beddome drew up the *CL* and Joseph Stennett preached at the opening assembly in 1733. Hayden says of Stennett's sermon, "The fundamental evangelical nature of the association's new doctrinal stance is clearly stated in a word to all the ministers who are exhorted 'boldly and constantly...to preach the blessed gospel with the fervour that becomes its invaluable nature and as the true and best adapted means of bringing souls to Christ.'"¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² However, this is not to devalue the role played by men such as Robert Hall snr. and John Fawcett who had no direct connection with Bristol

¹⁵³ Hayden (1991), p. 76, 80

¹⁵⁴ Moon (1979), p. 19

¹⁵⁵ Lumpkin (1959), p. 212-213

¹⁵⁶ Hayden (1991), p. 61

G. Conclusion

Our purpose in these first three chapters has been to understand the situation that faced Baptists in the mid to late eighteenth century and to consider what it was that set them on a path of revival that would last for over 100 years. In doing this we have challenged the commonly held view of Baptist historians that from 1720-1770 they were in thrall to a theological mindset, called hyper-Calvinism that brought them into 'stagnation' and 'decline.'

This led to an investigation of the doctrinal issues that were of significance in the eighteenth century. In the following chapter we will examine whether or not there was in truth a decline in PB Fortunes between 1689 and 1770. If there was no numerical decline amongst Baptists, the need to argue that hyper-Calvinism is the cause of this decline is removed. There can be no doubt that hyper-Calvinism where it did hold sway prevented churches from engaging in pro-active evangelism at a time when the Methodist Revival was winning converts across the land, but the accusation that the churches of Gill and others were dull and lifeless is unproven. What has become clear is that the charge that the PBs as a whole were held under the sway of the tenets of hyper-Calvinism is a false one. Throughout this period the evangelical Calvinist Western Association accounted for some 35% of all PBs, with the Bristol Academy dispatching the disciples of evangelical Calvinism throughout the land. The success towards the end of this period of the writings of Jonathan Edwards owes as much to the widespread presence of evangelical Calvinists who were a ready audience for his views as it does to their quality and power. Without that solid base it is doubtful that Edwards' works could have gained the even wider support that they did.

What truly transformed the life and work of the Baptists, in both incarnations, was their collective concern for the spiritual state of the nation coupled with their belief that Christ intended that His church should grow. It was quite simply their burden for 'the lost,' that caused them to become increasingly and effectively pro-active in their evangelism that would transform the fortunes of the Baptists.

IV. A Statistical survey of the growth in English Baptists Churches 1715-1851

Chapters I-III have laid the foundation for the heart of this study, the investigation of the growth amongst PBs from 1770 onwards, and the specific factors contributing to this growth. In this chapter by an analysis of the available statistical information the reality and the scale of that growth will be demonstrated. In order to achieve this something about the nature of the source material must be understood. The following sources have been consulted:

- The Evans List of Dissenting Congregations and Ministers
- The John Ryland List
- The Josiah Thompson List of Dissenting Congregations
- The Baptist Magazine Lists
- The *Circular Letters* of the Particular Baptists associations and the *Baptist Annual Register*
- Selected church records
- The 1851 Ecclesiastical Census of Great Britain

The Evans List of 1715-1729 and the Census of 1851 provide important reference points before and after the period of our study. Mann in his report for the Census gives information with regard to numbers of Baptist churches based on the work of a puritan historian named Neal. A closer examination of the available data will help to determine the accuracy of Neal's work.¹

¹ PP, 1851 Census, vol 33, p. lxi. See Table 6

A. The Eighteenth Century Lists

1. The Evans List of Dissenting Congregations and Ministers²

The Evans List was compiled following a correspondence set in motion by the 'Committee of the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations in and about the Cities of London and Westminster.'³ The three denominations in question are the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and the Independents/Congregationalists. The List was compiled in the handwriting of John Evans who was Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Hand Alley, London and a member of the Committee

The Evans List itself provides a limited amount of information and cannot be regarded in the same light as more modern attempts at compiling statistics. Evans relied on correspondents around the country to send him the desired information. The names of the correspondents appear at the foot of most county lists and it is apparent they were predominantly Presbyterian which may mean that the figures for Presbyterian churches were more accurate than for either Independents or Baptists.⁴ Evan's List records four Baptist churches in Cheshire, Lancashire, and Yorkshire in 1715, however Ian Sellers' history of these associations makes clear that there were many more, mainly as a result of the Civil War. Eight Cheshire parishes contained Anabaptists as early as 1665, though only the one at Stockport obtained a licence in 1672. Lancashire had by the late 1600's churches at Liverpool, Manchester, Furness Fell and Cartmel, and then in the early 1700's a 'revival' came to the Rossendale valey with some twenty meeting-houses, which duly spread into the Calder, Aire and Wharfe Valleys and deeper into Yorkshire. Also by 1672 there were churches in Horton and York.⁵ In 1713 the diocese of Cheshire reported there were twenty-two Baptist congregations in the county. All of which suggests that the Evan's list is only as accurate as its various contributors and it should be approached with this in mind.

² Creasey (1969), is the primary source for much of the following information For the list itself see Table 8

³ Hereafter 'Committee of the Three Denominations' or 'Committee.'

⁴ Creasey (1969), p. 3. He indicates that each denomination may have had similar but not identical lists, and refers to the *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, xix, 1961, pp. 72-74 for evidence of this.

Thomas Crosby indicates that the 'Committee of the Three Denominations' upon which Evans served had been revived at a meeting in Hamlin's coffee house, London in August 1714.⁶ Creasey, likewise, observes that the Committee dates from the reign of Queen Anne and was composed in 1715 of six representatives from the Presbyterians, five Independents, and five Baptists.⁷

Creasey believes that the reason the list was compiled was to establish the strength of Dissent in the land and thereby to strengthen the hand of Dissenters in their agitation for the repeal of oppressive legislation.⁸ The 'Committee of the Three Denominations' was itself at the forefront of this agitation, and the desire to strengthen the situation of Dissenters, rather than to promote co-operation between them was perhaps the real reason the Committee came into existence.

There was a further reason for the compilation of the Evans List that relates to the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715. Dissenters had stood firm in their support of King George I and wanted to ensure the strength of that support was communicated to the authorities.

Table 7 relates to a curious unnumbered page at the rear of Evans List. It shows a total by county of damage to dissenting meeting-houses during riots against Dissenters. Rupp assigns responsibility for these riots to the High Church Party in general and the 'Bloody Flag Officer', Henry Saverchell in particular.⁹ They were, it would seem, part of the reaction by the High Church Party within the Church of England to 'the erosion of their position within the state.' As Rupp points out, "... the watchword was a fervent 'State super antiquas vias', the return to the concept of a national Church in a Christian realm, the clergy exercising spiritual discipline over the whole nation, supported by the laity acting through Parliament."¹⁰ The damage done is not just to meeting-houses. For example, Mr. Thomas Abel of West Bromwich Meeting claimed eight pounds for his dead horse, and Hannah Swift of the Anabaptist Meeting in Oxfordshire claimed seven shillings for carpentry and glazing work.

⁵ Sellers, Ian (1987), p. 10

⁶ Crosby (1740), p. 108-109

⁷ Creasey (1969), p. 3

⁸ Creasey (1969), p. 3

⁹ Rupp (1986), p. 64ff and Brown (1986), p. 53

The 'Committee of the Three Denominations' also took upon itself to deliver on behalf of Dissenters a 'loyal address' to the King. The 'loyal address' served to show dissenting support for the crown, to remind the politicians of their existence, and to elicit the King's protection. Dr. Daniel Williams (1643-1716), Evan's predecessor at Hand Alley, delivered the first loyal address on 28 September 1714.¹¹ Dr. Williams' speech was reported in full in 'The Gazette' on the 2 October 1714 as was King George's warm response promising his protection for Dissenters.

The Baptist Minister Nathaniel Hodge delivered the address of 16 August 1715 and took the opportunity to indicate the extent to which Dissenters had suffered during the riots as detailed in Table 7. King George responded not just with offers of protection but also of compensation.¹² The 'loyal address' of 4 March 1717 held similar content and received from the King the promise of "...the speedy payment of the damages they have sustained in the late tumult..."¹³ Brown notes that in 1717 in response twenty-eight dissenting churches and individuals in eight counties did indeed receive compensation.¹⁴

Befordshire further indicates the difficulty Evans faced as two men make contributions, John Jennings of Kibworth and Ebenezar Chander of Bedford. Whilst they agree on the number of Baptist churches Jennings reports 4,760 hearers and Chander 4,565. In many cases the numbers of hearers for a specific church are not given so in Table 8 I have included a column to indicate this. A footnote from Evans appears on the Northamptonshire statistics saying he is unsure of the accuracy of returns from four churches, but no reason for this uncertainty is given. Some of the returns show the deficiencies of Evans' correspondents as Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham are indicated as having no Baptist presence. According to the 1996-1997 Baptist Union Directory these counties have eighteen churches that existed prior to and including 1715. It is possible that some of these churches were not Baptists churches when the List was compiled. However, it is also the case that the current BU Handbooks do not list churches that may have been established prior to 1715 but have since closed, or those

¹⁰ Rupp (1986), p. 53

¹¹ On his death in 1716 Dr. Williams left his estate in trust to provide for theological education of Dissenting Ministers at Glasgow University, and for the establishment of a library in London for the use of Dissenters based on his own collection of 6,000 volumes.

¹² Crosby (1740), pp. 125-129. He reports the speech in full.

¹³ Crosby (1740), p. 171

¹⁴ Brown (1986), p. 53.

churches, which may have then been designated as Baptist but are not now in membership of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Finally, the Evans List does not usually distinguish between General and Particular Baptist congregations, although in the entry for Northamptonshire some demarcation appears.

The average numbers of hearers for those churches reporting their numbers is 197. What we do not know is how the statistics sent to Evans were compiled, nor what instructions Evans sent out regarding their compilation. Did responding churches simply add up the number of adults attending all of their services on a given Sunday regardless of duplicate attendance? Is it only the main service that is considered or is it an estimated average adult attendance? No separate information regarding the number of children in attendance is given so we have no way of knowing if they are counted as hearers or not. The absence of any description of the method of compiling the statistics would tend to point to a very informal method of gathering information by estimation and possibly hearsay. The fact that statistics are unreported for 39% of the identified Baptist churches also strongly suggests that methods less than scientific were in operation. It is astounding that no figures for London appear at all, when these would have seemed to be the ones most accessible to Evans.

Assuming that the average holds for the ninety-eight churches who do not report their figures a further 19,306 hearers should be added to bring the total for England to 49,120 from 249 churches. The number of hearers does not of course mean the number of members an important distinction for the Baptist mind-set, far more so than the comparative distinction in the Church of England between communicants and membership of the Electoral Roll. It might normally be argued that churches that do not report their figures will on the whole be small churches but this is unlikely with the Evans List. Firstly, because the figures are compiled, on the whole, by Presbyterians not Baptists and so the absence of statistics is more likely to reflect the inability of the compiler not the unwillingness of the church. Secondly, because in some cases it is the figures for whole counties that are absent and not just a few churches, notable the twenty-three churches in and around London.

The Evans List does serve to illustrate the basic strength of Baptists in 1715. Clearly in 1715-1717 Baptist strength is found concentrated in three distinct areas as Table 9

indicates. The number of churches included in the table is the number of churches in the counties that have statistics for hearers available. It is quite probable that London and its environs (including Middlesex, Surrey and Kent) with some fifty-four churches forms a fourth significant area but the absence of statistics for hearers in the Evans List for Middlesex (London) and Kent mean we cannot establish this with certainty. The absence of any statistical information whatsoever for Baptist churches in Lincolnshire, which was a GB stronghold, is also unfortunate.

2. *The John Collett Ryland List*

Ryland came to Warwick on 24 May 1746, but was not ordained until 26 July 1750; he remained as pastor at Warwick until his departure for Northampton on Wednesday 3 October 1759. Joseph Ivimey, a prominent London Minister and Baptist Historian of the early nineteenth century, uses Ryland's list to state his belief that Baptists had declined steadily from the Restoration in 1660.¹⁵ However, Ivimey's use of the Ryland List is questionable.

Ryland entitles his list dated 29 January 1751 'A list of Calvinistic Ministers of the Baptist Denomination in England.'¹⁶ This reveals that Ryland's concern was for ministers rather than churches. The original list fills three consecutive pages of the Church Book but is then complicated by annotations and additions that are mostly undated.¹⁷ At his first attempt Ryland would appear to note that he had named seventy-four ministers. There are two regional tables one of which is dated 27 December 1753 the other of which is undated but which have relatively similar contents.¹⁸ Generally the information is brief and frequently omits the names of churches with which a minister is associated. Table 10 shows the number of PB ministers named by Ryland and Table 14 show the number of GB churches that Langley identifies from his own studies. Ryland identifies 107 ministers serving between ninety-four and 121 churches in England and Wales.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ivimey (1823), *Volume III*, p. 279

¹⁶ WCRO, Warwick Church Book, 1714-1759. See also Langley, (1918-1919), pp. 138-162 for a transcription of Ryland's original list.

¹⁷ It is possible that some of the annotations are the work of Arthur Langley, (1918-1919)

¹⁸ See Table 11 and Table 12

¹⁹ See Table 11 and Table 12

Langley by "...allowing for dead, duplicates and erasures..." concludes that there were in fact 104 names on Ryland's list and his own work reveals another forty-two PB ministers that Ryland was unaware of bringing the total to 146.²⁰ This serves to illustrate the weakness of Ryland's work and therefore of any conclusion drawn from it by Ivimey. Ministers do not equal churches and it is not easy to extrapolate from Ryland exactly how many churches there were. For example Ryland lists twelve London ministers but identifies only eight churches presumably because in some cases a church has two ministers.²¹ Further, the interest in ministers rather than churches fails to allow for the existence of churches that do not possess a minister.

Langley's list of General Baptist ministers "...compiled from the minutes of the General Assemblies and other sources,"²² identifies fifty-nine GB churches. Even allowing for the real difficulties in knowing from Ryland and Langley's work the number of PB churches the combined total for c1750 could not be less than 200 churches.²³

In a straight comparison with Evans, Ryland/Langley reveal a decrease in the number of churches from 249 to c180²⁴ an apparent decline of 18%. However, it may be questionable that a straight comparison can be made in this manner. It is not possible from the list Evans presents to distinguish between GB churches, PB churches, and those Baptist churches that are independent of both groupings. Certainly in 1851 the number of undefined Baptist churches was, at 550, significantly larger than the total of 275 churches for the old GBs and the NCGB combined.²⁵ There could, therefore, be around 100-150 churches designated Baptist by Evans but not by Ryland because they were not specifically PB. Furthermore when Thompson compiled his list he showed that 347 ministers served 414 churches.²⁶ This meant that 16% of churches were without ministers applied to the Ryland/Langley list of Ministers it could mean there were some twenty-three churches without pastors.²⁷ Contrarily Ivimey in almost the same sentence notes that, as Ryland had

²⁰ Langley (1918-1919), p. 155

²¹ See Table 13. Two of the names Ryland gives are Thompson snr. and Thompson jnr.

²² Langley, (1918-1919), p. 157. See Table 14

²³ Langley also concedes that the list of churches remains incomplete. Langley, (1918-1919), p. 162

²⁴ Excluding the churches in South Wales, which Evans does not include in his list.

²⁵ See Table 32

²⁶ See Table 15

²⁷ As this calculation does not account for those churches with more than one pastor this figure could be higher.

been a member of a London church before moving to Warwick, he may be considered a reliable reporter of the facts but then states the names of three churches that Ryland omitted from his list.²⁸ Finally when Ivimey concludes that in 1753 the number of Baptists was around 20,000 he does so by allowing that Ryland's membership figures are 1/3rd in error and 2/3^{rds} should be added for hearers. It is curious that he does not also allow some margin for error in the total number of churches.

If Ryland were taken at face value it would mean that between 1751 and 1773 when Thompson produced his list the number of churches increase by 130% from 180 to 414. A quite remarkable turnaround in status especially so when it is not until 1770 that Baptist fortunes are almost universally acknowledged to have begun their transformation. However, taking the starting point of Ryland/Langley of 180 PB and GB churches in England, allowing for those churches without ministers, those churches designated Baptist but neither General nor Particular, and for those PB churches missed by them both, a total of 300-350 is by no means unrealistic. From Table 76 it is possible to identify immediately four unaffiliated churches in Northamptonshire, which existed prior to 1750 and from Table 75 seven PB churches ignored by Ryland. If correct our amended figures demonstrate a gradual rise from the Evans List of 1715, which continues to the Thompson List of 1773, and dispels the myth of Baptist stagnation and decline in the middle of the century.

3. *The Josiah Thompson List of Dissenting Congregations*

Josiah Thompson at the time of the compilation of his list 1772-1773 was retired from the Baptist ministry, suggesting he was a man of independent means.²⁹ The majority of ministers, as with other workers, died in service as, in the absence of any kind of pension arrangements, the only prospect they had of supporting themselves was to continue working.

²⁸ Ivimey (1823), *Volume III*, p. 278

²⁹ Thompson, Josiah (1911-1912), pp. 205-222, 261-277, 372-385

The list was occasioned by the passing through Parliament in 1772 of a Bill designed to relieve dissenting ministers from the modified subscription required of them by the Toleration Act. Although the matter was not resolved by Parliament until 1779 the information in the Thompson List was provided in 1772 to aid the passage of the Bill, by showing the strength of Dissenters in England, and their support for the Bill. Thompson arranged his list by counties and provided information about the numbers of congregations, some limited information about individual church origins and present status, and the names of those ministers in each county who signed a petition supporting the 1772 Bill. As with the Evans List few churches make it clear if they are GB, PB, or Independent Baptist. Unlike Evans, who was a Presbyterian, Thompson was a Baptist but he made no attempt to clarify the different strains of Baptist churches. One would expect such differences to be of little importance to a Presbyterian who may well consider one Baptist the same as any other but 'tribal' differences usually matter a great deal to the tribes themselves. It may be that Thompson was unusually unconcerned about these matters or it may be that as early as 1773 barriers between the different strains of Baptists were already beginning to come down.

Unlike the Evans List the Thompson List did not come into existence as a survey of Dissenting Church life in England and Wales. So, whilst Thompson, provides fairly comprehensive information about the location and number of churches and ministers the information about the size of congregations is incidental.³⁰ Only the churches in Bedfordshire have reported with any consistency the number of attendees, and seventeen churches indicate a total attendance of 4,160 at an average of 245. Though it is apparent that probably in every case the number of attendees is an approximation not an accurate count.

4. *A Comparison of Evans and Thompson*

Bedfordshire provides an interesting comparison for according to the Evan's List the number of Baptist churches were one more at eighteen and the average attendance higher

³⁰ See Table 15

at 264. However, the vagaries of the reporting and the inaccuracies of the approximating of congregation size may explain this.³¹

What is apparent from Table 16 and Table 17 is that the number of Baptist churches in England continues to grow through the period 1715-1773 at the not insignificant rate of 66% or 2.94 new churches per year. This growth is not universal and the decrease in Northamptonshire of 31% is very much against the trend but might also offer some further explanation to the motivation of those Northamptonshire ministers and churches of the 1770's. The annual rate of growth at 2.94 churches is in comparison to the growth of the entire nineteenth century apparently slow (see Table 35 and Table 36), however when viewed as percentages the growth in church numbers may be viewed differently. The 66% growth between 1717 and 1773 (Table 17) compares poorly to the 371% growth between 1798 and 1851 (Table 35) but favourably with the 25.6% growth from 1866-1906 (extrapolated from Table 36). The same picture is revealed when the annual rates of growths are seen as a percentage of their starting point. So 2.94 churches per year represents 1.12% of the starting point of 249 churches in 1717-1773 and 15.4 churches per year represents 0.65% of the starting point of 2,382 churches in 1866-1906. Viewed either way it is clear that Baptist churches grew twice as fast during the period 1717-1773 as they did during the period 1866-1906. However, we noted earlier that the figures given in 1715 for Cheshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire were inaccurate, and it is likely that those for Durham and Northumberland are also wrong.³² It is possible from Sellers work to estimate that Evans was unaware of some thirty churches in the North. If we include these it would reduce the growth rate, in these main areas of Baptist strength in 1715-1773 to 45% from 71%. Applied to the total numbers of churches (see Table 17) the percentage growth also changes to 45% from 62%. Both of which still indicate a significant rate of growth.

Some confusion arises in the lists around the place of London and churches in both Surrey and Middlesex, which may explain why the number of churches in both Surrey and Middlesex appears to have fallen by 1773.³³ The progression in Yorkshire and Lancashire is perhaps the most dramatic increasing from just one church to thirty-nine. In general

³¹ See Table 16

³² Sellers (1987), p. 10-11, mentions a number of churches in the North in existence in 1715

³³ See Table 18

terms those areas of Baptist strength in 1715 remain the same in 1773. However, the failure of the Central Region to grow is significant. Indeed, if it were not for the fact that Leicestershire alone grew by twelve churches in this period the fate of the Central region would have been even sorer.

These figures do not lend support to the commonly expressed view that Baptists in the mid-eighteenth century were in a state of stagnation, a view usually explained by the undoubted drift of GBs toward Unitarianism and the prevalence amongst PBs of hyper-Calvinism. Although the very strong links between Gill and Brine and Northamptonshire from whence both emanated might be of importance in explaining the situation in this and surrounding counties. The revival in Baptist fortunes was to reach its peak in terms of membership in 1906 at 434,741 when there were 2,998 churches. However the number of churches continued to grow reaching their peak in 1951 at 3,351 by which time membership had been declining steadily to 335,540.³⁴ So whilst the number of churches grew from 1906-1951 by three hundred and fifty-three or 11.8% the number of members declined in the same period by 99,201 or 22.8%.³⁵ Thus, we may not assume that an increase in the number of chapels indicates an increase in the number of members and Ward and Gilbert may be right to speak of a decrease in membership and attendance alongside a rise in numbers of meeting places in the period 1700-1740.³⁶ However, the evidence for the numerical decline in membership and attendance is not strongly presented by Gilbert, furthermore he rightly points to the great difficulty in attaining accurate statistical information before the nineteenth century.³⁷ His conclusions as to the decline in dissenting attendance are based on these statistics. Far more accurate are the statistics for new chapels and meeting-houses due to the legal requirement to apply for licences.³⁸

The large number of applications for the periods 1691-1700 and 1701-1710 may fairly be ascribed to the passing of the Toleration Act in 1689 when large numbers of existing meeting-houses were awaiting registration, and many Dissenters were awaiting the freedom the Act brought to expand their work. Michael Watts says in the twenty years

³⁴ Payne (1959), p. 267-268

³⁵ However, it may be possible to explain this apparent anomaly as a residual effect of the Evangelical Awakening in that the activity of church planting 'zealots' continues on the fringe of the church long after the numerical strength of the centre has begun to decline.

³⁶ See p. 12 above

³⁷ Gilbert (1976), p. 23-27

³⁸ See Table 19

following the Act, “..meeting-houses sprang up in most of the towns and many of the villages of England and Wales, visible and permanent reminders of the failure of the established church to extinguish or comprehend Dissent.”³⁹ It might equally be possible to explain the number of registrations in 1711-1720 as a tailing off of the same phenomena. Thus the numbers of registrations in the decades 1721-1750 might be seen not as declining but as stable. The vast majority of the registrations are defined by Gilbert as ‘Unspecified Registrations’ and ‘Protestant and Protestant Dissenters’ leaving around a quarter in any one decade designated as Baptist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, or Other Denominations. My own research into the churches of the NPBA has not revealed one church with membership records of any note prior to 1750. It would seem unjustified, given the absence of concrete information regarding Church Membership statistics, especially against the firm evidence of the increase in the numbers of meeting-houses, to conclude as strongly as many do that Dissent in the early to mid-1700s was in rapid numerical decline. Gilbert when he writes, “...the registration of temporary places of worship ...was not simply a reflection of the growth of Dissent” recognises the contention in his own argument, that an increase in the number of places of worship would logically suggest an increase in the numbers of worshippers, but he does not amply justify his assertion.⁴⁰ His example of the Toxteth church that immediately after 1689 registered twelve premises as a gesture to premises used during the pre-toleration era he acknowledges as being rare. It is also true that other churches are responsible for multiple registrations as they are forced at times due to expiring leases, and persecution to find alternative premises, however churches are also forced to multiple leases as a result of constantly expanding congregations and the need to find larger premises. It is clear that from 1770 onwards the situation is transformed but this does not allow us to conclude that the situation prior to 1770 may be described as one of stagnation or decline.⁴¹

It must also be understood that it may not be possible in terms of growth analysis to lump all of Old Dissent together in the period 1700-1740. As statistical information becomes more available after this time it is apparent that the revival of fortunes enjoyed by Congregationalists and Baptists is not visited upon Presbyterian and Quakers.⁴² The clear

³⁹ Watts (1978), p. 304

⁴⁰ Gilbert (1976), p. 33

⁴¹ Lovegrove (1988), p. 38 argues that the available statistical information suggests that “...a period of steady growth...” commenced amongst Baptists after 1740, though he deals only sparingly with this issue.

⁴² Gilbert (1976), p. 35

decline of Presbyterians, who in 1715 accounted for two-thirds of all Dissenters, throughout the late eighteenth century and beyond is significant. It might explain why Dissent as a whole may be deemed to be declining prior to 1750 without necessitating that all its constituent parts were. By the turn of the eighteenth century the numbers of Baptist and Congregationalists had both exceeded the numbers of Presbyterians.⁴³

B. The Circular Letters of the Particular Baptists Associations and the Baptist Annual Register

The main sources for statistical information are the *CLs*⁴⁴ of the various associations and *Baptist Annual Register*⁴⁵ edited by John Rippon⁴⁵ between 1790-1802. Rippon (1750-1836) was a graduate of the Bristol Academy and the successor to the doyen of hyper-Calvinism, John Gill, at Carter Lane, London. It was Rippon's habit to include in the *BAR* such information from the churches and associations as was sent to him, and this includes copies of the *CLs*.⁴⁶ Rippon's self declared purpose was to bring Baptists from around the World together. He wrote:

...TO ALL THE BAPTISED MINISTERS AND PEOPLE IN AMERICA, ENGLAND, IRELAND, SCOTLAND, WALES, THE UNITED NETHERLANDS, FRANCE, SWITZERLAND, POLAND, RUSSIA, PRUSSIA, AND ELSEWHERE... WITH A DESIRE OF PROMOTING AN UNIVERSAL INTERCHANGE OF KIND OFFICES AMONG THEM AND IN SERIOUS EXPECTATION THAT BEFORE MANY YEARS ELAPSE... A DEPUTATION FROM ALL THESE CLIMES WILL MEET PROBABLY IN LONDON TO CONSULT THE ECCLESIASTICAL GOOD OF THE WHOLE...⁴⁷

Most *CL* title pages included a list of churches represented at the annual assembly by ministers or messengers, and some distinguish between those churches represented in

⁴³ Gilbert (1976), p. 36

⁴⁴ See p. 125 below. The *CLs* can be found in the British Library, and in the relevant County Record Offices, odd copies exist in early church archival materials.

⁴⁵ A copy of the *BAR* can be found in four bound volumes in the British Library. See Table 20

⁴⁶ See Table 20 for the statistics derived from the *BAR*.

⁴⁷ *BAR* (1790), this quotation is on an unnumbered page between the title page and the preface, the latter of which is numbered [i]-viii. The capitals are original.

person and those that send a letter to the assembly. These 'Annual Letters'⁴⁸ were reports from the churches and were read during the assembly. It is these individual letters that provide the association the statistical information they then record. It is this list of churches that I have used in the first instance for the number of churches in the association. However, this is only a guide as member churches that do not attend the assembly, and do not send letters are often excluded from this list. As we reach the year 1800 and then beyond, the statistics usually begin to take a more sophisticated format, and many associations begin to present the statistics in a tabular form, giving information on each church in the association. Where a *CL* gives a list of churches at the beginning and then provides a tabular list of statistics at the end and discrepancies between the two occur I have taken the figures from the tabular list as this is more directly related to the statistics provided. It should also be noted that association statistics for the eighteenth century rarely included a total for church membership.

The association tables are to be found in Appendix III.⁴⁹ The clear discrepancies in the tables exist between the columns that show the change in church membership (Difference column) for each year and the total membership (Membership Column) for that same year, when compared to the previous year. At times these discrepancies are large. The statistics for Norfolk and Suffolk show between 1799 and 1800 an increase in membership of thirty-five in the Difference column but a decrease in the Membership Column of sixty-eight. This difference and most other such large differences may be explained severally. First, by the fact that churches often return incomplete statistics, and the omission of the church's total membership is the most common absence. Thus at times as many as seven out of twenty-four churches may omit to send their total membership figure whilst still reporting their other statistics. If these same churches had reported full figures the previous year it is easy to see how the Difference column may show an increase whilst the Membership column shows a decrease. Secondly, churches that leave the association are not usually acknowledged, so again an adverse effect may be had on the figures.

It should also be noted that it seems to be general practice to report members dismissed to form a new church as a negative statistic without any balance in the positive columns as it may be some time before a newly formed church joins the association. Where such is

⁴⁸ Hereafter referred to as *LA(s)* - Letters to the Associations.

indicated in the returns I have endeavoured to show it. In general when any anomalies are explained in the returns or the minutes of an assembly I have shown this in the footnotes. Where an entry shows limited statistics it is because no others were available in the *CL* for that year. Occasionally for example an association may simply report one figure for those added and one for those decreased.

Together with the county-by-county statistics these tables present a clear picture of PB church Growth across the whole of the country. According to the Evans List,⁵⁰ which it must be remembered does not distinguish between General and Particular Baptist churches, Yorkshire and Lancashire had only one Baptist church in 1715-1717 between them. However by 1787 there were seventeen PB churches in the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association and by 1817 there were thirty-six churches, and Norfolk and Suffolk with only three Baptist churches in 1717 had by 1821, nineteen PB churches.

The Western Association by 1814 has sixty-three churches with 5,994 members at an average of ninety-five per church. This shows that since 1715-17 the number of churches has increased from sixteen for all Baptist churches to sixty-three PB churches alone. It is important to realise that the Evans List gives the number of hearers or attendees, not the number of members, for those churches for whom statistics are given. In 1715-17 the average attendee at churches in the south west was 309 against an average of ninety-eight members per church in 1814. If the average attendance in 1814 is to equate to that of 1715-1717 it would mean that the number of non-members attending services must number slightly more than two for every member.

⁴⁹ With the exception of those for the NPBA that can be found on p. 298ff

⁵⁰ Although as we saw earlier on p. 90 whilst the Evans List may show no Baptist Churches in Yorkshire there were perhaps as many as eight.

C. Early Nineteenth Century Lists

1. The Baptist Magazine Lists

The Baptist Magazine of November 1811 published a list of PB Churches in England ‘corrected to October 1811.’⁵¹ It was followed in the *BM* of May 1812 by a list taken from ‘Bogue and Bennett’s History of Dissenters’, which gives comparative figures for the Dissenting churches but does not separate out the different Baptist groupings.⁵² A footnote to the list states that 100 of the Baptist churches are GBs and twenty are Sandemanian though this is from a total that includes 176 Welsh Baptist Churches in a total of 708 Baptist churches in England and Wales. According to the NCGB historian J. H. Wood there were fifty-seven NCGB churches in England in 1815,⁵³ which assuming the number of GB and Sandemanian churches splits between England and Wales at the same ratio as the total number of Baptist churches, the figures in Table 21 are reasonably in agreement with those in Table 22.

The third *BM* list of January 1823 is a ‘List of the Particular or Calvinistic Baptist Churches in England.’⁵⁴ A footnote acknowledges that the list is incomplete taken as it is from the records in the *CLs*. These exclude Baptist churches that are not in membership of the associations and those churches not included in any given year due to their non-attendance at the annual assembly or their failure to send a report to it. The preamble to the list makes reference to the 1689 Confession of Faith adopted by the London General Assembly that it commends to the churches as a standard to be adopted by all.⁵⁵ The *BM* of January 1827 contains another ‘List of the Particular or Calvinistic Baptist Churches in England.’⁵⁶ The original list also gives where possible the date of the formation of the church, the name of the current pastor and the year of his settlement.⁵⁷

⁵¹ *BM*, November 1811, p. 458-463. See Table 21

⁵² See Table 22

⁵³ Wood (1847), p. 181-208 counting back through the separate lists from Thurlaston.

⁵⁴ *BM*, January 1823, p.23ff

⁵⁵ See Table 25

⁵⁶ *BM*, January 1827, p.32-35, February 1827, p. 80-83 and March 1827, p. 135-139

⁵⁷ See Table 26

A comparison of the BM lists reveals the level of growth in numbers of churches amongst PBs from 1789 onwards accelerating in the early years of the nineteenth century.⁵⁸

2. The J.P.A. List of 1789 and Amendments to the 1823 list

The appearance of the 1823⁵⁹ list provokes a short correspondence in the *BM* first from a correspondent signed J.P.A.⁶⁰ and then a response to J.P.A.⁶¹ J.P.A. in his letter to the editor refers to a printed list in his possession dated 1789 of churches and ministers.⁶² He does not state the origins of this list only that he is in possession of it, and the list is given by county in the *BM*.⁶³ He does not specify that his 1789 list is a list of PB churches but we may assume this to be the case, for if it is not it fails to serve the purpose for which J.P.A. is using it.⁶⁴ In addition to the 1789 list J.P.A. provides his own amendments to the 1823 list.⁶⁵

3. J.B.'s Comparison of the lists of 1811 and 1823

The April edition of the *BM* of 1823⁶⁶ carries a comparison of the lists of 1811 and 1823 under the initials J.B. noting the considerable growth in the number of churches over the twelve-year period under consideration.⁶⁷ Though much of what this correspondent states is evident to any analysis of the figures it is interesting to note the points he makes, as this serves to indicate what was of interest to the early nineteenth century observer.

⁵⁸ See Table 29

⁵⁹ See Table 25

⁶⁰ *BM*, August 1823, p. 331-332. The identity of J.P.A. is unclear as in the 1823 list there is no minister with these initials the closest being James Aston at Lockwood, Yorkshire.

⁶¹ *BM*, October 1823, p.432-434. This correspondent offers nothing of further interest.

⁶² Although I have included only the statistics for Counties and number of churches both the 1811 and 1823 lists in the *BM* give the names of individual churches and their ministers.

⁶³ *BM*, August 1823, p. 331-332

⁶⁴ See Table 27

⁶⁵ See Table 28

⁶⁶ *BM*, April 1823, p. 159ff

⁶⁷ The original lists in the respective *BM*'s include the number of churches in Wales, which I have not included in the lists given here.

The decline in Northumberland from four to three churches is explained by the fact that two Scotch churches previously included are now omitted, otherwise an increase would have been shown there also.⁶⁸ J.B. shows an interest in the fate of ministers, which serves to show something of the attitude of the time to ministry. Between 1811 and 1823 we are told that, "...about eighty pastors have been summoned, by the great Head of the church, to give an account of their stewardship..."⁶⁹ This evidence of concern for ministers and ministry is a characteristic of this period. J.B. goes on to discuss why it is that a further 100 ministers have during the twelve-year period 'removed from their stations.' Though saying it is not for him to speculate on the reasons for this J.B. goes on to do just that. He suggests as possible reasons, a change in sentiment either by pastor or people; financial difficulties; a love of novelty on the part of the minister and problems arising from deacons or members.⁷⁰ What is of interest is that underlying this is the belief that the movement of ministers from one church to another is not natural but enforced, the norm is at this time that once a minister comes to a church he will remain there for life. That this is so is born out by a selection process in which it was usual for a man to be on probation at a church for anything from six months to eighteen months before receiving a call. Still on the subject of ministry J.B. turns to the problems caused by the rate of church growth calculating that over the period in question some 400 ministers would be required to fill all the vacancies.⁷¹ He notes, however, that only about 150 ministers had come from the colleges, and that as many again, who were untrained, had taken up pastorates. He draws an interesting conclusion from this when he writes, "Perhaps this fact would go far towards accounting for our increase, as a denomination, not keeping pace with that of our Independent brethren..."⁷²

Moving away from the lists J.B. turns to financial matters. He laments that there are churches unable to afford a minister, too few ministers able to support themselves, and insufficient funds available to the denomination to affect the situation. He further bemoans the poverty of the BHMS, which leaves it unable to respond to the opportunities open to it. J.B. writes, "I fee fully persuaded that were the funds of that Institution commensurate

⁶⁸ *BM*, April 1923, p. 160 in footnote

⁶⁹ *BM*, April 1923, p. 160

⁷⁰ *BM*, April 1923, p. 161

⁷¹ J.B. reckons on 220 new churches formed, eighty ministers' dead, and ninety-eight churches vacant in 1811.

with its opportunities of usefulness, we need not, humanly speaking, remain behind the most prosperous and respectable denomination of Dissenters.”⁷³ J.B. suggests that new churches should not be formed until the congregation is able to support a minister. He also alludes to the problems surrounding the building of new meeting-houses and the extension of existing ones, urging consideration of a better system of funding, and more caution on the part of churches before embarking on such projects.

In terms of church growth J.B. expresses only one note of concern, which is the apparent lack of progress made by PBs in London. He notes that in 1738 there were thirty-five churches, in 1794 twenty-one, in 1811 twenty-seven,⁷⁴ and in 1823 thirty-two, although he does concede that the average membership and congregation have increased considerable.⁷⁵ J.B. concludes his analysis with five matters he believes deserving of wider consideration in the denomination.⁷⁶ They are a means of aiding churches in need of pecuniary support; second a better plan for aiding with new meeting-houses; third the establishment of a book room to aid ministers in acquiring books; fourth the purchase of a property to benefit ministers and widows in various ways; and fifthly to give more attention to the study of the scriptures and their relevance to the churches.

Perhaps the main emphasis that comes through here is the sense of the denomination as something that matters. J.B. was concerned not for his own local church but for the national church to which he belonged. In this I believe him to be representative of his era in that he was expressing a concern for the spiritual state of the country as a whole, which incorporated belief that if the churches across the nation were not growing then the mission of the church could was not being fulfilled. J.B., along with many of his contemporaries, maintained both a national and an international vision in which the big picture was as important as the small one.

⁷² *BM*, April 1923, p. 161

⁷³ *BM*, April 1923, p. 161

⁷⁴ In fact the 1811 list shows twenty-eight churches in London and Southwark

⁷⁵ *BM*, April 1923, p. 161. If this concern for London enables us to place J.B. there he could be James Bissett the minister of Stoke Newington, though this is classified as Middlesex rather than London at this time. However, the *BM*, November 1820, p. 495-498 carries two letters from J.B. of Whitchurch, Salop. The letters are lists of churches in Bedfordshire and Shropshire and so must be the same J.B. But, the minister of the church at Whitchurch, Hampshire, according to the 1823 list, is one Philip Davies.

⁷⁶ *BM*, April 1823, p. 162

D. The 1851 Ecclesiastical Census of Great Britain

As part of the 1851 Population Census the government for the first and only time conducted an Ecclesiastical Census of the country to determine the religious affiliation and distribution of the population. Census day was Sunday 31 March 1851.⁷⁷

The Census gave information about the size, number, and distinctions of congregations and was also interested in the size, determined by 'sittings,' of the places of worship.⁷⁸ Table 1 shows the strength of the five main Baptist groupings recognised by the Censor, and Table 6 statistical information for all Baptists prior to 1851 compiled by Mann. The Census also sought to ascertain whether a place of worship was a building built and designed for that purpose (separated), rather than a room in a house, or a barn or some such other building attached to another property (non-separated).

The government was genuinely concerned to ensure that there was enough space (sittings) in the churches to accommodate the whole nation, and as early as 1818 concern was being expressed through the pages of the *BM* on this very issue. An anonymous correspondent in the section entitled 'Domestic Religious Intelligence' of the April issue provided information in tabular form to verify that there was sufficient space in the churches and chapels of the nation for the whole population to attend worship.⁷⁹ The conclusion in the *BM* was that the Church of England could accommodate around half the population and together with the nation's chapels there were sufficient space for the whole population to attend worship at one sitting on a Sunday. The motive behind this report in the *BM* would appear to be an 'official report of the legislature' recently published with a plan to build sufficient new Anglican churches to accommodate the whole population. However further detail than this of the report is not provided in the *BM*.

⁷⁷The Census returns can be viewed on microfilm at the Public Records Office in Kew (PRO film 57.652-656). Parliamentary Paper, vol. 33 containing the Report by Horace Mann and his Tabular analysis of the returns may be seen on microfiche also at the PRO, Kew (PRO microfiche 55.299), and on hard copy in the British Library. Mann, (1854).

⁷⁸ That is the number of seats available in a church

⁷⁹ *BM*, April 1818, p, 154-155. See Table 30

Table 32 and Table 33 help to indicate the relative strengths of Baptist churches in 1851. Of interest are the number of GB churches still continuing as such who have not gone over to the Unitarians nor joined the New Connexion, and the much greater number of churches who whilst termed Baptist are not affiliated to either of the two recognised groupings of the time. However, when the average attendance is considered the much greater strength of the Particular's and the New Connexion's churches are evident. Table 33 makes allowance for those churches that do not report their statistics.⁸⁰

Table 34 indicates that the number of Baptist Churches prior to 1801 totalled 588. This is in stark contrast to Ernest Payne who gives the number of Baptists churches in 1798 as 445 (including Wales) taking his information from Rippon's *BAR*.⁸¹ My own researching of the *BAR* shows that there were 361 Baptist churches in England in 1798.⁸² This discrepancy of 227 churches is extremely large. Even discounting the number of GB Churches and the number of undefined Baptist churches there is still a discrepancy of 122 churches. As Rippon's express purpose in producing the *BAR* was to promote contact between Baptists around the world it would seem unlikely that he would have ignored either those Baptist churches who continued as GB churches or those which did not designate themselves either as General or Particular. As the statistics in the Census are based upon the returns received from individual churches the greater weight must be given to them. It must, however, be said that the individual returns are often themselves quite unhelpful in aiding the task of the Censor. It is evident from a study of them that due to the paucity of church record keeping many churches were not fully aware of when they were formed, the response 'Before 1800' being a common one. Some forms are more fully completed than others, making a full series of statistics impossible. Nevertheless the 1851 Census remains the most comprehensive survey of religion in England until recent times, and whatever its weaknesses the evidence it supplies must be considered reliable. On this basis the growth in the number of Baptist churches can be shown in Table 35.

Once again these statistics serve to indicate the steady increase in growth that takes place in Baptist churches, clearly shown by the last column on Table 35, which indicates the

⁸⁰ PP, 1851 Census, vol. 33 Table A, Supplement II, p. clxxii

⁸¹ Payne (1959), p. 267.

⁸² See Appendix II, Table 8

average increase in churches year on year from the previous reference point. The longevity of the growth period is evident from Table 36. The peak period of growth is clearly between 1798 and 1851 when an average of 41.2 new Baptist churches appear annually. In viewing Table 36 it should be realised that the figures for 1866 are taken from the Baptist Handbook and apply only to those churches designated as PB and NCGB churches, which explains the apparent decline in numbers of churches from 1851 to 1866. It should also be realised that the 1851 Census accounts not just for members but also for hearers, or those in attendance at Baptist church services on Census day, a much larger figure. Although membership statistics reached their peak around 1906 the number of churches does not reach its peak until 1951 when the Baptist Union of Great Britain numbered 3,351 member churches. Table 36 also illustrates how the pattern of growth continues into the first decade of the twentieth century.

E. Conclusion

There can be little doubt that a pattern of significant growth emerges amongst Baptist churches commencing c1770. Alan Everitt⁸³ explores the link between nonconformist churches and towns to see if there was any discernible pattern behind the growth of Old Dissent. He concludes, “The truth is that there was no simple equation between agricultural society and agrarianism, or industrial parishes and dissent.”⁸⁴ By use of the phrase Old Dissent he deliberately excludes the Methodists who form a New Dissent in eighteenth and nineteenth century England. Table 37 indicates that nonconformity was almost equal in strength to the established church on Census day in 1851 making up 44% of churchgoers nation-wide. The distribution is not even. In the more populated south east the Church of England number around 66% of churchgoers in a part of the country in which it has been long established where the parish system is well developed. From the Midland counties of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire northward Dissenters make up 50% of the churchgoing population. Rural areas such as Cornwall, and the East and West Ridings all had predominantly dissenting populations.⁸⁵

⁸³ Everitt (1990)

⁸⁴ Everitt (1990), p. 182

⁸⁵ Everitt (1990), p. 180

However, to conclude as Everitt does that Baptists did not especially take hold of the new industrialised areas of the country is not to suggest that they were totally rural either. According to the Census⁸⁶ 9,229,120 people lived in large towns and there were eight hundred and thirty-nine Baptist churches in those towns, whilst, 8,698,489 lived in the rest of the country where 1,949 Baptist churches were situated. However, the rest of the country does not imply in the countryside. Baptists did not operate on a parish system whereby the entire country was divided up in such a manner as to ensure that every part of the country had a church responsible for its spiritual welfare. Baptist churches were gathered churches existing in proximity to their congregations. There is no evidence that it was part of their thinking to establish a church in every parish along Anglican lines. New Baptist churches came into being on the basis of possibility but their survival depended on viability. As a result of this the vast majority of Baptist churches if not established in large towns were established in population centres of one size or another. The Censor, for example, did not consider Kettering, a large town, yet its Sunday afternoon attendance numbered 575 men, women, and children. The church at Thrapston averaged 300 at its evening service and the church at Higham Ferris 250, small towns but centres of Baptist strength.

So a pattern is established of growth throughout the towns and cities, in industrial and agricultural England. It was a cycle of growth that was sustained from one generation to the next for a period of nearly 150 years. Our study of the NPBA illustrates something of the nature of the growth as from a small core of churches the association spirals outwards increasing in strength until like an amoebae it splits into smaller county based cells which begin the process anew. A similar in-depth study of the Western and London Associations would no doubt reveal a similar pattern.

⁸⁶ PP, 1851 Census, vol. 33, Table FF, p. cclxxiii

V. The Northamptonshire Particular Baptist Association

A. Northamptonshire in the Eighteenth Century

Northamptonshire occupies a central position within England as a whole. Its unusually long slim shape on a north-south axis means that it borders upon more counties than any other county in England.¹ To the north it borders Leicestershire, Rutland and Lincolnshire, to the east it borders Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire, to the south it borders Buckinghamshire, and to the west Oxfordshire and Warwickshire.

The NPBA from its initial meeting in the mid-1760's included churches from outside of the county. At its peak ten counties provided member churches. There was no doubt that the county's geographical position enabled it to become the focal point of Baptist Church life in central England.

1. The ups and downs of the gentry

Professor Alan Everitt quotes the eighteenth century travelogue William Camden's description of Northamptonshire as, "Everywhere adorned with noblemen's and gentlemen's houses."² According to Everitt as few as 27% of Northamptonshire's gentry (335 families) were truly indigenous to the county in the seventeenth century.³ Everitt struggles to effectively explain this pattern of social mobility, which is peculiar to Northamptonshire. His reference to the affect of the enclosure movement seems inadequate, as he himself acknowledges, for it is by no means unique to Northamptonshire. He places some importance on the fact that at one time half the county had been a royal forest, which had devolved, presumably by means of grace and favour, to various ennobled families.⁴ Presumably the fact that such a large part of the county belonged to the crown

¹ See Map 1, p. 325

² Everitt (1966), p. 63. Everitt was Professor of Local History at Leicester University.

³ Everitt (1966), p. 63

⁴ Everitt (1966), p. 63-64. He does not draw out the implications of his assertion.

meant it was bereft of the normal complement of indigenous ennobled and gentrified families. One explanation for the influx of gentry into Northampton that Everitt ignores is its central location in the nation as is demonstrated by its strategic importance in the Civil War when the county became something of a national cross-roads for armies.

By 1827 Northamptonshire possessed a comprehensive network of turnpikes,⁵ and railways began to appear in the county in 1838 with the main London to Birmingham line.⁶ It is a natural extension of the strategic importance of Northamptonshire to the nation that the two major arterial roads from London to the North, the M1 and the A1, both pass through the county, as does the A14 which is the principal route across England from the Irish ports in the west to Europe in the east. We can also note in modern times that both main rail routes from London to the north, the east coast and west coast lines pass through the county. Whilst the age of canals did not last as anticipated, the Grand Union Canal, which was to be the spine of the entire canal network, also passes through the heart of the county. Everitt also notes that Northampton became a coaching centre providing easy access to London, Bath, Oxford and Cambridge.⁷ Northamptonshire's geographical location and the relative ease of access it offered to the rest of the country played its part in attracting the socially mobile.

Of the turnpikes thirty-one of the thirty-six shown were enacted before 1800. The ease of movement afforded by them would have been of great help to the itinerant evangelists of the NPBA, and to the association itself. The relationship between Andrew Fuller of Kettering and John Sutcliff of Olney is one that is immensely important to the development of Baptist life in Northamptonshire. Fuller frequently rode from Kettering to Olney to meet his good friend there. One wonders if their creative relationship could have flourished as easily without the Kettering to Wellingborough Turnpike enacted in 1753-1754?

Great importance must be attached to the place occupied by the county during the Civil War. Northamptonshire had strong puritan roots and Northampton itself would become one of Parliament's major strongholds with a strong garrison, made necessary by the

⁵ See Map 2, p. 326

⁶ Two rail links existed briefly 1800-1805 and 1805-1815 only to join unfinished sections of the Grand Union Canal and were closed when the canal was opened.

proximity of the town to Oxford where the King maintained his court. The battle of Naesby, fought on Northamptonshire soil, was one of the most important of the War. This battle and other skirmishes, with the constant movement of troops from both armies criss-crossing the county, had a major impact on the life and thought of the people of the county. Everitt writes, "...the whole wartime population of [Northampton] - tradesmen, troops, and country gentlemen - had rapidly become pervaded by an overwhelming sense of grim and efficient puritan authoritarianism, increasing with the rising tide of ruin all around."⁸ His view is that the relative chaos and lawlessness of the war period and the innate Puritanism of the population produced after the war the determination amongst the gentry to assert control over the affairs of the county. This in turn produced a situation over the next 100 years in which gradually that desire for authority and control reduced the number of significant families from 335 to nineteen.

Three other factors must be accounted for in explaining this reduction in the number of gentrified families. The first is that at 335 their number was at its peak due to their recent influx into the county. Over the course of time as these same families took root intermarriage between them naturally reduced their numbers. Secondly the Civil War and the subsequent Restoration abruptly halted the process of gentrification. The initially triumphant Parliamentarians proved reluctant to encourage further gentrification for fear they might find their newly won status at threat, and the returning Royalists had every reason to halt a process that had led to their loss of status and power in the first place. This closing of ranks amongst the gentry, and especially the nobility, was more pronounced in a county that had suffered more than most in the War. The third factor concerned the fate of younger sons in an era when primogeniture was practised almost universally. Northamptonshire, with the exception of Northampton itself, boasted no industry and only local trade. This resulted in younger sons leaving the county for London and other parts of the country in order to find their opportunities, which served to reduce yet further the number of gentry in the county.

⁷ Everitt (1966), p. 71 see p. 114 below

⁸ Everitt (1966), p. 66

2. *The development of Northampton*

During the eighteenth century Northampton became one of the principal market towns in England. Three factors lay behind this rise to prominence. The first was the general increase in population that had become especially significant by 1640. Although most people still lived in the country the cities also grew. This placed a demand upon food supplies, and pressure on the centres of food gathering and distribution - the market towns. The increased demand prompted the Agricultural Revolution, and the subsequent increase in produce revolutionised commerce in the market towns. Everitt writes, "The traditional 'open market' of the local town ultimately proved incapable of meeting the expanding demand."⁹ Northampton, because of its central location and its proximity to London, became a major market centre. Although posterity ascribes to Northampton fame for its 'shoes' its early importance was as the 'centre of all the horse-markets and horse-fairs in England.'¹⁰

At the heart of the commerce system that developed was the inn. Along with the increase in produce came a new class of merchants who were travelling factors and agents. Acting as middlemen they bought from the farmers in the local markets and then sold on from the major markets. Their place of business was the inn the numbers of which in a major centre like Northampton increased six-fold. The larger and better of these inns such as the George in Northampton could accommodate seventy to eighty guests in what was, by eighteenth century standards, reasonable comfort.

Such simple things as this mattered immensely in the story of the NPBA . The turnpike roads made it possible for representatives from the churches to travel with ease around the county and the presence of large and comfortable inns at their destinations provided the accommodation that made the association meetings possible. Each of the *CLs* for the association for 1770-1830 ends with the location of the next annual gathering and the name of the inn at which representatives were to 'put up.'

⁹ Everitt (1966), p. 68

¹⁰ Everitt (1966), p. 69 - Everitt quotes from Daniel Defoe, (1959) *A tour through England and Wales*, Everyman edition, London, ii. pp. 86-87

Although this new merchant class spent a great deal of time travelling they did begin to establish roots and family homes. Everitt notes the popularity of Northampton as such a base, pointing to its location as a coaching centre. He also notes that Northampton had a reputation for being a clean and well-built city. It was one that, due to the previous influx of gentry into the county, was well provisioned with those "...many sophisticated trades, pursuits, and amusements, which came into existence to meet their own taste and that of the country gentry."¹¹

3. *Distribution of Baptists in the NPBA Counties*

It would be wrong to assume that the pattern of rural dissent is identical throughout the entire countryside or even within adjoining counties such as Leicestershire and Northamptonshire. In every County there were local social and historical considerations that could make significant differences. The following analysis is taken from the 1851 Religious Census. One difficulty of the statistics as they are presented is that it is not possible for a total figure for attendance to be given, as the statistics do not account for those who attend more than one service on a Sunday. Horace Mann, who compiled the official analysis of the statistics, reasoned that actual attendance was in the region of 70% of total attendance for Census Sunday and where relevant, as in Table 63, I follow his lead on this point.¹² As noted the Census focuses on sittings as well as attendance. Mann points to the non-attendance of very young children, disabled and aged individuals, those left at home to care for them, and those kept from attendance by work as factors reducing the number of required sittings. He estimates that the reasons given preclude 42% of the total population from attending church and that accommodation is therefore required for 58% of the population or 10,398,013 persons.¹³

Alan Everitt concludes from his analysis of the 1851 Census that Dissent was at its strongest in the counties from the Midlands (i.e. Derby and Nottinghamshire) northwards, especially so where there were large industrial centres.¹⁴ By contrast essentially agrarian counties close to London were the strongest centres of Anglicanism. However there were

¹¹ Everitt (1966), p. 71

¹² PP, 1851 Census, p. cli1

¹³ Mann (1854), p. 58-596

some clear exceptions. Bedfordshire (62% Dissenting - ranked 8) though rural and close to London and agrarian Cornwall (64 % Dissenting - ranked 1) in the far south-west were both Dissenting strongholds, but Devon (58% Anglican, ranked 22), and Somerset (61% Anglican, ranked 27), by contrast were strongly Anglican. Whilst Westmoreland in the far northwest was strongly Anglican (66% Anglican – Ranked 36).¹⁵ These examples confirm that local considerations can make a significant difference.

The information contained on Table 44 and Table 45 highlights further interesting information regarding the NPBA Counties. The two most rural counties are Lincolnshire and Staffordshire. They are the largest counties by acreage and they contain the largest populations (Table 44) and, as might be expected, the largest number of Anglican churches, and the highest numerical attendance compared with the other counties (Table 45). We can see also from Table 63 that they contain the lowest attendance ratio of all the counties. However by contrast in terms of average attendance a different story unfolds for whilst Lincolnshire has the lowest average attendance, Staffordshire has the second highest (twice that of Lincolnshire - see Table 52). Interestingly for Baptists, in these two counties, the story is much the same. Staffordshire and Lincolnshire have the lowest attendance numerically and as a percentage of the population.¹⁶ Although Lincolnshire contains the third highest number of churches this does not impact upon attendance, which remains very low. The average attendance at Lincolnshire's Baptist churches is higher only than Rutlandshire, whereas in Staffordshire the average attendance, just as it was for the Anglicans, is higher by 45% (Table 52).

That Lincolnshire effectively comes bottom of the list by most comparisons amongst the nine counties for Anglicans and Baptists is surprising. From an Anglican perspective Lincoln is one of the oldest Bishoprics in the country and from a Baptist perspective it is much more recently the birthplace of the extremely vibrant NCGB. The movement of people from the countryside to the towns resulting from the Industrial Revolution undoubtedly would affect the average attendance at Lincolnshire's Anglican churches but does not explain the more important indicator of percentage of population attending church.

¹⁴ Everitt (1972), p. 47

¹⁵ Everitt (1972), p. 69

¹⁶ Rutland which is by far the smallest county by acreage has fewest churches and the lowest actual

Table 52 further helps to indicate that there is no discernible difference within any of the counties of relative strength between Anglicans and Baptists. Bedfordshire has the highest average attendance for Baptists and the third highest for Anglicans, and Hertfordshire has the second highest Baptist average attendance and the highest Anglican average (just two more than the Baptist average). In fact if you ranked the nine counties by average attendance five of them would be in identical places. Only Derbyshire (third Baptist to sixth Anglican) and Staffordshire (sixth Baptist to second Anglican) occupy significantly different places. It is also interesting to note that in seven of the nine counties Baptist churches have higher average attendance than Anglicans, in Hertfordshire they are almost identical, and the ninth is Staffordshire whose extremely high average attendance we have already noted.

Amongst Baptist groupings the dominance of the PBs is apparent. They are the only grouping to be represented in every one of the nine counties.¹⁷ In Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire there are more NCGB than PBs with higher average attendances (except in Nottinghamshire – see Table 53). Derbyshire is the county in which all of the groupings (including undefined) are most equally represented. It is perhaps possible to discern the manner in which the New Connexion from its Lincolnshire and Leicestershire origins spread most rapidly west through Nottinghamshire into Derbyshire and through Leicestershire itself whilst making no impact whatsoever on the PB dominated areas further south. Staffordshire, which fares badly by many comparisons, is relatively much stronger in PB terms with the fourth highest actual and average attendance and number of churches. The cause of this is likely to be seen in its pre-NPBA links to the south west to Bristol and the Western Association via the west Midland Counties of Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Table 55 to Table 61, are concerned with the five towns within the nine counties considered by the Censor to be 'large.' These illustrate the greater strength of Baptists in towns in comparison with Anglicans. Whereas throughout the nine counties there are 4.3 times as many Anglican churches, in the towns there are only 1.8 times the numbers of

attendance but a much higher percentage ratio – see Table 63

¹⁷ See Table 47 to Table 50. Though every county contains undefined or unaffiliated Baptist churches whose presence is significant enough to warrant inclusion in the statistics.

churches. Curiously the total Anglican attendance is also 4.3 times the Baptist attendance whilst in the towns it is an almost identical 1.7 times. The towns, as can be seen from the next section, provided a much more level playing field for Dissent than the countryside (again it is within Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, that the exception is found). Both Anglicans and Baptists enjoy significantly higher average attendance in the towns with Leicester's nine Anglican churches averaging 1,318 attendees and its ten Baptist churches 886 attendees. Across the five towns Baptists had the highest average attendance at 697 compared to the Anglican's 654.

The statistics also reveal some interesting details with regard to the pattern of Sunday attendance. Across the nine counties the evening attendance for Anglicans is significantly lower than either the morning or afternoon varying from two and a half times lower up to seven times lower (Table 45). Amongst GBs it is the morning service that is least well attended with the twenty-one churches in Derbyshire and Leicestershire holding no morning service at all, and the afternoon service that is best attended (Table 49). The exception is the one Northamptonshire GB church that follows the PB pattern of higher morning attendance. By contrast amongst churches of the New Connexion it is the afternoon service that is the least well attended, and the evening service the best attended (Table 48). Amongst PBs a more even spread is observed, though in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire the pattern follows the more dominant New Connexion churches in those counties (cf. Table 47 with Table 48). Curiously in Derbyshire where the groupings are the most equally spread and no one group is dominant, the churches of the different groupings observe a pattern that equates to the general pattern for their own grouping across the nine counties, and do not adopt a county-wide pattern of any kind.

However, it should be acknowledged that the figures in Table 63 and Table 64 are based upon 'sittings,' not actual attendance. For example, although in Northamptonshire the eighty-seven Baptist Churches (of all groupings not just PB) had 23,200 sittings their actual attendance can be calculated at 20,721 spread over the three services on Census Day.

4. *The Effect of Land Ownership on the Distribution of Church and Chapel in the NPBA Counties*

One of the major factors affecting the distribution of Dissenting churches was the ownership of land, and the political power that went along with it, as in many instances major landowners were also local magistrates and justices of the peace. It was to these men that Dissenters applied for the licences to establish their churches. In the towns and cities of the nation it was more possible for these positions to be held by merchants and men of commerce rather than the landed gentry. Everitt notes that this seemed to be less so in Northamptonshire where many of the smaller market towns had by the 1860's 'mere estate parishes' with the land held either by a single magnate or by a few individuals. This exacerbated the situation in a county that could be said as early as 1797 to be 'completely under the control of about a dozen peers' in political matters as well as in ownership of land.¹⁸ Table 68 illustrates this point though it is based on figures provided for the mid-nineteenth century not the late eighteenth.¹⁹

Ownership of land was often co-terminus with parish boundaries and in Leicestershire twenty out of 250 parishes (8%) were owned by one individual, who either personally or by patronage held political power over the parish. In Northamptonshire it was twenty-nine out of 282 (10%).²⁰ One of the interesting characteristics of Leicestershire was the number of parishes which contained three or more chapels (40% as opposed to 16% in Northamptonshire) which Everitt explains by the unusually 'large number of industrialised villages' present in Leicestershire.²¹ Everitt also points out that Leicestershire contains far fewer landed estates than does Northamptonshire.²² Table 69 and Table 70 explore the relationship between land ownership and the distribution of Dissenting chapels.²³

¹⁸ Everitt (1972), p. 53

¹⁹ Everitt (1972), p. 53-54

²⁰ Everitt (1972), p. 49

²¹ Everitt (1972), p. 50

²² Everitt (1972), p. 51

²³ Everitt (1972), p.79-81, Appendix Tables XIV-XVII

However, it should be understood that despite these clear differences between Leicestershire and Northamptonshire there were only 3% more Dissenters²⁴ in the former when from the evidence that Everitt provides it might be expected that the difference was more significant. This is especially true given that in Leicestershire 52% of the land is held by either a single owner or a small number of owners whilst in Northamptonshire the figures were much higher at 67%. There is a clear link between landholding and the pattern of chapel distribution. Of the forty-nine wholly owned parishes in the two counties only one Northamptonshire parish contains a chapel. Further of the 269 owned by a few sixty-one (12%) contain one chapel, eighteen (4%) contain two chapels, and two (0.4%) contain three or more chapels. These figures would tend to allow for a much higher proportion of Dissenters in Leicestershire than Northamptonshire than is in fact the case. From Table 64 we can see that Leicestershire does have more chapels at 354 against 294. Table 64 also shows the total number of Dissenters is also higher in Leicestershire at 73,714 against 65,656.

Together these statistics serve to illustrate that despite the contextual difference that Everitt highlights other factors are in play. There are two principal reasons why, despite the factors already considered, Leicestershire's Dissenters only number 3% more than Northamptonshire's as a percentage of the total churchgoing populations of their respective counties. The first is Northamptonshire's greater tradition of Dissent for whilst the average attendance at Leicester's chapels is 208, in Northamptonshire it is 7% higher at 223.²⁵

The strength of Old Dissent that is apparent in Northamptonshire is acknowledged by Everitt when he writes, "There were probably few counties where the Old Dissent as a whole was more powerful or more deeply entrenched than in Northamptonshire."²⁶ Further in Northamptonshire there were chapels to be found in as many as 29% of those parishes where the land was held by a few as against 32% in Leicestershire, however, given that in Leicestershire 43.6% of parishes were held in the hands of a few whilst in Northamptonshire the figure is much higher at 56% once again the ability of Dissenters, led by Old Dissent, in Northamptonshire to buck the trend is apparent. However, even in

²⁴ In terms of Baptists presence Leicestershire at 15% of sittings was less than Northamptonshire at 16% of sittings. In Leicestershire attendance was at 127.4% of available sittings and in Northamptonshire it was 86.6%. In total numbers Leicestershire possessed 14,018 Baptists and Northamptonshire 20,551

²⁵ See Table 69

²⁶ Everitt (1972), p. 51

Northamptonshire Dissent was barely able to break the stronghold of wholly owned parishes with only one of them containing a chapel? The power of the magnate was almost total owning not only the land but the villages and towns as well. Few inhabitants would not have worked either directly or indirectly for the magnate. All political appointments rested in his hands, as usually did the disposal of the parish living. Few were willing to risk the ire of the man who so controlled the fate of their entire families. But some did, and though unrecorded by the Census there would have been those illicit meetings even within such estate parishes.

The second explanation is to be found in the relative strengths of the Church of England in the two counties. It would appear that the factors that allowed for greater freedom for Dissent in Leicestershire also allowed the Church of England more freedom.

Leicestershire contained thirty-nine more Anglican churches than parishes (16%) and Northamptonshire only ten (3.5%). Further Leicestershire's Anglican churches had an average attendance of 287 whilst in Northamptonshire it was slightly higher at 290 (1%). This means that the Anglican population of the two counties was numerically almost the same. However, in the context that Everitt provides this is quite extraordinary and surprising.

By contrast, of the forty-four parishes with three or more chapels, thirty-one are in freehold parishes and a further eleven are in parishes owned by a number of individuals. In Leicestershire this accounts for 46% of parishes and in Northamptonshire 58% of parishes.

5. Conclusion

A picture is painted of a county that became a popular place to live. Its location, with the advent of the Agricultural Revolution and improvements in the nations transport routes, and its previous under population in terms of the gentry all combine to produce the vibrant burgeoning county that Northamptonshire becomes. That there should be a parallel vibrancy and growth amongst Northamptonshire's Baptists should not be surprising.

B. The Formation of the Northamptonshire Particular Baptist Association

Further evidence that PBs were not in the parlous state they are so frequently accused of can be found in the formation of the NPBA in 1765. The formation of PB churches into an association was by no means new. Yet, as it is some seventy to eighty years since the formation of the first, the Western Association, it cannot be argued that Northamptonshire was simply following the trend. Nor is it true to argue that the NPBA was only formed when there were sufficient churches for it to do so. Two of the original member churches no longer exist and the date of their formation is unclear but of the remaining six the last to form was Walgrave in 1700.²⁷ The same source shows that in the counties²⁸ covered by the original NPBA there were some fifty-two Baptist churches that existed prior to 1770.²⁹ The churches clearly had existed for some time and in sufficient number to come together if they desired.

Raymond Brown describes what took place at the association meetings established early in the eighteenth century. He writes,

The procedure was much the same wherever the meetings were held. The local church was normally represented by its minister and one other member who brought to the association a letter, carefully composed by their church, describing its life, problems, encouragements and ambitions. The meetings were spread over two or three days and always devoted time to preaching and mutual exhortation as well as discussion. The programme was arranged so that queries raised by the churches concerning pastoral or doctrinal matters could be debated and the churches informed of the association's common mind. At the close of the meeting a circular letter was prepared over the signature of the presiding minister or moderator and sent to all the associated churches.³⁰

²⁷ *BUH* (1996-1997). Under the entry for each of the remaining churches is given the date of its formation.

²⁸ See sections in Handbook for the East Midlands, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Cambridgeshire.

²⁹ The handbook does not distinguish between church groupings and it does not include churches that are no longer in existence or no longer in membership of the Baptist Union (e.g. Strict or Grace Baptists churches).

³⁰ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 40

This is precisely the pattern that was to be followed by the NPBA at its own annual assemblies.³¹ Why prior to 1765 Northamptonshire's PBs refrained from forming an association is unclear. However, what drew them together in the run up to the formation of the association was the growing belief that they were failing in their mission, and that only by associating together could they do something to affect this. This mission they understood both doctrinally and practically. The doctrinal purpose behind forming the association is affirmed by Robert Hall snr. (1728-1791) minister of Arnesby, Leicestershire, in his *CL* of 1776 on *The Trinity*. In his preamble to his subject he states that the purpose of the letters to this point have been to 'explain and defend' those doctrines commonly called Calvinism.³² The need for coming together to make such a defence is found in the letter of 1768 entitled *Against Antinomianism* also written by Robert Hall Snr. Faced by the three contrasting issues of the modern question, antinomianism, and the drift of their GB brethren into Unitarianism the Northamptonshire Baptists perceived the need to join together to defend their beliefs and to encourage each other in them.

However, whilst we must not underestimate the importance of doctrinal issues it is the link between the issue of the modern question and the practical issue referred to that is the most crucial in explaining the advent of the NPBA. That practical issue was their realisation that their churches were not growing, and were doing little to affect the 'poor spiritual state of the nation.' This is clearly demonstrated by the opening remarks of the association's first *CL* by Moses Deacon.³³ The transformation of the PBs was not theologically motivated but practically motivated. It was no part of hyper-Calvinistic theory that the church would decline. Their belief that God did not need them to bring men and women to a living faith, never supposed that without their activity, men and women would not come to faith. In coming together to address these issues they created the forum for the transformation that would follow.³⁴

A further indication of the importance of the numerical state of the churches is revealed by the fact that from their very first gathering in 1766 they kept records of their progress. The

³¹ *CL* (NPBA, 1766-1815)

³² *CL* (NPBA, 1776), p. 2

³³ *CL* (NPBA, 1766), p. 1-2

1784 assembly was faced with the problem of three years of successive decline in membership, with a fourth to follow in 1785, and two immediate responses are made to this situation. The first is the issuing by John Sutcliff, of his now famous 'Call to Prayer.' And the second is the decision taken at that assembly to ask Andrew Fuller, recently installed as minister at Kettering, to prepare the next *CL* on the theme 'Decline and Revival.' It was this depth of concern for the unconverted that appears again and again in the *CLs* and the breviate of the assembly meetings that became the true motivation for the transformation of the PBs. They simply could not sustain an adherence to a doctrine that was so clearly responsible for the inertia that lay behind their lack of growth and threatened their extinction. They did not abandon their strongly held Calvinistic beliefs but they did abandon the extremes of hyper-Calvinism responsible for their indolence for an openly evangelistic and moderate Calvinism.

C. The Growth and Expansion of the NPBA from 1770-1830

Of the original eight member churches of the NPBA two, Arnesby and Sheepshead,³⁵ were in Leicestershire, Carlton was in Nottinghamshire, with the remaining five in the county from which the association took its name. Of the next ten churches to join the NPBA only one, Roade, was a Northamptonshire church.³⁶ At its peak the association had churches in membership from Bedfordshire, Rutlandshire, Lincolnshire, Hertfordshire, Staffordshire, and Derbyshire. In 1829, with forty member churches, and a membership of 3,423, the association established a committee to look into the viability of continuing in its current form. In 1827 the church at St. Albans had already left to join with other Hertfordshire churches, and it was evident that others would do so. As a result by 1837 the membership of the NPBA had diminished to twenty-two churches from three counties (nineteen from Northamptonshire) with a membership in the region of 2,200.

Table 47 shows the markedly improved situation in the nine counties just twenty years later. The census statistics do not take into account churches that have not returned

³⁴ See p. 128 below on NPBA and hyper-Calvinism

³⁵ Now known as Shepshed. The contemporary spelling of Sheepshead is retained throughout this study

³⁶ See Table 72 and Table 73

information to the Censor. Nationally this was almost exactly 19%. If we adjust the average attendance in the above counties accordingly we find AM- 162; PM - 126; and Evening - 154 which is above the national average of 150-140 respectively.³⁷

So from eight member churches and approximately 600 members at its instigation in 1766 the NPBA can claim by 1851 to have grown to 239 churches with a total attendance of 92,873, comprising 65,012 separate individuals on the 31 March 1851 at three services.³⁸ The vagaries of statistical information is again demonstrated in that whilst the Census shows the Northamptonshire PBs to number sixty-three churches the NPBA's own returns in the *CL* for 1851 record only thirty-seven member churches. The only logical explanation is that there were a further twenty-seven PB churches in Northamptonshire who for whatever reason chose not to belong to the association.

The counties indicated in Table 47 are not exclusively given over to Baptist churches of the PB persuasion.³⁹ It is especially evident in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire that PB weakness is made up for by the strength of the other Baptist groupings.

Within the nine counties of the NPBA there are only five towns that are determined by the Censor as being large towns. They are Derby, Leicester, Northampton, Nottingham, and Stoke-upon-Trent. Of their 239 PB churches only seventeen are to be found in these large towns.⁴⁰ Table 65 is compiled from the individual returns to the Censor for the County of Northamptonshire.⁴¹ The gaps will serve to indicate how difficult it was for the Censor to compile statistics from the returns. The individual returns are themselves difficult to read, even on microfilm, and it is certain that I have, therefore, misread some of the names of churches: where I am in doubt I have placed a '?' after the name. The churches are grouped on the Census by Registration District and that explains their order, though I have not shown where one district ends and another begins as this information is of no significance to this study. Churches were asked to provide an average attendance for the previous few months, many did not, others provided just single figures, others figures for each service. I have provided for this average only one figure for adult attendance (not

³⁷ See Table 57

³⁸ See Table 47

³⁹ See Table 66

⁴⁰ PP, 1851 Census, vol. 33, Table F p. cclii-cclxxii

⁴¹ PRO film 57.652-656

including scholars) and where churches gave figures for each service separately I have included their highest average attendance. There was no space on the Census Form for Baptist churches to indicate whether they belonged to a specific grouping of Baptist churches and so most churches do not do so. Table 65 shows how the Census recorded the strength of the individual Baptist churches in Northamptonshire and Table 67 below that of the Baptist groupings in the county.

Table 65 identifies ninety-one Baptist churches in the county of Northamptonshire whereas the official Census total shown on Table 67 indicates only eighty-seven Baptist churches in the county. Furthermore from my investigation of the microfilm copies of the returns only seventeen churches visibly describe themselves as PB, four as a Union of Baptist and Independent, two as Strict Baptist and one as GB, leaving sixty-seven as undefined. If the Censor used some other means to discern the grouping of Northamptonshire's Baptist churches it is not apparent.

The other thing apparent from Table 65 is the extent to which churches did not send complete returns to the Censor, and the extent to which returns are approximations of attendance. Those churches whose attendance figures are presented in round figures, in tens or fifties are almost certainly to be considered as such. The varying pattern of attendance also complicates calculations, as many smaller churches have only one service on a Sunday, many others only two. It is intriguing that the churches at Wellingborough and Rotten Row, Thrapston, despite large adult attendances of 100 and 130, clearly state they have no children. It is apparent elsewhere that churches have simply not reported the number of children present. The churches at Aldwinckle and Stanwick append a note on their return stating that for reasons of sickness and extra field work resulting from storms the attendance on the 31 March was especially low. The Censor appears to accept that attendance was low on this Sunday and so the very many churches that indicate an average attendance higher than that for Census Sunday may not be exaggerating.

D. The Circular Letters of the NPBA

The *CLs* were printed annually and distributed to all the churches in the association. The front page of the letter, which was sometimes over forty pages long, carried the doctrinal

statement of the association and a list of those churches represented at the assembly (i.e. churches in membership of the association). The importance of the *CLs* are best understood when it is realised how they are written. The ministers at the annual assembly chose the theme for the letter and the person designated to write it. At the following assembly the letter was then submitted to the ministers for scrutiny and discussion. The final draft was then signed, not by its author, but by the Moderator of the association for that year on behalf of all the churches represented.⁴² The letters, therefore, in a very real way expressed the current concerns of all the ministers and churches in the association. All the associations adopted a general format for the *CLs*. There was usually some continuity in content from year to year, but on occasions this was abandoned perhaps due to a specific event, a death, or a newly perceived need. In most instances the subject is a doctrinal one. Once approved the *CL* was published and churches received the number of copies they had ordered. Appended to each *CL* were the minutes or 'breviates' of the assembly and a record of the decrease or increase in the overall membership of the association. Not until 1811 do the records of each individual church appear. The doctrinal statement of the NPBA was as follows:

Maintaining the important doctrines of three equal persons in the Godhead; eternal and personal election; original sin; particular redemption; free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ; efficacious grace in regeneration, and the final perseverance of real believers; the resurrection of the dead; the eternal happiness of the righteous, and everlasting misery of such as die impenitent; with the congregational order of the churches.⁴³

1. *The NPBA and the Evangelical Revival*

One of the curious aspects of the *CLs* of the NPBA, which commenced publication when the Methodist Revival was in full flow, is that they make no reference to the revival. Perversely one of the most frequent themes of the letters is the deplorable state of religion in England. Nearly every letter begins with a preamble, which lauds the excellence of the annual gathering, a comment on the state of the association's churches, and an introduction

⁴² Moderator and author were often the same person.

⁴³ *CL* (NPBA, 1820). From 1768-1820 this formula varies only in small details. For example the 1772 Northamptonshire Letter omits only the two phrases '*the eternal happiness of the righteous; and everlasting misery of such as die impenitent.*'

to the meat of the letter that follows. It is in this section that frequently reference is made to the state of religion in England and a call to pray and fast for the nation included, as though the nation was not in the throes of a revival already.

The first possible indication that the NPBA is disdainfully aware of the revival comes in the 1769 Letter by John Ryland when in a section about the Holy Spirit he writes somewhat disapprovingly of ‘wild enthusiasms.’ Whilst this might be an erroneous warning against fanaticism generally it seems more likely it is a veiled comment on the revival. It was also J.C. Ryland who infamously accused the young William Carey of being an enthusiast in his passion for foreign mission.⁴⁴ However, it might be an error to view the elder Ryland entirely as a reactionary or as a fervent hyper-Calvinist. Indeed R.W. Thomson credits men such as J.C. Ryland with the vision and enterprise to bring about the rejuvenation of PBs.⁴⁵ Whilst there is little doubt that men can change greatly in their formative years the picture we possess of a young J.C. Ryland as a boy and at the Bristol Academy is that of a man with an excitable and impetuous disposition.⁴⁶ He was brought up under Benjamin Beddome at Bourton-on-the-Water in a church that, whatever the prevailing theology of the day, could not for a moment be described as lacklustre or stagnant. His own personal survey of Baptist churches in 1750⁴⁷ was undertaken because of his concern at the lack of progress being made by Baptists when the evangelical revival was gaining strength year on year.⁴⁸ Advancing years may have curbed his own impetuosity, and he may not have been able to embrace either the fullness of the revival or the more moderate evangelical Calvinism of his son’s acquaintances but that does not for a moment lock him into reactionary hyper-Calvinism. J.C. Ryland came to a flagging Northampton church and greatly revived its fortunes. He was a founder member of the NPBA, a great friend of the hugely important Robert Hall snr.⁴⁹ He had sufficient personal humility to bring his son, John Ryland jnr., who would become himself a hugely influential figure in the transformation of PBs, alongside him in ministry and then to resign in his favour.

⁴⁴ See, p. 235 below

⁴⁵ Thomson (1937), p. 60

⁴⁶ Robinson (1927), p.60-73, and Thomson (1937), p. 60-61

⁴⁷ See p. 92 above

⁴⁸ Thomson (1937), p. 62

⁴⁹ See p. 63 above

The 1798 Letter by Brother Burton on *Experimental Religion* contains a clearer reference to the revival. Burton writes, “By experimental religion we do not mean any of those ecstasies, visions, or revelations, which, though they have existed in the Church of God, yet were of an extraordinary kind, and peculiar to the days of inspiration. For such revelations in the present day we have no foundation in the sacred writings. We pretend to nothing of the kind ourselves, and consider those who do as under the influence of enthusiasm. The Christian experience of which we speak may be found in all the devotional parts of scripture, particularly in the Psalms of David.”⁵⁰ The language does not appear to be strong or overly condemnatory, but shows the NPBA wanted to distance itself from those aspects of the revival that it believed had no scriptural mandate.

2. *The NPBA and Hyper-Calvinism*

There can be no question that the most important factor in the transformation of the PBs into the vibrant growing force for change, that they were to become, was the abandonment of the hyper-Calvinism that had been their hallmark. The shift, though crucial, was in fact quite subtle. Robert Hall Snr. begins his Letter of 1770 by saying that the purpose of the recent Letters has been to ‘explain and defend’ those doctrines commonly called Calvinism.⁵¹ In some respects what occurred was a change in application rather than theology.

The first stirrings of change came with the formation of the association itself, even though founder members such as John Browne from Kettering were hyper-Calvinist in their theology.⁵² Hall’s Letter of 1772 explored the theme *Eternal and Personal Election* and whilst it adheres to a belief in predestination it contains none of the exclusive rhetoric of more extreme hyper-Calvinistic tracts. John Evans Letter of 1774 on *Regeneration* speaks positively of the ‘use of means for evangelism’ as no Hyper-Calvinist would. In the breviates of the 1779 assembly we are told that the gathered ministers and messengers from the churches agreed together, “...to promote village preaching as being a likely method to spread divine knowledge among multitudes who are ignorant; to encourage the

⁵⁰ *CL* (NPBA 1798), p.2

⁵¹ *CL* (NPBA 1770), p. 2

⁵² See for example *CL* (NPBA 1767), p. 4 in the section on ‘*The notion of universal grace...*’ written by

catechising of children; and to print the articles of the association.”⁵³ Doubtless this was a decision to support what was already taking place at Clipstone, where the association had dismissed eighteen members to a new work. It was at this same assembly that Robert Hall Snr. preached his sermon on Isaiah 7:14 entitled *Helps to Zion’s Travellers’* that was to so positively influence William Carey.

Added impetus for the change came from 1782 to 1785 when for four consecutive years the associations overall membership decreased. Faced by this decline Fuller finally published in 1785 his book *The Gospel worthy of all Acceptation* and composed the *CL* on the theme *Decline and Revival*.

By 1810 Fuller was able to state without fear of contradiction from within the association that, “We take for granted that the spread of the Gospel is the great object of your desire. Without this it will be hard to prove that you are Christian Churches.”⁵⁴ Indeed few Baptists churches would take issue with Fuller on this, however he does later go on to write, “There are those, on the other hand, who abuse the doctrine by converting it into an argument for sloth and avarice. God can convert sinners, say they, when he pleases, and without any exertions, or contributions of ours.”⁵⁵ This may indicate that hyper-Calvinism still persisted, but it more clearly shows that those who adhere to it can be freely ridiculed publicly. What at one time was the commonly held doctrine of the PBs of England had long before 1810 become the preserve of the spiritually irresponsible.

3. Membership Statistics (1766-1851)

Table 78 shows the statistics of the NPBA as churches returned them to the association for the annual assembly. Although total membership figures are not given until 1811 onwards there is a clear indication from 1766 of continued growth. The information requested for the annual report is fairly detailed and it is surprising given the concern of the NPBA for church growth that actual membership figures are not included in the returns before 1811. That said John Rippon does include two complete tabular returns for the association in

Browne.

⁵³ *CL* (NPBA 1810), Breviates

⁵⁴ *CL* (NPBA 1810), p. 2

1792 and 1795 in his *BAR*.⁵⁶ In the clearest of terms these figures indicate considerable growth in the individual membership of the associations churches.

E. Selected church records

Church Books vary tremendously in terms of the information they yield, and the information recorded often depends on the priorities of the compiler. One book may focus on prayer meetings, whilst another on disciplinary matters and yet another on baptism and membership. In many cases the compiler is the pastor and this can mean a sudden change in the information given as a pastorate changes. In an interregnum there may be no record kept of Church Meetings.

The attitude of compilers to statistics also varies, and few keep track of the size of membership. Though Membership Lists are common they are only useful for calculating actual membership when fully maintained. The usual practice is for new members to be added to a list with their date of joining, details about whether they join by baptism or dismissal, and then details of the date they cease to be a member, usually for reasons of death, dismissal, or exclusion. Whilst it is a relatively simple matter to ascertain the numbers of new members received on an annual basis it is much more difficult to calculate annual membership, as frequently the final and crucial column relating to the year in which membership ceases are not maintained. This is understandable given the time that may elapse between the two events. It is only where a membership list is compiled to mark a new pastorate that a solid reference point is available.

1. Larger Churches or those with Comprehensive Records

It is usually the large established churches, with a sense of their history that have maintained their records over the centuries, though not exclusively so. The churches considered in this section are those whose records are comprehensive.

⁵⁵ *CL* (NPBA 1810), p. 3

a. Fuller Baptist Church, Kettering

The PB church at Kettering was founded in 1696, and over the next 100 years was to play a major part in PB life. Kettering nurtured and released both John Gill and John Brine, who were arguable through their championing of hyper-Calvinism the most influential Baptist ministers of the mid eighteenth century. With the appointment of Andrew Fuller in 1783 they chose the man who was to give theological underpinning to the more moderate form of Calvinism (Fullerism) that would counteract hyper-Calvinism and allow PB fortunes across the nation to revive. It was also intimately involved in the formation of the BMS in 1792. The inaugural meeting of the society was in the home of the widow Beeby Wallis on the 2 October 1792. Her husband had been a deacon of long standing and was related in direct line to the first two ministers of the Kettering Church, known until it changed its name to Fuller, as the Little Meeting, Kettering. Andrew Fuller, present at the meeting, was to be secretary of the Society until he died in 1815.

In the archive room of the church, amongst many valuable historical items, are the minute books covering the period of this study. Included with these is a list of members, and information relating to the reception of members at church meetings.⁵⁷ The membership list in the Church Book was compiled on the 1st March 1775 and it shows only those members living at the time of compilation. The oldest living member in 1775 joined the church in 1716. Those who joined and died between 1716 and 1775 are not indicated. This explains why the increase in membership from 1769-1771 and 1771-1775 equates exactly to the number of new members received. From 1775-1783 the overall membership increases by twelve while the church has received thirty new members, but the list is now taking into account those members who have died, been dismissed by letter, or excluded, since 1775.

The picture painted is one of consistent growth further reflected by the fact that in 1787 the meeting-house was 'considerably enlarged'.⁵⁸ The largest gain is the eighteen achieved between 1795 and 1796 but generally there are no periods of rapid growth, rather small

⁵⁶ *BAR*, Volume 1, p. 419 and Volume 2, p. 268. See Table 79 and Table 80

⁵⁷ See Table 81 and Table 82

increases year on year. Table 83 shows the rate of growth using the fixed points provided by the Church Book as a point of reference. This may seem to suggest that the rate of growth was much faster in the earlier period. However, it must be remembered that the figures for membership given in 1769 and 1771 are not the actual membership of the church in those years, but only those who were still in membership in 1775. Whilst it is reasonable to assume that the twenty-three new members who joined between 1769 and 1771 were still alive in 1775 there is nothing to say that a further twenty or forty members did not die during this time. From 1775-1814, when the membership totals reflect both increases and decreases, the annual rate of growth is 2.5 and this is perhaps the most reliable figure.

During this same period the Kettering church is involved in the planting or commencement of three other churches, and therefore, is involved in a cycle of growth that extends beyond its own membership. In 1778 the minutes note that nine members were set aside to form the church at Gretton where meetings had been taking place since 1770. Forty years later the then minister of Kettering, John Hall preaches at the opening in Gretton of a 'new commodious Baptist chapel.'⁵⁹ The minutes of 1 May 1800 note that Sir Egerton Leigh is baptised, received into membership and then in December 1800 set aside to start a new Baptist Church at Little Harborough. Leigh is recorded to have preached at Kettering on the evening of his baptism, which serves to suggest he comes to the church as a believer, and the speed with which he is then released to Little Harborough may suggest a measure of planning on all sides.

The minutes of the 20 October 1802 show that James Ward, John Daniels, Francis Robinson and Ann Wells are released to form a new church at Burton (Burton-upon-Trent) and on 14 November 1802 the name of William Biffin is added to those released to Burton. The attendance records of the association, and the breviate, indicate that the work at Burton-upon-Trent began in 1793 only to falter in 1800 when it was dissolved only to reform in 1802,⁶⁰ when on the 18 November James Ward is ordained by Andrew Fuller. The church clearly encountered further problems in 1812 as the Kettering minutes for 22

⁵⁸ NthCRO, LA - 1787, Fuller, Kettering

⁵⁹ BM, December 1824, p. 531

⁶⁰ See Table 73 and Table 74

October show that Elizabeth Burditt is received from Burton, followed on 26 November by two of those originally dismissed to Burton, John Daniels and Anne Wells.

As the nineteenth century progresses Kettering sends a string of men either into the ministry or overseas as missionaries continuing a well established tradition. One example is William Knibb the BMS missionary to the West Indies who was to be so instrumental in gaining the abolition of slavery in Britain and its Dominions.⁶¹ Another would be Mr. Reich Manton who on Tuesday 7 August 1827 was ordained pastor at the Oundle, Northamptonshire church.⁶²

b. College Lane Baptist Church, Northampton

College Lane Baptist Church had its origins in the mid-seventeenth century as a cell or house meeting in the home of Robert Massey. When his home was destroyed in the Great Fire of Northampton in 1675 the small group of worshippers found shelter in the home of Lady Fermor where they continued to meet until 1714. It was with help from Richard Davis of Rothwell that they had formed themselves into a Baptist church on 27 October 1697. On a damaged page of the first Church Book the Covenant adopted that day was as follows:

We the members of this Church of God, whose names are all inserted in this book, do solemnly promise in the presence of God and his holy Angels, and also in the presence of each other: to walk together in the performance of all Gospel ordinances and in the presence and discharge of all relative Duties as the Lord shall please to enable us.

They accepted both adult and paedobaptism as valid forms of initiation, though it seems those who favoured believers' baptism were in the majority. John Moore served the church as pastor from 1700 to 1726 and it was during his ministry that land was purchased and a new chapel built in College Lane, Northampton, from which the church took its original name.⁶³ The church enjoyed a period of growth under Moore's leadership but ran into difficulties following his pastorate and in 1732 it voted to disband. The Trustees

⁶¹ See p. 238 below

⁶² *BM*, October 1827, p. 483

however, strove to keep the church open and it struggled on for the next twenty-seven years until the arrival of John Collett Ryland as Pastor on 6 October 1759. The church that had in excess of 250 members during John Moore's pastorate had only forty-two members on the first anniversary of Ryland's arrival. The statistical information used to create Table 84 is taken from the Church Book kept by Ryland himself. The membership figures on Table 85 to Table 87 are derived from the text of the various Church Books as the recording of information allows.

There is little doubt that during J. C. Ryland's pastorate the church enjoyed a further period of extended growth despite the hyper-Calvinistic beliefs that J. C. Ryland held. It can be no coincidence that the church enjoyed until 1781 its two periods of growth during the long pastorates of John Moore (1700-1726) and John Collett Ryland (1759-1785). In the intervening period 1726-1759 the church saw four pastorates the longest of which was four years, and during this thirty-three year period the church had a pastor for only eleven of those years. However, a long pastorate was not a guarantee of growth, not even when that pastor was one of the most celebrated of his and any other era of Baptist Church life, as the tables relating to the ministries of John Ryland, George Keeley, and Thomas Blundell indicate (Table 85 to Table 87).

John Ryland was twenty-two years of age when he was ordained as co-pastor to his father at College Lane in 1781. Although they remained co-pastors until 1785, the father devoted himself to the school he ran and to village preaching leaving the essential work of the pastorate to his son. John Ryland was a brilliant young man able to read Hebrew at the age of six. He was preaching regularly at the age of fourteen both in College Lane and the surrounding villages, and by the time he was twenty-three he was preaching four times each week. In 1791 the Principal of Bristol Baptist College, Caleb Evans, died unexpectedly at the age of fifty-four and John Ryland was invited to become his successor both at the College and in the pastorate at the Broadmead Church. Ryland took some time to come to the decision to leave College Lane, which he finally did, in late 1793⁶⁴ and in the year he left the church there was a significant decrease in the membership of

⁶³ Powell (1996), p. 3

⁶⁴ The decision of the church to release Ryland to Broadmead and the College was taken at a Church Meeting on 17 November 1793 and recorded in the NthCRO, College Lane Church Book.

seventeen.⁶⁵ John Ryland in some ways never quite left College Lane, and was for the remainder of his life a frequent visitor to the church taking part in ordinations and inductions. His sister Elizabeth was married to Joseph Dent, who served the church as deacon for fifty-seven years. His family ties with the church gave him further cause to return regularly, as did his ongoing friendship with Andrew Fuller and John Sutcliff, and their joint work for the BMS.

It took the church six years to replace Ryland and the membership remained static at around 168 during this time. An upsurge occurred following the arrival of George Keeley on 13 November 1799 but the peak of 205 members in 1800 was not exceeded thereafter. Keeley, however, continued the practice of village preaching, hiring a barn at Weston Favell in 1799 for this purpose.⁶⁶

Thomas Blundell, whose father of the same name had been present at the formation of the BMS, was ordained on 20 June 1810. His pastorate saw no significant growth, although in October 1810 a Sunday school was commenced which proved very successful, and three daughter churches were founded at Kislingbury (1810), Ecton (1815) and Harpole (1822).⁶⁷

This would be an appropriate moment to consider the question of village preaching and village churches for increasingly College Lane became involved in the villages surrounding Northampton. There is no doubt, for example that the planting of the above mentioned three churches would have taken from College Lane a number of members thus keeping their own numbers down. It is well known that both John Collet Ryland and his son John Ryland engaged regularly in village preaching. The minutes for 6 July 1781 indicate that one Mr. Pewtress was dismissed to the ministry at Blisworth, though not with the full support of the church.

On 2 September 1781 three members were dismissed to form the new church at Guilsborough,⁶⁸ followed by two more on 10 May 1782. On 10 May 1784 Abraham

⁶⁵ According the College Lane NthCRO, *LA* for 1793 a number of members left to join a new church in Northampton led by a minister with antinomian views that would explain this decline.

⁶⁶ NthCRO, *LA* – 1799, College Lane, Northampton

⁶⁷ Powell (1996), p. 12

⁶⁸ Guilsborough in 1819 dismissed members to form the new church at Ravensthorpe. See p. 192 below and

Abbott was chosen as a deacon with special responsibility for those members living in the area around Kingsthorpe. On 8 December 1786 John Luck was dismissed to become the pastor of the church at Hackleton. A minute of 15 July 1802 makes clear that College Lane had for some time been responsible for village meetings in Bugbrook, Kislingbury and Harpole, though not all was well with this work at this time.

In addition to work in specific villages the church appointed many people to the role of itinerant preacher. On 9 February 1798 Thomas Berrige was set aside for this work with the instruction to preach only where there is no “stated ministry or regular church,” followed on 18 July 1800 by one Brother Hall. On 18 April 1803, John Wheeler and Abraham Abbott were released to village preaching but not until both had preached several times before the Church Meeting to ascertain their fitness for the task. This became a regular requirement for candidates for village preaching and on 9 December 1811 it was enshrined in the Church Rules that no member could go out as a preacher without first being tested. The church clearly took this process very seriously as indicated by the case of Thomas Bumpas who first came before the church on 16 February 1802 but was not released to preach until 30 May 1805. Bumpas goes on to pastor of the church at Braunstone from 7 August 1807 only to return to College Lane on 12 July 1811.⁶⁹ Mr. Hickson was the first to be approved a preacher following the decision on 9 December 1811 and he subsequently went on to Eagle Street, London, where he worked with Joseph Ivimey.

The minutes of 1 August 1805 record the agreement of the church meeting to the congregation at Bugbrook becoming an independent church with John Wheeler as their pastor. The *BM* carries a report dated 10 August 1808 detailing the building of a new meeting-house at Bugbrook, “...a neat substantial building about 40 feet by 30, without galleries...”⁷⁰ This was necessitated by the ending of the lease for the previous place of worship and by the progress made by the church which had ‘considerably increased’ since its opening. Further evidence of this came from the fact that the £600 cost of the new building was met entirely by the church apart from the offering taken at the opening

footnote 159

⁶⁹ This did not result in the demise of the work at Braunstone. The *BM*, June 1821, p. 259 recounts the ordination at Braunstone on 10 April 1821 of Rev. Joseph Bate from the Bristol Academy in the recently extended church in the presence of a congregation too large for the building.

⁷⁰ *BM*, April 1809, p. 156-157

service. The 8 August 1805 was set aside as a day of prayer and fasting by College Lane for Bugbrook, and also for Thomas Coles whom College Lane had agreed on 11 January 1805 to send to Olney for ministerial preparation. It is not clear what became of Coles' studies but in April 1806, he was dismissed to be minister at Gretton.⁷¹

A further indication of the church's serious approach to these matters is the case of Samuel Marshall who also came before the church as a candidate for ministry on 12 January 1810. After hearing him preach four times not one member of the church could support his candidacy and he was turned down. Sadly Marshall resigned his membership on 9 March 1812. Similarly, Paul Dadford's application to preach was deferred on 24 November 1812, approved on 11 June 1813 and then revoked on 11 February 1814 when his application for ministry was also refused. However, at the same meeting on 24 November 1812 Francis Wheeler became the first to be recommended by the church to study for the ministry with the support of the Bristol Education Society.

Eight members were dismissed to form the church at Kislingbury on 8 June 1810 where the church had been responsible for a congregation for some years. On 12 June 1828, a new meeting-house was opened which would indicate the success of this church plant.⁷²

The planting of the church at Kingsthorpe was interesting. On 10 January 1823 the church agreed to help Kingsthorpe toward their independence and on 12 November 1823 Kingsthorpe asked the church to dismiss John Smith to them as their pastor but College Lane declined. Smith had been denied authorisation to preach on 8 July 1814 and his candidacy for the ministry was rejected on 6 December 1816. Their refusal to dismiss Smith to Kingsthorpe was entirely consistent with their previous decisions regarding his suitability for ministry. However, on 10 January 1824 Smith resigned from College Lane, not to become Pastor at Kingsthorpe, but of the PB church at Ecton, Northamptonshire, where it seemed he had been preaching with some success.⁷³

⁷¹ This information is conveyed as an addendum to the minutes of 10 June 1807 having been previously omitted.

⁷² *BM*, 1828, p. 326

⁷³ *NBM*, January 1825, p. 36-37

On 5 September 1809 Eustace Grey, following three trial sermons, just as was required for village preachers, was approved as a candidate for the BMS and commended to Sutcliff at Olney.

c. Walgrave Baptist Church

The Church Book for 1750-1770 contains only a few incomplete fragments and the covenant signed by Rev. John Ayer (1741-1821), and thirty-two other discernible signatures before the bottom of the page gives out, is of main interest.⁷⁴ The next Church Book is well preserved and the initial entries from 1783 are voluminous. Nearly every Church Meeting entry begins with a description of those who prayed and the nature of the prayers and often little else is recorded.

John Ayer was a native of Kettering where his family was long established. He was brought up an Anglican but when he became apprenticed to a dissenter he began to attend the Independent church in Kettering. On completing his apprenticeship he returned to the Church of England mainly due to the presence at Kettering of the evangelical clergyman Abraham Maddox (1713-1785). Maddox's enforced departure from Kettering in June 1770 led Ayer, leaving for the Little Meeting, Kettering. Though not a baptised member of the church Kettering gave Ayer permission to preach in the villages around Kettering.⁷⁵ Soon after this Ayer met Rev. Moses Deacon pastor of Walgrave Baptist Church who preached at Kettering during the interregnum. Ayer was impressed by Deacon and was baptised by him becoming a member of the Walgrave Church. A father/son relationship developed between Deacon and Ayer and the ageing Deacon invited Ayer to assist him at Walgrave. Following Deacon's death Ayer was invited unanimously to succeed him as pastor. Ayer was ordained in October 1773 and remained pastor until 1785.⁷⁶

Walgrave is situated about eight miles north east of Northampton in the direction of Kettering, which is also about eight miles away. In May 1783 the church sought the advice

⁷⁴ *BUH* (1996-1997), p. 113 indicates that the Walgrave Church was in existence from 1700. The dismissal of thirty-eight members in 1838 to form the church at Olney may explain the reason for this new constitution at Walgrave, along with the arrival of Ayer. See p. 142 below.

⁷⁵ Probably a decision made possible by the fact that Kettering was in an interregnum at the time.

⁷⁶ See the memoir of Ayer's life that appeared in the *BM*, May 1822, pp. 177-180 compiled by Rev. Joshua Burton and Ayer's nephew Robert Smith.

of John Ryland as to the pastorate and Ryland commended to them a Mr. Alexander Payne, a Gloucestershire businessman who duly came to preach on 8 June 1783. Payne joined the church at Walgrave on 29 May 1785 and was ordained on 6 July 1785. Payne initially preached for an extended period of six weeks and then came as a probationer for a period of twelve months. His ordination was delayed for a further six months whilst he deliberated on the call he received from the church. Twenty-two ministers attended his ordination with Fuller, Sutcliff, and Ryland, as they so often did, taking part in the service.

A new covenant presumably drafted by Payne was adopted and signed on 8 June 1783 by twenty-three members. On 17 April 1786 a foundation stone for a new church was laid and the church opened on 3 August 1786 with again Fuller and Ryland present and participating.

Walgrave also provided its share of pastors and preachers. A note on 22 January 1792 records the death of a Mrs Ward whose husband had, many years previously, been sent by Walgrave into the ministry. On 6 June 1793 the church unanimously agreed to test the abilities of Edmund Mabbutt for the ministry having heard and approved his motives. A five-month trial period followed when a request was received from Ridgemount, Bedfordshire (twenty miles south-east of Northampton) to allow Mabbutt to preach there whilst they were without a pastor. Although some felt Mabbutt's trial period was too short, and that it was improper to release him whilst still on trial, the church agreed to Mabbutt aiding at Ridgemount. He was well received there and the church at Ridgemount was to add their voice of support to Mabbutt's sense of call to the ministry. On 27 July 1794 Mabbutt was commended by Walgrave to the Bristol Academy, departing on 16 August 1794 for his studies.

In 1797 two brothers, John and Stephen Barker are tested for their preaching abilities and in January 1798 Stephen Barker removed to Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire (forty miles due east of Northampton) where he had been preaching since November 1797. He is not dismissed from Walgrave until 31 March 1808, with his ordination following. John and his wife are dismissed to the Towcester church on 2 May 1802 where John becomes pastor on 20 May.

On 16 December 1798 Richard Cox and Stephen Clarke express their motivation toward ministry and are approved, both having been preaching for some time previous. On 2 January 1800 Samuel Barker was approved for testing before the church and on 26 July 1801 he is set aside for ministry but sadly he died early on 5 January 1807 whilst visiting his brother, John, in Towcester.

On 3 January 1802 Alexander Payne records a proud entry into the Church Book as his son George preaches at Walgrave the day before departing for London and his studies at Mr. Simpson's Academy. On 1 January 1801 Richard Clarke is dismissed to the pastorate at Weston-by-Weedon, and on 29 February 1816 J. Reeve and S. Deacon are set aside to preach at 'any congregation as should invite them.' On 14 February 1819 Payne died at the age of seventy-seven after thirty-three years and seven months at Walgrave. John Wheeler who had been Pastor at Bugbrook even longer took part in the funeral service.

The Church book also records the baptisms that take place in the life of the church, which is unusual, and they are recorded on Table 88 along with the yearly increase in membership, which is often the same figure.

d. Arnesby Baptist Church

With Fuller, College Lane, and Walgrave, Arnesby shares the distinction of being one of the original members of the NPBA when it formed in 1765-1766. Unlike the former churches Arnesby is in Leicestershire. The early records of the church are lost though a few fragments exist from the first Church Book. The second Church Book is well preserved and provides helpful information about our period of study, including the information on Table 89 about membership gleaned from various places in the Church Book.

On the 21 April 1778 one Brother Burton is ordained to the pastorate at Sutton, Bedfordshire, completing a process that began in December 1773 when he was first released to preach at Coventry, and with their commendation fully recognised by Arnesby on the 29 April 1774. By 1788, Burton is recorded as the pastor at Gretton, Northamptonshire. On the 19 January 1777 William Higgs after a trial period lasting three

years is released also to the 'public works of the ministry,' though sadly Higgs died of smallpox in 1778.

On 13 August 1780 Robert Hall jnr. was called by the church to the ministry, although he was still only sixteen. The son of the pastor Robert Hall jnr he was born at Arnesby on 2 May 1764 and baptised on the 6 September 1778. . The report of his call notes that he had been drawn to the ministry from a very early age. At aged eight he had begun to write hymns, one of which was published. In 1776 he went to board with J. C. Ryland at Northampton and in 1778 he went to the Academy at Bristol under Caleb Evans. In the same year Brother Butler 'a gift in our church' was dismissed to Sutton-in-the-Elms becoming pastor there.⁷⁷ He was to become as well known a pastor and preacher as his father. Nathan Sharman followed Hall into the ministry on the 6 October 1786 after 'frequent trials'. On the 23 May 1789 he was dismissed to the pastorate at Cheney, Bucks. However, it is not until the 26 January 1812 that the next member, Wiliam Bassett is released to preach after the usual testing.

Robert Hall snr. died on the 13 March 1791 during his thirty-seven years he received some 218 new members into the church at an average of nearly seven per year. His successor Thomas Blundell was received from the Kettering Church and ordained on 3 April 1793. He removed to pastor the church at Sutton, Bedfordshire in October 1803, and was replaced after an interregnum of six years by William Cuttriss on 2 April 1809 from Thrapston. Cuttriss leaved for the pastorate of Ridgmont, Bedfordshire in April 1818. On 3 November 1815 John Hall was dismissed from Arnesby to become Pastor at Kettering where he was ordained on 7 November 1815.⁷⁸

The first new church associated with Arnesby was formed at Ryton when in June 1774 they dismissed eleven members to form the church there, although subsequent notes indicate that was not a totally happy parting. In 1778 one member was dismissed to the newly forming church at Clipston.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ NthCRO, LA - 1778, Arnesby

⁷⁸ According to the AFBC, Fuller, Kettering Church Book the ordination of John Hall took place on 15 November 1815. He was likely a relative of the Hall's.

⁷⁹ NthCRO, LA - 1778, Arnesby

In 1785 the church reported to the association that its attempts at village preaching were well supported, and that several Sunday schools run by the church in the villages were well attended.⁸⁰ The 1796 letter talks of the ‘great utility’ of village preaching.⁸¹ A copy remains of the letter written by the church, dated 11 June, to the 1797 annual association meeting.⁸² It states the following, “We are thankful that we have been enabled thro divine goodness to get the Gospel into the villages of Kilby and Whetstone, once a month on Lord’s Day evening. Mr Blundell, Mr. Davis of Wigton, and Mr. Evans preach in turn.”

The Church Meeting decided on 27 September 1775, due to the poor spiritual state of the nation, to make the day of every Church Meeting one of prayer and fasting. An interesting decision given that Arnesby’s membership was increasing and the membership of the NPBA increased in 1775 by 137, the largest single increase between 1766 and 1815. The church book indicates that in 1799 a new enlarged meeting-house was built at a time when the membership reached its peak at 115, in the period until 1819. By 1803 the numbers had dipped to ninety-six due to what was described as the arrival of an, ‘enlightened minister of the establishment’.⁸³ The removal of Blundell to Luton in 1803 may be due to the downturn in fortunes at Arnesby.

There are no minutes recorded from 1821-1831. However the Church Book does contain a table showing the members by residence of various villages of 1838, which is a testimony to the ongoing success of the church’s involvement in village preaching.⁸⁴

e. Olney Baptist Church

In a book held in the archives of the Olney Church entitled *Index of Burials 1738-1826* the opening page contains the names of the thirteen individuals who on 15 November 1738 formed the Baptist Church at Olney. The book records, “Our beginning is small so that we may greatly increase.” The Olney Church Book records that until this time they had been under the pastoral care of the church at Walgrave.⁸⁵ The Walgrave church records cannot

⁸⁰ NthCRO, LA - 1778, Arnesby

⁸¹ NthCRO, LA - 1796, Arnesby

⁸² This letter is part of the Arnesby Baptist Church Archive at the Leicestershire Public Record Office

⁸³ NthCRO, LA - 1803, Arnesby

⁸⁴ See Table 90

⁸⁵ BUH (1996-1997), p. 112 indicates that a church had been meeting at Olney since 1669

confirm this, as they do not exist for the period prior to 1741.⁸⁶ The relationship with Walgrave is an interesting one given the location of the two churches. Walgrave is some eighteen miles north of Olney and the most obvious routes are likely to take travellers through Northampton as the Kettering to Newport Pagnell turnpike was not opened until 1753-1754.⁸⁷ Haykin believes this arrangement to have lasted only from around 1732 and it may be that it was the reputation of the Walgrave pastor, Moses Deacon that made them look there for their pastoral oversight.⁸⁸ Francis Walker became a member and the new church's first pastor on 4 November 1741⁸⁹ but sadly died within a year, though by July 1742 the membership had increased to forty-six of which, some fifteen members had transferred into the Baptist church from the town's Independent Congregation.

An unsettled period for the church followed that was not wholly overcome by the arrival of William Walker as pastor in 1753 even though Walker remained at Olney for over twenty years. In fact both Walker's arrival and departure from the church were troublesome and the church's archive contains a wallpaper bound volume written by Walker himself detailing what took place. The account of his arrival he entitles *A true Representation of the Case of the Church at Olney*.⁹⁰ Walker drew up a new Covenant for the church with thirteen articles and forty-two members signed it. A list of members is maintained in the church book dated 1752-1854 for Walker's ministry with some seventy-five names included but as this list does not accurately maintain the dates that membership ended whether by death, dismissal or exclusion it is not possible to give accurate annual total membership figures for this period. Walker was involved in two events of note during his time at Olney. The first was the building in 1763 at a cost of £250 of a new church building, always a sign of life and good health in a church. More significant, though on a wider scale, was Walker's presence on 17 October 1764 at the meeting at Kettering to establish the NPBA. On 14-15 May 1765, Olney became one of the six founding members of the association. Walker was to host the association at Olney in 1766, 1768 and in 1771.

Walker's departure for Colnbrook in 1753 occasioned the second of his writings in the wallpaper bound volume, which he entitled *Epistle to the Church at Olney* and it is dated 4

⁸⁶ See p. 138 above

⁸⁷ See Appendix IV, p. 326, Map 2

⁸⁸ Haykin (1994), p. 104. He does not indicate where he derives this information.

⁸⁹ He became a member on 27 March 1742

⁹⁰ Maurice Hewitt who was minister at Olney from 1925-1931 wrote an unpublished history of the church

February 1773. It is by no means a brief work and it makes clear Walker's unhappiness at his departure from Olney. Walker had clearly hoped to see out his allotted life span at Olney despite his difficulties and the near impoverished state in which he existed there.

Olney endured an interregnum of two to three years before John Sutcliff came to Olney from the Bristol Academy. He was ordained on 7 August 1776 with his former pastor John Fawcett of Wainsgate making the long journey to Olney to preach at his ordination. Sutcliff was influenced by Fawcett, the writings of Jonathan Edwards, his acquaintance with Dan Taylor, and his time at Bristol. He came to Olney an avowed evangelical Calvinist and his early years brought him into conflict with hyper-Calvinists within the Olney congregation.⁹¹ Our concern here is with Sutcliff's work at Olney and with the NPBA where he was to exercise considerable leadership along with Andrew Fuller, and John Ryland.⁹²

The church that Sutcliff came to at Olney was typical of many Baptist churches of that time in that its congregation far exceeded its membership. The afternoon and evening congregations Ryland had told Sutcliff were in the region of 300-400.⁹³ However in a letter that Sutcliff wrote to John Fawcett in the autumn of 1775 he stated that the membership at Olney was only thirty-eight though a number of young people were awaiting entry.⁹⁴ According to the annual returns sent by the church to the NPBA this number had increased to fifty-eight by 31 May 1776. Sutcliff reported in 1781 that since January 1780 he had buried forty of the church [members] and congregation, whilst in the same period the membership decreased only from fifty-nine to fifty-three, with one addition to the membership in 1781.⁹⁵ This served to indicate the extent to which the numbers that attended the church for worship far exceeded the number of members. By 1784 the membership had declined to forty-eight, and Sutcliff's report demonstrated his disappointment.⁹⁶ In 1785, a change in fortune was reported, although membership only increased to forty-nine, hidden behind this was a hint that the number of hearers had

(c1930) possibly intended for its bi-centenary in 1938, and the manuscript remains in the church's archive.

⁹¹ Haykin (1994) pp. 151-152

⁹² See p. 78 above for his wider influence

⁹³ Haykin (1994), p. 89

⁹⁴ Haykin (1994), p. 117-118

⁹⁵ NthCRO, LA - 1, Olney. a loss therefore of seven members, so of the forty burials at least thirty-three were non-members. Not all of the decrease in membership from 1780-1781 need be explained by death so the figure for non-member burials could be higher.

⁹⁶ NthCRO, LA - 1784, Olney

increased significantly. Table 92 reveals the steady increase in annual membership during Sutcliff's ministry peaking at 105 in 1811. It is interesting to see that just as the membership at Olney increased rapidly in the first years of Sutcliff's ministry so it also decreased alarmingly in the two years following his death.⁹⁷

Olney suffered its share of misfortunes and time was taken up at its church meetings with a variety of disciplinary matters, in common with many other PB churches at this time.⁹⁸ The church also had its fair mix of people and a decision taken on 9 March 1786 to establish a monthly collection for the church's own Poor Fund to aid its own poverty stricken members indicating a positive desire in the membership to demonstrate their Christian principles in a pragmatic manner. The church proved its political awareness when on 22 September 1790 it held a public meeting in support of the attempt to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts being undertaken in Parliament.⁹⁹

Sutcliff's Academy was established in 1798 following a meeting of the Executive Committee of the BMS held in Northampton. Its purpose was to train men for the mission field though Sutcliff sent as many into home mission as he did into foreign mission.¹⁰⁰ The main impact on the Olney church of the Academy was to be found in that a significant number of the young men who came to train with Sutcliff came single and left married having found their brides at Olney. A plaque on the wall of the Olney church commemorates William Robinson (1784-1853) a native of Olney whose family connection with the church went back three generations.¹⁰¹ He was baptised and became a member on 11 February 1802 and on 22 March 1804 was released by the church to itinerant preaching. On 30 March 1806 after studying under Sutcliff at the request of the BMS Robinson was dismissed to Serampore along with his wife Elizabeth (nee Walker, who had joined the church the same day as Robinson). He served the BMS for forty-seven years in the Far East in Java, Sumatra and Bengal. The Academy did not long survive Sutcliff's death in 1814. In 1809 the church sent John Smith, who had joined on 16 April 1807 into Baptist ministry, and in 1817 Benjamin Medlock, who had joined on 11 February 1813, went to Burton-on-Trent. John Lawson (1787-1825) was an engraver sent by the church via the

⁹⁷ See Table 92

⁹⁸ See p. 244ff below

⁹⁹ See also NthCRO, LA - 1789, Olney

¹⁰⁰ Similarly it should be noted that the Bristol Academy also provided a good number of men for the BMS at this same period. See p. 235 below

Academy with the BMS to India in 1813.¹⁰² Richard Mardon (1776-1782) was another who came through the Academy and joined the BMS establishing the work of the society in Burma.

Of great significance was Sutcliff's involvement in the NPBA in which for the vast majority of his ministry in Olney he was one of the leading lights. Table 93 shows Sutcliff's involvement at the Annual Assemblies during his ministry. The principal role in the life of the association was that of the Moderator, which Sutcliff held seven times. This must have been a particularly taxing task in 1803 when Sutcliff became involved on behalf of the NPBA in the dispute between Richard Hopper and the church at Nottingham.¹⁰³

The *CL*, as we have noted, was a document of some importance in the life of the association being distributed in large numbers to the member churches and taken up also by many other churches across the country, and Sutcliff wrote this on seven occasions. During the course of an assembly that would have begun at the earliest at lunch-time on the first day and finished probably at lunch-time on the third day anything from four to six sermons might have been delivered, and there would have been numerous opportunities to pray, but the recording in the Olney minutes of the fact that Sutcliff 'led in prayer' may be signalling that this was a role of particular importance.

A further indication of Sutcliff's assumption of wider responsibilities in the NPBA can be found in the frequency with which the Olney church released him on Sunday to preach elsewhere. The minutes for 16 December 1779 show agreement to Sutcliff taking a Sunday off to preach at the Roade church, although this permission was withdrawn on 20 January 1800 because Roade had been 'admitting irregular ministers among them,' and presumably Olney did not want its minister counted as one of them! The matter must have been resolved for a further request came on 6 August 1786, which was acceded to, and Sutcliff preached there on 20 August. On 10 April 1784 he was given permission to preach at Soham and on 9 November 1783 at Kettering prior to Andrew Fuller's arrival as pastor in 1784. What is not noted in the church book are the further numerous occasions when Sutcliff often in tandem with Ryland and or Fuller was present and officiating on

¹⁰¹ Haykin (1994), p. 273

¹⁰² Haykin (1994), p. 324

¹⁰³ See p. 243 below

behalf of the NPBA at the induction and ordination of ministers, the dedication of new church buildings and the formation of new churches.¹⁰⁴

Sutcliff's death on 22 June 1814 was a blow not only to the church but also to the association and the BMS both of whom he had served with such distinction. As is often the case, and indicated in the membership statistics in Table 92, Olney encountered some difficulties following Sutcliff's death. These were not resolved until James Simmonds became pastor in 1818. He came on probation on 17 August 1817 for one month, which was extended on 14 September for a further three months. The church minutes reveal an interesting piece of information, which indicated how the church dealt with the fact that attendance so greatly exceeded the membership. On 23 October 1817 the Church Meeting voted with two opposed to call Simmonds. This was followed on 26 October 1817 by a meeting of subscribers, those attendees who gave regular support to the finances of the church, who voted with six opposed to call Simmonds. Presumably the second meeting was much larger than the former and was open to those members who were also subscribers, as some due to the poverty of their circumstance would have been members but not subscribers.

Simmonds served the Olney church as Pastor on two occasions from 1818-1834 and then again from 1842-1858. The only hint as to why he left in 1834 was the fact that Simmonds' wife had died and perhaps in his grief he could not contemplate continuing at Olney. He removed to Charles Street, Leicester and was transported there by a local waggoner named Ward. On delivering him to Leicester Ward said to the welcoming party, "I have brought you a good man, and if you don't treat him well, I will come and fetch him back." Curiously prophetic words as eight years later he was able to do just that, though there was no suggestion that Simmonds was treated badly.¹⁰⁵ The record of Simmonds' ministry was poorly kept though it was noted that on 8 January 1819 Samuel Tompkin who had only joined the church on 10 October 1818 was asked to 'exercise his gifts' in front of the church before on 5 November 1819 being dismissed to Hackney, London presumably as pastor.

¹⁰⁴ Many of these occasions are noted in the sections that surround this one and I do not detail Sutcliff's involvement here.

¹⁰⁵ AOBC, Hewitt (c1930) records this story.

f. Friar Lane Baptist Church, Nottingham

The Friar Lane church in Nottingham was to play a prominent role in the life of the NPBA in the period under consideration. Along with Roade and St. Albans it was amongst the second wave of churches to join the association in 1767. It was frequently used to host the annual association meetings notably in 1784 when John Sutcliff issued his prayer call and in 1792 when William Carey preached his famous missionary sermon. Sadly the Friar Lane church no longer exists, but there is a plaque on the site of the church which indicates that it was there that William Carey preached his famous sermon 'Expect great things from God; Attempt great things for God.'

A reference in the membership list of the Presbyterian Church in High Pavement, Nottingham, indicates that there was a Baptist cause in Nottingham as early as 1690.¹⁰⁶ However, it was in 1724 that the church, for the sum of £100, obtained its premises in Friar Lane, in close proximity to a burial ground that had been used by the Baptists of Nottingham for 'many years.'¹⁰⁷

In 1769 Richard Hopper began a long pastorate that was to end in difficult circumstances in 1803.¹⁰⁸ Hopper began his pastorate with a new Declaration of Faith adopted on 2 November 1769, its opening statements being almost identical to those that adorned the annual *CLs* of the NPBA.¹⁰⁹ By 1776 the church had grown substantially and a subscription list was opened to expand the premises. In their 1775 *LA* the church actually laments the problem being posed to them by large numbers seeking to defect from the Independents in Nottingham whom they have declined due to their concern that admitting them would serve to dilute their practice with regard to communion. They express gratitude to J. C. Ryland for his help in this regard.¹¹⁰ An additional letter is sent in 1775 relating to two persons from the GB church in Nottingham wishing to join at Friar Lane when concern is again expressed about the weakening of Friar Lane's doctrinal position if they should allow this, and others were to follow. By 1799 and his thirtieth anniversary Hopper had welcomed 258 new members into the church at a rate of over eight per year.

¹⁰⁶ Godfrey and James (1903), p. 2

¹⁰⁷ Godfrey and James (1903), p. 1

¹⁰⁸ See p. 243ff below

¹⁰⁹ See p. 126 below

¹¹⁰ NthCRO, *LA* – 1775, Friar Lane

During the same period eighty-one members died, none were excluded and twenty-five dismissed to other churches giving the church a net gain of 152 members.¹¹¹

One of Hopper's last significant acts was the establishment in 1799 of a Sunday School in Wheeler Gate, Nottingham.¹¹² The Friar Lane premises were struggling to keep up with the demand placed upon them by the continually expanding congregation, and an upper gallery was added to the church in order to seat the Sunday School.¹¹³ By 1810 the buildings were again too small and a new subscription begun, which by April 1814 had raised £1,800 of the £3,300, required for the new church. In the event the new church was built in George Street and opened on 16 August 1815, with the Friar Lane site being sold to the Scotch Baptists for £600.¹¹⁴

Following Hopper's unhappy departure the church called John Jarman who was ordained on 12 September 1804 having been supplying the church since December 1802.¹¹⁵ However, the ramifications of the Hopper dispute still rumbled on and in 1805 several members who had supported Hopper led by Samuel Ward left the church forming a separate church in Bridlesmith Gate on 21 April. The malcontents had sent a letter to the church on 1 April 1805 stating their intent but the Friar Lane Church ignored it until a further letter of 28 April sought the dismissal of three further members to Bridlesmith. To comply would be to recognise the new church, which Friar Lane would not do. Instead it informed the original six malcontents that they had been excluded and that Friar Lane would have no further dealings with the new church. The three further seceders were informed that should they continue to non-attend they would be erased from the church records.

In 1809 the matter raised its head again bringing the church into a dispute with the church at Loscoe.¹¹⁶ What disturbed Friar Lane was that Loscoe had invited Samuel Ward to preach for them and a series of increasingly bitter letters was exchanged. Loscoe replied to the first letter from Friar Lane with surprise at receiving a complaint four to five years after

¹¹¹ Godfrey and James (1903), p. 17. See also Table 94

¹¹² Godfrey and James (1903), p. 17

¹¹³ Godfrey and James (1903), p. 20

¹¹⁴ Godfrey and James (1903), p. 55-59

¹¹⁵ Godfrey and James (1903), p. 23

¹¹⁶ A copy of the ensuing correspondence is to be found in the NPBA Archives at the Northamptonshire County Record Office bundled with the *LAs* for the church that composed them.

the event. In response in a letter of 1 January 1810 Friar Lane replied, "We did not think there was any Society of professing Christians who could have been prevailed upon to add their signatures to a letter teeming with such unchristian bitterness as yours does." Friar Lane also announced their decision to refer the matter to the association for arbitration, but Losoce declared themselves unwilling to submit the matter to the association because they did not believe that the association should take the authority of "...an ecclesiastical synod or council to determine anything in the churches of Christ; the all sufficiency of the scriptures is denied, and the congregational order of the churches only an empty name."

During Hopper's time the church was involved in planting a new church at Bottesford some eleven miles due east of Nottingham (though in fact in Leicestershire), and at Derby fifteen miles due west of the city. Friar Lane continued this involvement during Jarman's ministry sending William Nichols, a hosier and a deacon, to become the pastor at Collingham, fifteen miles north east of Nottingham, on 27 January 1807.¹¹⁷ Nichols had in fact been preaching at Friar Lane and 'usefully' in one particular village for many years before this.¹¹⁸ Their association with the church meeting at Arnold (now within the boundaries of the city of Nottingham to the north of the city centre) was more involved. On 27 April 1807 friend Butler after 'exercising his gifts' before the church, was given permission to fill the pulpit at Arnold in response to a request for help from the Arnold church.¹¹⁹ On 26 February 1810 Samuel Ward (cousin to the previously mention Samuel Ward) was asked by Friar Lane, along with J. Barber, to exercise his gifts in order to assess his suitability to go to Arnold. Ward was approved on 16 April 1810 and Butler on 27 August 1810, and Friend Godfrey was appointed on 27 May 1811 to support further the work at Arnold. In the same year Friar Lane became responsible for the work at Southwell that had commenced with the licensing of a cottage by the GBs of Stoney Street chapel, Nottingham in 1800. In 1811 the Southwell Baptists turned to John Jarman and Friar Lane for help and a relationship that would last twenty-five years involving the provision of preachers and pastors commenced until the BHMS took on responsibility for Southwell with the appointment of a Mr. Phillips in May 1838.

¹¹⁷ Nichols did not become a member at Collingham until 28 June 1809 but he was installed as their pastor on 16 June 1807 after a six-month probationary period. See comments on Collingham below.

¹¹⁸ NthCRO, LA - 1799, Friar Lane, Nottingham. The letter does not state that the village in question was Collingham. Friar Lane also dismissed four members to Collingham in 1808 (see NthCRO, LA - 1808, Friar Lane, Nottingham).

g. Collingham (and Sutton-on-Trent)

The Collingham Church Book commences with a history of the church dated 1806 at its compilation. At the rear are a register of births with the first entry in 1762 and a set of accounts from 1778 onwards. The list of members, however, commences in 1805. The history traces the origins of the Collingham church to pre-1690 as in that year its pastor Stephen Hunt left the church to be succeeded by Robert Milnes who was still pastor in 1705 when a new meeting-house was built with accompanying burial grounds. Milnes died after over forty years service in 1737. James Lomax became pastor in 1740 coming from Skipton, Yorkshire. In 1757 business took him to Nottingham but he continued his involvement with Collingham until 1764 when he died. Between 1757 and 1774 the master of the Collingham School, George Thompson, supplied the church but never became pastor. In 1778 William Shaw also from Skipton became pastor until his death in December 1803.

It was two years before Collingham found a new pastor in William Nicholls who was ordained on 16 June 1807. Nicholls' wealth is revealed when on 24 June 1816 he proposed to finance the building of side galleries in the Collingham church. His only condition was that he would be allowed to decide who could occupy the pews in these galleries. The church agreed unanimously to this proposal. One of Nicholls' first acts was to lead the Collingham church into membership of the NPBA,¹²⁰ which might help explain why some 400 people attended the ordination at which John Jarman, and William Fletcher of Swanwick officiated.

Nicholls continued the commitment to village preaching he had displayed at Friar Lane¹²¹ and on 22 June 1808 Collingham agreed that, "As a church we consider it our duty to engage in attempts to carry the Gospel to some of the adjacent villages by reading and prayer and other religious exercises." By 30 May 1810 the church was conducting worship in Girton and Besthorpe in connection with which Collingham was allowing John Vessey a resident of one of the two villages to 'exercise his gifts' and he was approved on 21 November 1810. On 25 September 1811 the church agreed to extend its ministry in the

¹¹⁹ Godfrey and James (1903), p. 37

¹²⁰ Collingham applied for membership on 27 April 1807 and sent messengers to the annual assembly that year.

village of Sutton administering the Lord's Supper there bi-monthly.¹²² The success of this approach is reflected in the growth of the membership at Collingham as Table 97 illustrates.

Collingham became involved in a dispute with Sutton over William Coles¹²³ who Nicholls had wanted Collingham to make his assistant in November 1812. The church had declined on the grounds that "...several of the bretheren were fearful of the unpleasant consequences should it be acceded to." On 2 November 1814 matters came to a head when one young man indicated that he and others would no longer attend at Sutton should Coles continue there. Coles was surprised and distressed by this remark, and Nicholls deemed it inappropriate. A secret ballot was conducted at Collingham on 20 November 1814. Thirty-eight members voted against Coles and only sixteen for him. Ten days later it was agreed that Coles be given until April 1815 to find an alternative situation.¹²⁴

A curious note appears in the Collingham minutes of 24 September 1816 to the effect that the assistant minister, one Mr. Smith, was unable to subsist on the £80 per annum he was receiving from the church. It is curious, first because it is the only reference in the Collingham minute book to him, and his name does not appear again. It is also curious in that whilst not an exorbitant sum £80 per annum was by no means a low sum for a minister to receive.¹²⁵ In fact Smith, was a Bristol Academy student, and according to the Sutton Church Book preached there from 25 June 1815 to 22 February 1818. The Sutton minutes notes that under Smith's ministry "...a considerable addition was made to the number of hearers and the Baptist cause was more established than it had been at any previous time."

When Collingham took over the work at Sutton in 1810 it quickly outgrew the home of Mr. Sheppard where it had been conducting worship since 1809. Nicholls personal wealth and generosity was displayed again when he gave a piece of land for the building of

¹²¹ See p. 150 above

¹²² According to the NottCRO, Sutton-on-Trent Church Book the work commenced in the village in 1808 as a result of the ministry of Alexander Jamieson sent out by the Haldane brothers of Glasgow. It was taken under the care of Nicholls and the Collingham church in 1810.

¹²³ The Coles of Collingham originated at Gretton where one Thomas Coles was the first minister of the church there.

¹²⁴ Although the church did not formally appoint Coles as Nicholls' assistant their giving him five months to find an 'alternative situation' indicates some acknowledgement of his situation.

¹²⁵ It is possible that both Coles and Smith were being supported financially by Nicholls or that Nicholls was not himself drawing a salary thus making the employment of an assistant possible.

a chapel twenty seven feet long and eighteen feet wide, and again in 1821 when Nicholls gave further land for an extension to the church and contributed financially to the fund. On 29 June 1810 Nicholls, John Jarman, and John Sutcliff opened the new chapel at Sutton. On 4 October 1820 Collingham agreed that candidates for membership from Sutton might give their experience at Sutton and not Collingham, a clear step toward the independence of Sutton. On 2 October 1822 the decision of the Sutton congregation to add a baptistry to their premises is a precursor to their request on 30 October 1822 for separation, which Collingham warmly support.¹²⁶ The new church was pastored by the Rev. George Pope, from the Stepney Baptist Academy, who had been another unmentioned assistant to Nicholls since 28 June 1818. Fourteen members were formally dismissed from Collingham to Sutton to form the new church there. However, it would seem that despite this Pope remained officially Nicholl's assistant, for when Nicholls dies in 1835 the church announced on 22 November that it was inviting Pope who had been his assistant for seventeen years to succeed him. Pope accepted and remained pastor at Collingham until 29 October 1857.

What is clear is that the growth at Sutton that necessitated a new chapel in 1810, that resulted from Smith's ministry between 1815-1818, and required the chapel to be extended in 1821 was not reflected in the membership, which from Table 98 we can see grew from only three to sixteen during this time. The congregation however could have been four or more times larger than this.

h. Sheepshead Baptist Church

Sheepshead shares the distinction of being one of the founding members of the NPBA the first Church Book for 1765-1874 acknowledges that the church was founded some thirty years before 1765, with the record of the Gospel being preached in Sheepshead by a Mr. Boyce and a Mr. Boyers going back even earlier. It is the death of the second Minister, Mr. Christian, on the 1 January 1765 that occasions the minutes commencement. Their commencement also coincides with the inauguration of the NPBA.

¹²⁶ In part the request is precipitated by an illness to Nicholl's that prevented him administering the Lord's Supper at Sutton. By separating and then ordaining Pope on 7 November 1822 the Sutton church bypassed

The Church Book contains a record of new members added during the pastorates of succeeding ministers: John Martin 1765-1772 (56), William Guy 1774-1782 (92) and Robert Mills 1785-1793 (32). Although the Church Book does not include a record of the actual membership it does indicate the annual increase to the membership total.¹²⁷

The first chapel at Sheepshead was erected c1727. Christian died in January 1765 after preaching at a gathering of local ministers. Among those the Church Book records as being present was Robert Hall, and it may well be that this was one of the earliest meetings of the NPBA. It was ministers of the association that filled the pulpit at Sheepshead until the arrival of John Martin, also at the recommendation of the ministers, in May 1765 with his ordination on the 2 July 1766. The Church Book during Martin's ministry reflects the wider concern of the NPBA for the state of the nation at large recording alongside its own prayerful concerns a request from the association in 1769 to set aside a day for national prayers.

Table 95 indicates in 1774 William Guy received fifty-eight new members into the church, a figure partly inflated by the two year interregnum between the departure of John Martin and Guy's arrival. A new membership list is compiled in 1794 from the start of Mill's pastorate that shows in 1785 there were 115 members. A comparison of the list compiled in 1794 with the previous list reveals that of the fifty-eight members received into the church in 1774 some thirty-six were still in membership in 1785.

Between 1765 and 1782¹²⁸ a total of 148 new members were received into the church. When added to the thirty-seven members listed at the death of Christian in January 1765 this gives a possible maximum of 185 members against an actual membership in 1785 of 103.¹²⁹ Therefore, during this twenty years period every two new members received returned a net gain of one member.

The 1794 list also accurately provides information about the fate of members and so it is possible to work out that of the thirty-seven members of 1765 a total of twelve remain in

this problem.

¹²⁷ See Table 95

¹²⁸ The ministries of Martin and Guy

¹²⁹ There is a three year interregnum between the ministries of Guy and Mills from 1782-1785, and the 1794 list notes the numbers of members as one hundred and three at the commencement of Mill's ministry in 1785

membership in 1785 with twenty having died, two being dismissed, and three excluded. Similarly of the 148 members received between 1765 and 1782 twenty-two have died, three have been dismissed, and thirty-two were excluded leaving ninety-one still in membership in 1785. When added to the twelve still left from 1765 gives a membership total in 1785 at the commencement of Mill's ministry of one 103.¹³⁰

Between the 11 February 1770 and 28 November 1803 there are no recorded minutes. Although there is a three page record of the calling of Robert Mills to the pastorate on 31 July 1785, and a copy of the new covenant instituted by Mills. The minutes when they recommence in 1803 show a preoccupation with disciplinary matters. The minutes again cease between April 1812 and June 1816 with the note of 25 June 1816 recording the death of Mills (presumably in 1812) and the impending arrival of the new minister Mr. Peters. Table 96 indicates that during Mill's seventeen-year ministry 127 new members were added to the church.

There is almost no information available for Peters' ministry, which ends by around 1826.¹³¹ Peters is succeeded in 1828 by a Mr. Bromwich and a new, though somewhat disorganised list is drawn up by Bromwich on 22 April 1828 revealing a total membership of only about eighty-six, which would indicate, at least in growth terms, that Peters' ministry was not a successful one. Between 1730 and 1739 some repair to this decrease was made as a further forty-nine members were received.

2. *Smaller Church or those with incomplete records*

a. *Thrapston*

The church at Thrapston was formed on 13 March 1797 with seven original signatories to the covenant which consisted of twenty-three articles of church order and practice and a

rather than at the end of Guy's.

¹³⁰ See Table 96

¹³¹ The *BM*, December 1816, p. 523 does carry an account of Peter's ordination at Sheepshead.

further fourteen articles of faith. Although only eleven miles due west of Kettering there is no indication of the Kettering Church being involved in the origins of Thrapston, although Andrew Fuller did take part in the ordination of Mr. Raymond Hogg at Thrapston on 9 January 1798.

The Church Book contains the membership list as one continuous list but provides very few summaries of the membership. Table 99 shows the number of members added each year from 1797-1834. In addition there are several reference points in the Church Book. In 1797 when the church was formed it had seven members, by 1828 this had risen to seventy-two members. Between 1797 and 1828 the church had welcomed 149 new members and grown by sixty-five. In 1834 the church had eighty-seven members an increase of fifteen from 1828 for the forty-three new members added.

The Church Book records that on 18 January 1798 the church was providing support for the village congregation at Islip one-mile east of Thrapston. On 1 March 1795 three members were dismissed to the church at Ringstead two and a half miles south of Thrapston, though not in happy circumstances. On 2 January 1801 Brother Moore was set aside to go into the ministry and the church made a gift to enable him to purchase some books that would be useful in his ministry.

On 22 May 1803 it is recorded that Pastor Hogg would be accompanying Mr. Smith of Bath on an itinerancy in Cornwall, an episode that was to set a most unfortunate train of events into action that would eventually lead to Hogg's resignation. The issue that came to threaten the very existence of the church was that of the provision of supplies during Hogg's absence. Whereas supplies were sought from outside of the church there was strong feeling that the church should have looked to its own members for supplies. A further point of debate would appear to be whether or not the choice of supplies was one that should have been made by the church and not by a small group on behalf of the church. At the heart of the debate was a recalcitrant member, by the name of Mary Collier. Collier showed her dissatisfaction by refusing to attend the Lord's Supper, which action on 2 April 1804 brought her before the disciplinary proceedings of the church. A heated debate ensued until finally on 1 March 1805 Collier along with Mrs. Youngs and Anne Tyler were dismissed to the church at Ringstead.

In a personal comment on the proceedings Hogg writes in the Church Book on 1 February 1805 that Collier, "...launched out in a very painful and unbecoming way, what a trying member this is." Hogg resigned his pastorate at Thrapston on 30 October 1807 after seventeen years service, dispirited and unable to see a way forward for the church. As keeper of the minutes he took the opportunity to write an account in which he complained of the pittance of £40 upon which they have expected him to survive. He wrote, "I only say that the very spirit which some few of the leading persons in the society manifest of this occasion fully justifies my conduct in leaving them, and proves the propriety of it, at least to myself." He also made clear that his purpose in writing this account is to, "Let my successor note these things..." From April 1808-May 1809 it seemed that his successor might well be William Cuttriss from the Bristol Academy but he eventually declined the prospect of Thrapston and went to Arnesby.¹³² The fact that Hogg was still in the church may well have been one of Cuttriss' reasons. In fact Hogg remained a participating member at Thrapston until 1815.

b. Roade

The church at Roade first appears in the association records for 1767, amongst the first of the new churches to join the NPBA after its formation in 1765/6. It is the pastorate of William Heighton (1752-1827) that is perhaps of most significance during this period. Heighton joined the Kettering Church in 1777 and was called to the work of the ministry in 1784; the year Andrew Fuller came to Kettering. He came to Roade via the pastorate at Winnick (a village in Huntingdonshire) in 1787 where he remained until his death. The success of his ministry led to a church extension in 1793 and a new church twice the size of the former able to hold over 400 in 1802. The congregation was drawn from the surrounding villages, seven of which Heighton visited regularly to preach. Blisworth and Milton in which churches were to be formed were two of the villages Heighton visited. Milton became independent on 13 June 1825 with seventeen members, sixteen from Roade.¹³³ The Church Book for October 1825 also makes reference to the establishment of

¹³² Cuttriss notably becomes involved in the fight against the slave trade. See, p. 238ff below

¹³³ *BM*, November 1825, p. 487, according to the NthCRO, Roade Church Book for May 1825 it was seventeen members that were dismissed to Milton.

the church at Blisworth, which Heighton was to pastor along with Roade. During his forty year pastorate Heighton welcomed 173 members into the church.¹³⁴

One vital aspect of church growth that is evident in the Church Book is retention. It is apparent an initial conversion is often followed by that of other family members continuing on into succeeding generations, such as the Marriott and Longstaff families between 1800 and 1825.

There are six separate membership lists in the Church Book, and these are shown on Table 100. These figures do help to indicate how difficult it can be to make forward progress in membership growth. Despite sixteen new members from 1781-1793 the membership declined by two over that period, and the nine new members from 1826 to 1828¹³⁵ cannot prevent an overall decline in membership of five. The decrease in 1826 is explained by the establishment in 1825 of the churches at Milton and Blisworth.

c. Blisworth

The origins of the Blisworth church are found in 1780 when John Goodridge came to Blisworth having married Anne Blunt to become a tenant farmer to the Duke of Grafton. Soon after his arrival a small gathering of three to four Dissenters was taking place in each other's homes. Despite opposition from the local Rector permission was obtained from the Duke to licence a barn for worship and in October 1789 a meeting-house for Baptist Dissenters was opened with John Ryland amongst those preaching. Although Blisworth was only five miles south of Northampton its links were with the church at Roade only two mile to the east, itself a village church. There was a link with College Lane as revealed in their Church Book entry for the 6 July 1781 with regard to a Mr. Pewtress who had been ministering at Blisworth whilst a member at College Lane. However it is not until 1 November 1825¹³⁶ that Blisworth with eleven members became an independent church, with Rev. William Heighton, also the pastor of Roade, taking pastoral charge. On 15

¹³⁴ See the memoir of Heighton's life that appeared in the *BM*, October 1828, pp. 441-446 by W.G. (identified as William Goodrich pastor of Ravensthorp in the *BM*, January 1823, p. 27)

¹³⁵ The reason for the new list in 1828, so soon after the one in 1826, is that Heighton died in 1827 and a new pastor, Mr. Jayne, arrived.

¹³⁶ *BM*, February 1826, p. 83

September 1825 the church had opened a new worship centre that was thirty-six feet square in preparation for their formation as a church.¹³⁷

The Blisworth records are very scant and Table 101 shows the numbers of members added from 1825 until 1835. Blisworth highlights the problems arising between the difference in membership and attendance. Concern was expressed at their independence as to whether or not eleven members could sustain the church. However, it is apparent that in addition there was a large congregation as the barn in which they met is described as 'thronged' with worshippers, and the Sabbath school started in 1807 had 100 pupils. The fact that on 6 September 1826 Blisworth ordained Mr. G. Foskett as its pastor is an indication that it did prove sustainable.¹³⁸

d. Hackleton

The first meeting-house at Hackleton, which is five miles south-east of Northampton, was opened in 1767 although an independent church was not founded there until 19 May 1781 when John Luck from College Lane came as pastor until 1797. On the 5 October 1783 the church baptised and welcomed into membership William Carey.

The link between College Lane and Hackleton continued in 1808 when Abraham Abbott, a deacon and a recognised village preacher began preaching fortnightly. A note of the 28 July 1809 acknowledged the assistance given by College Lane to Hackleton.

An undated note c1809 described a revival amongst the church's 'younger friends' that led to the re-establishing of a monthly 'experience meeting.' This resulted in twenty-eight names being added to the membership with eighteen baptisms on the 17 April 1809, and seven on 31 July 1809, all conducted by John Sutcliff. A note of 7 May 1809 states that, "Our place of worship is so crowded: it is with great difficulty the people can crowd into it." As a result a new site was purchased and a new meeting-house opened on 8 November 1809. The Church Book records that the new meeting-house was 24ft by 36ft a space that could accommodate perhaps as many as fifty people seated with space for lecterns, pulpits,

¹³⁷ *BM*, February 1826, p. 83

¹³⁸ *BM*, April 1827, p. 187

communion tables etc. Presumably this was larger than the previous building and so puts the notion of that building being crowded into context.

Even a small fellowship such as Hackleton saw the task of village preaching as its responsibility, as can be seen from the setting aside for that role of Edmund Chester on 15 March 1810, after the now familiar process, and also of George Cave on the 27 February 1817. Although in Cave's case it is clear he has already been preaching for several years. On 31 August 1815 the Church Book was passed into pastor Knowles' care and unfortunately he proved a very poor keeper of the records in comparison to the fulsome reports of his predecessor.

However the real growth of the church commenced during the pastorate of Mr. Knowles from Kettering, who was called to Hackleton on 1 October 1812, whilst a student with Sutcliff. After an extended probationary period he was ordained on 12 July 1815, and remained pastor for forty-eight years. Between 1813 and 1862 the church welcomed 238 new members at a rate of nearly five per year. Table 103 shows the membership of the church from 1813 to 1830, revealing a steady increase in membership during our period of study. This continued onwards and by 1862 Hackleton had 141 members, as against only forty-three when Knowles became Minister in 1815. The 1851 Census returns for Hackleton show an average attendance of 200.¹³⁹

e. Harpole

An open membership Baptist Church was formed in the village of Harpole three miles west of Northampton on 16 November 1823. The Church Book for 1823-1851 begins with a history of the formation of the church from the early eighteenth century when villagers travelled into Northampton to hear Philip Doddridge at Castle Hill Congregational Church. In return Doddridge was the first dissenting minister to preach in Harpole, which he did at least annually until his death in 1751.

When in c1800 the villagers erected a meeting-house both Baptists and Independents came to preach there. It would seem that the move to the Baptists came when nearby Bugbrook

Baptist church was formed in 1798 followed by Kislingbury in 1810. Both churches helped to provide regular supplies to Harpole, with their pastors, Wheeler and Adams, baptising Harpole's converts at different times.

The success of the work at Harpole led to the opening of a new meeting-house on 4 October 1809 when amongst the preachers was Sir Egerton Leigh.¹⁴⁰ Kislingbury only a mile or so south now became the main support for Harpole as villagers from there joined Adams' church and Adam's preached every Sunday in Harpole. This continued until 1820 when Adams moved on to Walgrave.

When the church formed on the 16 November 1823 it had eight members and between 1823 and 1837 the Church Book indicates a further thirty-nine members were received but the records are far from complete.

f. Kislingbury

Kislingbury was formed as an open membership Church on 15 June 1810 and Samuel Adams of Tiverton was ordained pastor a few days later on 21 June. In 1822 Adams moved on to pastor the Walgrave Church and Mr, T. Wake, replaced him on Tuesday 15 May 1827.¹⁴¹ As usual both events were well attended by other ministers in the association with the triumvirate of Fuller, Sutcliff and Ryland all taking part.

The Church book contains only scant records for these early years, as the notes are not contemporary but written much later. The membership book however has survived and yields the information on Table 103 with regard to the receipt of new members. As the numbers of new members are small and, more importantly, the records are well maintained it is possible to calculate the changes to the membership of the church as shown on Table 104.

¹³⁹ See Table 65

¹⁴⁰ See p. 132 above

¹⁴¹ *BM*, September 1827, p. 435

g. Blaby

The church at Blaby began as a Sunday school work of the Arnesby church (8 December 1798). Soon fifty children were in attendance and the work was extended to include Lectures (sermons). The work outgrew the rented buildings and on 10 October 1807 a new meeting-house was opened and the church formed on 12 June 1809. Benjamin Evans was ordained the first pastor on 16 September 1812 during which year there were seventeen baptisms. In July 1812 the church decided to join the NPBA, which they did on 9 June 1813, and to extend the meeting-house from 18ftx12ft to 40ftx30ft (a gallery was added in 1829). The minutes from 1813 onwards are dominated by financial concerns, which perhaps give a clue to the lack of membership growth in the church.¹⁴² On 22 April 1839 Evans resigned somewhat acrimoniously after twenty-seven years as pastor of the church.

h. Kegworth

Kegworth was formed on 30 January 1760 having previously been connected to the church at Sutton-in-the-Elms. The Church Book for 1794-1867 recorded the thirteen members who signed the original declaration, with the first pastor, Christopher Hall (1761-1763). The Rev. John Gregory succeeded Hall in the ministry from 1763-1768. A further list on the following page, headed by John Lloyd, who was Pastor from September 1769 until his removal to Norwich in 1774, contains sixty-two names. The church book recorded a series of unsuccessful attempts to find a new minister until a Mr. Blackshaw of Bewdby became pastor on 21 February 1779. However, only twenty-six names signed the decision to call him. His pastorate ended sadly when he resigned on 14 June 1788, and in January 1789 the church book recorded he was excluded from membership due to 'intoxication,'

William Carey arrived on probation in early 1790 and over the next eighteen months the fifty-three members, completed an extension to the buildings and adopted a new Covenant. The *BAR* recorded that Carey was ordained after a ten-month probationary period in the presence of twenty ministers, on 24 May 1791.¹⁴³ The *BAR* report concluded, "The day was a day of pleasure, and I hope of profit to the greatest part of the Assembly." Carey's

¹⁴² See Table 105

¹⁴³ *BAR*, Volume I, p. 519

successor was a Mr. Cave from Samuel Pearce's church at Canon Street, Birmingham. After a probationary period that began in October 1793 Cave was ordained on 24 September 1794, and four deacons and eighty-nine members signed the decision to call Cave. Although Carey was only at Kegworth for two years the membership grew significantly from fifty-three in 1791 to eighty-nine at the time of Caves call in 1794. The Register of Members (1760-1845) for Kegworth shows that between 1760 and 1830 a total of 633 members were received into the church, and the rate of nine new members per year. However, as Table 106 indicates between 1800 and 1829 the actual membership grew only by nineteen from eighty-three to one 102.

VI. The development of Itinerant and Village Preaching amongst English Baptists in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century

A. Introduction

1. The Origins of Itinerancy

According to the Chambers' Dictionary the word 'Itinerant' applied as a noun means, 'one who travels from place to place, especially a judge, a Methodist preacher, a strolling musician, or a peddler.' Whilst it could be applied to anyone whose working practice requires them to travel from place to place to ply their trade, it is a term that is particularly associated with travelling preachers or evangelists. That the dictionary should consider the wandering preachers of Wesley and Whitefield the exemplars of itinerancy is undoubtedly a fair reflection of the events of the Wesleyan Revival of the eighteenth century, as well as an indication of the enduring significance of that revival.

Itinerancy in England was the preserve of the Dissenters. The parish system had divided every part of the land into entities, over which the parish priest, backed up by the law of the land, exercised much influence. The local priest rarely welcomed the presence of a dissenting congregation in his parish, and persecution was, at times, intense. As time passed and the numbers of such congregations increased a grudging acceptance of them grew, and their legal position was much improved by the 1689 Toleration Act.

The increase in itinerancy in the eighteenth century ruffled the feathers of many parish priests who found that their activities disturbed the peace of their parishes, and stirred up their parishioners. Deryck Lovegrove writes "...to the preachers and their supporters much of the prevailing religious observance connected with the established church was little better than superstition, while, equally, many Churchmen regarded their irregular and

uninvited activity as an unseemly and dangerous form of religious enthusiasm.”¹ Even amongst Dissenters the activities of itinerants who, almost by definition, were excitable, zealous, enthusiasts, were often unwelcome. Dissenting congregations had often arisen out of the established church and now found themselves losing members to the Methodist itinerants, and they liked it no better than the parish priest had.

2. *The Impetus for Itinerancy*

Itinerancy as it evolved in Baptist churches was not a lay led movement. Lovegrove writes, “From the first appearance of this new emphasis upon itinerant preaching the leadership and impetus came from those who were ordained ministers.”² Moreover, it should be noted, generally from those who were newly ordained toward the end of the century rather than those long settled in pastorates. Amongst Baptists it was ministers who in the main gave impetus to the work of village preaching, in addition to their pastoral responsibilities, and at times without the full support of their churches. John Sutcliff of Olney was not untypical of those ministers who seemed so tireless in their endeavours. Involved in the establishing of the BMS in 1792, he was asked by his fellow Committee members in September 1798 to take on the responsibility for ensuring that candidates for the mission were suitably educated.³ Amongst the training Sutcliff deemed suitable was to ensure his students preached in surrounding villages such as Clifton, Reynes, and Denton.

What provoked PB ministers of the 1770’s to engage in itinerancy can be summed up by the word ‘reaction.’ First, it was a reaction against the rigidity of hyper-Calvinism that would move PBs increasingly to a more evangelical or evangelistic form of Calvinism. And, secondly, it was a reaction to the mushrooming success of the Methodist Revival.⁴

The *BM* of May 1810 carries an article by Abraham Booth (1734-1806) on village preaching.⁵ The reason Booth gives for engaging in village preaching shows the extent to which the PBs had moved away from hyper-Calvinism. He writes:

¹ Lovegrove (1979-1980), p. 127

² Lovegrove (1979-1980), p. 128

³ Haykin (1994), p. 251

⁴ Lovegrove (1988), p. 23

⁵ Booth, Minister of Prescott Street, London was one of the founding members of the BHMS. This article

Preaching the Gospel, or publishing salvation by Jesus Christ, is the ordinance of God, and the grand mean of converting sinners, in order to their present peace, their greater usefulness, and their final happiness. **PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE**, was the high command of our sovereign Lord to his disciples, just before he ascended the throne of universal dominion.

The reasons thus far given for prompting itinerant work may, of course, be applied wider than just to Baptists. However, Baptists also possessed their own, unique stimulus for itinerancy or home evangelism. This came with the establishment of the BMS in 1792 and William Carey's departure to India in 1793. This impetus for international mission did much to provoke concern for and involvement in mission at home.⁶ Indeed, at a meeting in Birmingham in 1795, the BMS agreed to the appropriation of some of its funds for Home Mission. At the urging of John Ryland, principal of the Bristol Academy, a tour of Cornwall was undertaken by William Steadman (1764-1837) and John Saffrey (1762-1825). This was in 1796 and John Ripon printed a full report of this 'highly successful' venture in the *BAR*.⁷ The formation in 1797 of the 'Baptist Society in London for the Encouragement and Support of Itinerant and Village Preaching'⁸ was a direct result of this tour.

Lovegrove talks of a transition point for Dissent from "...insignificance to the full flower of Victorian Nonconformity..." marked by "...a new and highly visible phenomenon; the widespread employment of itinerant evangelism."⁹ The extent to which this claim is true of the Baptists must now be investigated, but first we should ask why itinerancy? The stimuli we have noted explain why Baptists would engage in home evangelism though not why itinerancy became the universally accepted method for that evangelism. Despite the fact that itinerancy featured in Baptist church life from as early as the 1640s¹⁰ the answer lies in the inspiration provided by the success of Methodism. Baptists never adopted the

was the address Booth gave to support the launching of the society in 1797. It is included as a preamble to the minutes of the newly formed society.

⁶ Lovegrove (1988), p. 14

⁷ Brown, Charles (1897), p. 10; Sparkes (1995), p. 1

⁸ See p. 168 footnote 14. Lovegrove (1988), p. 25. The BMS also provided sponsorship for the tour of Wiltshire by Thomas Westfield. cf. Lovegrove (1988), p. 26.

⁹ Lovegrove (1988), p. 14

¹⁰ The Baptist tradition of appointing 'messengers' was well established. Cf. White (1996), p. 75 on Thomas Collier itinerant evangelist in the West Country from 1634. Also Lovegrove (1988), p. 22

totality of the 'method' but they extracted its core value and made it their own, with not inconsequential success.

The formation of the BHMS,¹¹ quickly followed by auxiliaries all over the country would prove to be a big help, but if the work was not to degenerate from mission to maintenance more was needed. The method adopted was to continually bring before the denomination the spiritual plight of the nation through days of prayer and fasting and through sermons and the written word, a most powerful tool at that time. Typical is the article in the *BM* of December 1828, entitled 'On Revival of Religion.' It is signed T.T. and presumably this is Thomas Thompson then the chairperson of the BHMS. In reference to revivals in the United States Thompson defines revival as, "...copious effusions of the Holy Spirit's influences, by which Christians have been roused, sinners have been converted, and multitudes have been stirred up to anxious enquiry respecting eternal things."¹²

Thompson notes that there have been a few occasions in Britain when these same things have occurred but he gives no examples. Rather he laments the supine nature of the English church, which is too content with a little growth 'whilst the multitudes around us have been perishing.' He compares one association with thirty-four churches that had reported a growth in membership of fifty over the past year with individual American and West Indian churches who alone had gained ten times that number. Thompson goes on to urge the churches to expect more and to ask for more from God. He writes of the 'necessity of such a revival,' and the 'advantages of such a revival.' "The church would receive accessions of such as shall be saved – the means of grace would be well attended and highly valued – and the ordinances of religion be as feast of fat things, promoting the spiritual health and vigour of the inhabitants of Zion."¹³

¹¹ See p. 168 below

¹² *BM*, December 1828, p. 598

¹³ *BM*, December 1828, p. 599

B. Baptist Itinerancy

1. The Baptist Home Missionary Society

Overall, the work and the cost of itinerancy were borne by local congregations, as the work of itinerants increased and the need for greater funding became apparent this would lead to the formation of societies specifically concerned with itinerancy, which in turn lead to the appointment of full-time itinerants. This took shape amongst PBs with the formation of 'The Baptist Society in London for the Encouragement and Support of Itinerant and Village Preaching' in 1797.¹⁴ The London society became the parent organisation and others began to spring up around the country, and it was in recognition of this that the society removed London from its name in 1817.¹⁵ Its financial basis was such that initially it could only support preaching tours.

As has been mentioned the impetus for the formation of the BHMS came from the BMS and in particular from John Ryland, who from his Bristol base had been instrumental in persuading the BMS to support the initial tour of 1796. Indeed Underwood states that at the outset the BHMS "...was virtually a branch of the Missionary Society and was intended as an answer to those who refused to support the Society on the plea that there was enough work to do at home, without sending missionaries abroad."¹⁶ Though, in his extremely brief consideration of this matter Underwood may well overstate the case. In the preamble to the rules of the BHMS is written:

¹⁴ In 1817 it became the 'Baptist Itinerant and British Missionary Society' and in 1821 the 'Baptist Home Missionary Society.' Cawardine (1979-1980), *BQ*, 28, p. 209 dates the change to BHMS as 1822. Christopher Anderson (1782-1852) formed the Scottish Itinerant Society in 1797. An important distinction needs to be drawn between the BHMS and the Home Missionary Society (HMS), not previously evident. The work of the two organisations was identical and it is possible to read the reports in the *BM* without being aware that these are two distinct bodies. Baptist involvement in the latter is considerable with the report in the *BM* of May 1821, p. 212 under the heading 'Home Missionary Society' seeming to suggest a direct link between the societies. The origins of the HMS are unclear though the *BM* of June 1821, p. 257 writes of the 'Second Annual Meeting' of the HMS. On p. 257 of the same edition it carries the report of the Baptist Itinerant and British Missionary Society, which contains the change of name of the society to the BHMS. From this point on reports are carried in the *BM* of both the BHMS and the HMS. The *BM*, of June 1823, p. 265 carries a report on the BHMS and the *BM* of July 1823, p. 292 on the HMS stating quite different progress for each society. And, the *BM* of August 1826, p. 383 contains separate reports of the annual meetings of each society on the same page.

¹⁵ According to the BHMS Minutes for 20 July 1797, a letter was received indicating one such society had already formed in Reading.

¹⁶ Underwood (1947), p. 179-180

While we rejoice in the spirited and laudable exertions of our Christian Brethren, under different denominations, to propagate the Gospel among the heathen, in foreign climes; we should not forget the many myriad's at home, who have fearfully anything pertaining to Christianity, besides the name – who are profoundly ignorant, if not notoriously profligate and profane.¹⁷

The minute book presents a fascinating account of the BHMS from 1797-1812 recording the minutes of the Committee Meetings, the General Quarterly Meetings, and the Annual General Meeting.¹⁸ It includes a great number of reports received from around the country from those supported in their itinerancy by the BHMS. John Ripon was the first Chairman, and in June 1797 he became the first to be sent by the BHMS on a preaching tour to North Devon and Somerset, which was to be a fruitful field for the labour of the society.

In addition to the initial tours the BHMS acted by making ministers and churches aware of their existence and inviting them to send to them the names of suitable candidates for itinerancy that they contacted directly.¹⁹ The BHMS also invited those wishing to itinerate to send their proposal for their tour to aid them in their decision-making. They did not act arbitrarily but sought to establish a strategy for their work and so in 1805 they resolved to write to all PB churches to ascertain the information required.²⁰ The churches were asked if they knew towns and villages where the Gospel was not preached and how far such places were from their churches. Second it enquired how the churches thought the Gospel might best be taken to these towns and villages. And, thirdly what if any other organisations for village preaching existed in their areas?

Denominational boundaries were thought unimportant and the preamble to the rules rejoices in the formation by their Congregational brethren of a similar society. Rule XIII goes even further when it states, “This society, though formed under the countenance and direction of the Baptist Monthly Association, is at liberty to permit its Itinerant Ministers,

¹⁷‘The Proceedings of the Baptist Society in London for the Encouragement and Support of Itinerant Preaching’ can be found in the Angus Library at Oxford. At the front of the minute book are three printed pages, which include the preamble to the rules and the rules themselves. The preamble is included in the *BM*, May 1810, p.282-285 where it is ascribed to Abraham Booth. This quote is from p. 1 of the preamble.

¹⁸ Hereafter Committee, QGM, and AGM

¹⁹ On 8 September 1797 the Committee invited Mr. Miall of Portsea and Mr Symonds of Wooton to undertake itinerancy, both declined, though Symonds was willing to go in the Spring. The Committee on the 22 September 1797 agreed to a new tour of the south-west. The Committee agreed on 12 March 1798 that a general letter be sent to the churches.

²⁰ BHMS Minutes, AGM, 25 April 1805

whenever expediency calls, to unite with Paedobaptist Ministers of Evangelical Principles, who may be engaged in the same General Design.”²¹

They were also true to their remit to evangelise the villages of the realm. In 1806, the BHMS was asked by the London ministers to establish a preaching station in Poplar in order to take the Gospel into unreached parts of the city. The Committee turned down this request but proposed to send them £10 towards the venture.²² However, the GQM only agreed the gift after a prolonged debate. The venture was duly established and the *BM* of January 1809 reports that on the 23 October 1808 John Rippon preached at the opening of the Poplar Mission house to be run by the London ministers preaching in turn.

In the early years of the BHMS, amongst the names that recur frequently in the reports of the society are those of John Palmer of Shrewsbury and Mr. Humphrey and Mr. Norman in Devon and Cornwall. A brief look at the work of these men will serve to illustrate how the BHMS conducted its mission.

a. John Palmer of Shrewsbury (1768-1823)

John Palmer was the minister of Shrewsbury Baptist Church, Shropshire from 1792 until his death on 15 May 1823.²³ In August 1797, the BHMS allocate £40 to Palmer as the first of many gifts he was to receive.²⁴ Palmer’s dealings with the BHMS last until the AGM of 25 April 1806 when he sends his last report to the society. John Palmer’s dedication and commitment to the task of itinerancy is shown by the fact that not even the onset of winter interfered with his work, as he continued to preach through the winter at Bishop’s Castle and Elsemere with two friends including a doubtless cold baptismal service!²⁵ By the summer of 1798, Palmer was reporting such success to the BHMS as to warrant the serious consideration of establishing permanent preaching places in some of the villages he visited.²⁶

²¹ The Baptist Monthly Association was the meeting of London’s PB ministers who formed the BHMS.

²² BHMS Minutes, Committee, 20 May 1806. This was 50% of the cost of the suggested preaching station.

²³ *BM*, August 1824, p. 317-324 and *BM*, September 1824, p. 369-373 for a full ‘Memoir’ of the life of John Palmer.

²⁴ BHMS Minutes, Committee, 8 August 1797

²⁵ BHMS Minutes, GQM, 25 January 1798

²⁶ BHMS Minutes, GQM, 19 July 1798

In 1799 Palmer undertook a five-week tour of the north-west and north Wales. His positive report includes this account of one village visited, "Never was a Gospel Ministry wanting more in any place nor a people more willing to listen."²⁷ In April 1800, the BHMS sent a further £40 to Palmer to support his ministry in the villages.²⁸ The AGM of 25 April 1805 recognise Palmer's devotion to the work by extending to him an invitation to preach the annual sermon of the society.²⁹ In this address to the BHMS Palmer states that with the support he has received from the society he has been enabled to preach in sixty-four towns and villages, with fourteen preaching stations established and the ordinances exercised in eight of them. He laments only the lack of assistance, which would have meant greater success.³⁰ In his last report to the BHMS Palmer reports he has extended his work to two further villages, and that he is sending out some of his members to preach in the villages.³¹ Palmer continued his work probably via the Wellington, Shropshire District Support Group for Village Preaching mentioned in the *BM* of May 1809 and May 1810. It is likely that Palmer was one of those behind the formation of this auxiliary society.

The *BM* carries a brief report of the formation of the church at Whitchurch, Shropshire on 11 January 1814 at which Palmer, whose Shrewsbury church had been responsible for the work, preached.³² In fact the church in Whitchurch had originally been established by the Baptist Church at Salop in 1806 but had failed. Shrewsbury stepped in to breathe new life into the church, which resulted in it being reformed in 1814. On 2 May 1815 Mr. John Hinners from Shrewsbury was ordained as the pastor of the church with forty members.³³

The memoir to John Palmer, which appears in the *BM*, credits the establishment of churches at Oswestry, Whitchurch, Wellington, Minsterly, Wem, Rolla, and Welsh Pool either directly or indirectly to Palmer.³⁴

²⁷ BHMS Minutes, GQM, 24 October 1799. Lovegrove (1988), p. 89 produces a helpful map showing the extent of Palmers travels on this tour, which he estimated (p. 92) covered 200 miles.

²⁸ BHMS Minutes, AGM, 24 April 1800

²⁹ BHMS Minutes, AGM, 15 April 1805. Palmer reported to the BHMS at this AGM that in the previous eight years he had preached on average a sermon every day.

³⁰ BHMS Minutes, AGM, 25 April 1805

³¹ BHMS Minutes, AGM, 25 April 1806

³² *BM*, March 1814, p. 132

³³ *BM*, September 1815, p. 394-395

³⁴ *BM*, August 1824, p. 323

b. Humphrey and Norman in Devon and Cornwall

By the late eighteenth century, itinerancy was an established practice at the Bristol Academy and it was common for students to spend their summers on preaching tours around the Southwest often in the company of an established minister.

The BHMS had been birthed through tours to Devon and Cornwall and it did not neglect the region. In 1798, John Ripon supported by the BHMS toured Devon with Daniel Sprague, and other tours followed in Shropshire, Herefordshire, and Wales.³⁵ Also, in 1798, John Steadman toured Cornwall with Francis Franklin a student at the Bristol Academy; this was Steadman's second tour following the first in 1797.³⁶ Franklin toured again in 1799 with John Saffrey with the advice of the Committee of 9 March 1799 that they ensure that they and their intended preaching stations are properly licensed for the forthcoming summer tour of the province.

The work in the south-west soon passed into the hands of more local men, notably Mr. Humphrey and Mr. Norman who like Palmer became closely associated with the BHMS until 1806. Indeed, they received so much money from the BHMS over the next few years that they were virtually full-time itinerants. They were invited by the BHMS in 1799 to undertake their first tour of north Devon retracing the route of Saffrey and Franklin the previous summer.³⁷ In their subsequent report on their 146-mile circuit they speak of preaching seventeen times in seven days to 'considerable congregations.'³⁸ They write also of their hope of establishing regular prayer meetings, and their desire to acquire meeting-houses to allow for winter preaching.³⁹ In his report the following year Norman speaks of further encouragements and of 'a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.' He also includes in this report a Wesleyan reference when he writes of the joy of being, 'a means under God of plucking poor sinners as Brands from the Burning.'⁴⁰

³⁵ Brown, Charles (1897), p. 26

³⁶ Hamlin (1965-1966), *BQ* 21, p. 321

³⁷ BHMS Minutes, AGM, 25 April 1799

³⁸ BHMS Minutes, GQM, 24 October 1799

³⁹ This comment serves to illustrate that much of the work of the early itinerants took place in the open air. Humphrey's report to the BHMS GQM of 22 October 1801 speaks of preaching to 300 in a street at North Morton, and 400 in a field at Trowbridge.

⁴⁰ BHMS Minutes, AGM, 24 April 1800

Humphrey and Norman both focussed on the same area in north Devon centring on Minehead, Dunster and Porlock, and by 1801 Humphrey was able to state that several of the towns now had meeting-houses for regular use.⁴¹ In 1802 Humphrey conducted a five week tour of North Devon stating in his report to the BHMS that he never preached to less than one hundred people. He noted that whilst many were being converted the number willing to take the extra step to be baptised were few. He likened this extra step as being akin to an Indian being asked to abandon his caste.⁴² Like Palmer April 1806 saw the last communication with the BHMS by both Humphrey and Norman. Again, the most probable explanation is that support of their work was now undertaken either by the newly formed churches or by newly formed itinerant societies. In Humphrey's case he would appear to have made the transition from itinerant preacher to minister at Collumpton, Devonshire.⁴³ Humphrey however, did not give up his commitment to village preaching and was soon involved along with others in the work at Bradninch, Devon.⁴⁴ It would appear also that Humphrey maintained his connection with the BHMS as his name is attached to a motion at the AGM of the society in 1817.⁴⁵

Despite this activity the *BM* was still able to carry a report in April 1814 that outlined vast tracts of the south west destitute of the gospel and of the need for the BHMS to find the means to support itinerant work. Mention was made of a Mr. Harris who was labouring with some success and was restricted only by a lack of financial support from extending his work to more and more villages from whom he received 'pressing invitations' to come and preach.

⁴¹ BHMS Minutes, AGM, 23 April 1801. However according to the BHMS Minutes, AGM, 25 April 1805 Norman is reporting that he is now preaching in a different group of churches in north Devon.

⁴² BHMS Minutes, AGM, 22 April 1802

⁴³ *BM*, November 1811, p. 458 – under the list for Devonshire. He should not be confused with the William Humphry who, according to the *BM*, March 1812, p. 128, on 25 December 1811 is ordained as Pastor over the Baptist church at Isle-Abbott, near Ilminster, Somerset. This Humphry, was baptised at Isle-Abbott and was presumably a member of the church newly formed there on 23 June 1808, before becoming its pastor.

⁴⁴ *BM*, January 1814, p. 43 – three miles south of Collumpton

⁴⁵ *BM*, July 1817, p. 273 – motion number 4.

c. *The BHMS after 1812*

The increasing exposure given the BHMS in the *BM* would appear to bear fruit as 100 individuals attended the first public meeting of the BHMS in June 1814.⁴⁶ The report of the proceedings of the meeting is more upbeat than previous ones. A year later on 21 June 1815 a 'numerous meeting of the subscribers and friends' gathered at the New London Tavern to rejoice in the work of the BHMS and to hear amongst other things of the expansion of the interest of the BHMS into the Scilly Islands.⁴⁷

i *John Jeffery, the Scilly Islands Mission and Cornwall*

The work on the Scilly Islands was initially undertaken by John Jeffery of Penzance, who had been preaching in the villages of Cornwall supported by the BHMS. In November 1814 he visited the Islands to distribute tracts and to investigate the situation there. His report to the Committee of the BHMS resulted in their asking him to undertake work on the Island with their support for six months.⁴⁸ In the summer of 1815 aided by the Rev. Smith of Penzance almost every home on the Islands was visited. Jeffery reported that he preached to the entire population of the island of Sampson 'forty in number' of whom only two could read.⁴⁹ John Jeffery was in fact the first full-time evangelist employed by the BHMS from 1815-1819. The work soon prospered,

Prayer meetings were formed, schools were established, and divine service performed every Sabbath. The schools flourished exceedingly, and there were soon one hundred and sixty adults and children instructed every Lord's Day by eleven teachers. There are now upwards of three hundred; and nearly thirty teachers are engaged in this honourable employ.⁵⁰

In a letter dated 10 February 1818 Jeffery reports that in his three years on the Islands that 150 souls had been saved, fifty within the last three months. A number of baptisms were pending the arrival of Smith from Penzance, which indicated that Jeffery as a preacher and

⁴⁶ *BM*, July 1814, p. 307. It was a breakfast meeting at 7.00am on a Friday morning but the report in the *BM* omits the date.

⁴⁷ *BM*, July 1815, p. 303

⁴⁸ *BM*, April 1816, p. 172-173

⁴⁹ *BM*, April 1816, p. 173

⁵⁰ *BM*, April 1816, p. 173. 'now' meaning a year later.

not a minister was unable to baptise converts. A year later in 1819 Jeffery was reporting schools attended by 200-day scholars and 350 Sunday scholars. He stated, "Nothing is wanting but school books and a little money, to increase the latter to one thousand."⁵¹ The inherent dangers of the itinerants life was shown by the fact that Jeffery and some companions narrowly escaped drowning when crossing between islands on his many travels in 1818.⁵² By 1821 the constant exposure to the elements endured in sea crossings necessitated Jeffery to spend a month recuperating at Penzance.⁵³ By the summer of 1822 Jeffery was back at work and able to report that he now received assistance regularly from Isaac Nicholls and Edward Webber, the former of whom would appear to be developing a ministry to the seamen who called in on the Islands.⁵⁴ He expressed his concern that those he was now entrusting the work to should be properly taught by him and asked for several text books, including some by John Gill to be sent to him.⁵⁵ In 1824 a report from Mr. Trewalla printed in the *BM* catalogues continued growth on the islands still under the care of Mr. Jeffery. The principal island of St. Mary had three gatherings totalling 300, and two Sunday schools with eighty pupils between them. Seventy children attended the Sunday school on Tresco and 120 the services. Brehar also had well attended services and a Sunday school of forty, and St. Martin's had a crowded gathering for adults and two Sunday schools with fifty-five scholars. St. Agnes had a 'thirst for the Gospel' and the Sunday school established by Jeffery had now developed into a day school under the care of the local vicar, teaching all the island's children. Finally on Sampson, where Edward Webber was working it was reported that 'all the inhabitants attended the preaching', and a Sunday school also operated.⁵⁶

However, by 1823 John Jeffery's remarkably ministry was no longer restricted to the Islands but had extended onto the mainland from whence he originally came. The church at Newlyn had, under his ministry, increased its evening service from 700 hearers. His letter containing this information, reprinted in the *BM* as part of the first Quarterly Register of the BHMS, went on to outline in some detail Jeffery's desire to take the gospel out from Newlyn to the surrounding district.⁵⁷

⁵¹ *BM*, February 1819, p. 82

⁵² *BM*, February 1819, p. 82

⁵³ *BM*, December 1821, p. 553

⁵⁴ *BM*, December 1822, p. 541

⁵⁵ *BM*, December 1822, p. 541

⁵⁶ *BM*, January 1824, p. 47

⁵⁷ *BM*, January 1824, p. 47-48

ii *Continued Expansion of the BHMS*

Despite the restrictions of finance the BHMS was determined to expand its work and passed a resolution at its AGM in 1816 to this effect.⁵⁸ The base from which it wanted to expand was the support of forty-five ministers across 'twenty-six counties in England, and Wales, in Scotland, in the Isle of Man, and in the Scilly Islands' in some 200 villages.⁵⁹ By 1817 some sixty ministers were receiving support to preach in 220 towns and villages, hand out 8,000 tracts, establish fifty Sunday schools for children, five for adults, and six new churches.⁶⁰ The work had also extended to the Channel Islands.⁶¹

At a special General Meeting on 16 July 1817 the society undertook the first alteration of its name. The change was made in part to enable the BHMS to adopt a national role and become the overseeing body for the many local itinerant societies by then in existence. Additionally it was to enable more local societies to be formed, as well as the formation of auxiliary societies whose function was to raise funds at a local level for the work of the national society.⁶² To further this end the BHMS established a sub-committee whose task was to correspond with ministers around the country to exhort them 'to make further exertions for the spread of the Gospel.'⁶³ One of the first societies formed in response to this effort was the Loughborough Auxiliary Baptist Itinerant Society on the 15 October 1817 covering Nottingham and Derby as well as Loughborough.⁶⁴ By 1820 the society possessed the finances to appoint several full-time itinerants, and the number of villages reached had increased to 300, connected with which were seventy Sunday schools.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ *BM*, July 1816, p. 299

⁵⁹ *BM*, July 1816, p. 299

⁶⁰ *BM*, July 1818, p. 276. Also *Brown, Charles (1897), p. 29-30*

⁶¹ *BM*, July 1817, p. 274

⁶² It was not unusual for gifts to be made conditionally. The *BM*, May 1818, p. 196 records a gift of £105 made on the condition that that auxiliary societies supporting the BHMS be formed in the majority of London churches by June 1818. The sum was equivalent to two ministers' annual stipends or the total cost annually of the Scilly Islands Mission.

⁶³ *BM*, September 1817, p. 397

⁶⁴ *BM*, May 1818, p. 196-197

⁶⁵ *BM*, July 1820, p. 289

By June 1823 the BHMS was supporting seventeen full-time missionaries, with a meagre salary of £40 per annum, and a further eighty ministers and preachers.⁶⁶ It now began to be proactive advertising in the *BM* for five full-time itinerants giving details of the locations for which they are sought.⁶⁷ Up until this point itinerants had been found either by personal recommendation or out of those coming to the BHMS to volunteer their services. By 1823 it would appear that the point had been reached whereby these means were no longer sufficient, hence this new approach to recruitment was adopted. Further evidence of the growth of the society is provided by the decision taken to produce a Quarterly Register for the use of the sixteen Auxiliary Societies, and by a stated desire to see the formation of further countywide Auxiliaries.⁶⁸ The reason given for this is that despite the cost of the production of the QR it is necessary to keep interested parties better informed of the workings of the BHMS.⁶⁹ That the innovations of 1823 mark the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the BHMS is further illustrated when on 31 October 1823 they invited the Rev. F. A. Cox of Hackney to become joint secretary of the Society,⁷⁰ an appointment that would prove highly significant. The report also gives evidence of the way in which the BHMS is beginning to think strategically from its central committee rather than simply reacting to local initiatives. The recruitment of paid itinerants is a part of this new strategy, but it is more fully revealed in the section of the report relating to Cornwall, compiled by Fox.⁷¹ Fox acknowledges that a great deal of work had been done by the Methodists except in the Western end of the county⁷² and therefore proposes that the BHMS look to those areas untouched by the Methodists. In the event the work in Cornwall progressed so well that by 1825 a District Committee had been formed to oversee the work from nearer at hand, and a visitation of the Scilly Islands undertaken.⁷³

⁶⁶ See also Brown, Charles (1897), p. 31

⁶⁷ *BM*, June 1823, p. 265

⁶⁸ Hereafter QR. The sixteen 'Auxiliary Societies' referred to here are the sixteen county Societies with which the BHMS works in close co-operation rather than the very many smaller auxiliary societies based on churches or smaller localities that essentially existed to financially support the work of the BHMS. The formation of a Middlesex Auxiliary on 6 November 1823 reported in the *BM*, December 1823, p. 518 would appear to be a direct result of this appeal.

⁶⁹ *BM*, June 1823, p. 266

⁷⁰ *BM*, January 1824, p. 45

⁷¹ *BM*, January 1824, p. 46

⁷² *BM*, January 1824, p. 46

⁷³ *BM*, August 1826, p. 384

As part of the announcement for the AGM to be held on 16 June 1829 the *BM* includes a table listing the stations supported by the BHMS.⁷⁴ This table serves to illustrate not only the extent of the work of the BHMS but its breadth. It is interesting to note that whilst nil returns are made for many counties, there is no mention of London at all, and that, in the ten counties in Central England that at one time made up the NPBA, there are only three preaching stations in total reaching to a further seven villages with four Sunday schools. Crucial though the role of the BHMS was at this time, alongside it must be placed the work of churches, as in Northamptonshire, that continued the work of itinerant village preaching, church planting, and Sunday school founding without looking to the BHMS for support.

By mid-1830 the BHMS was able to report that it supported thirty-six full-time missionaries and forty others part-time. The number of villages preached in being 250 with over 130 Sunday schools having been founded since the BHMS began its work.⁷⁵ There was an air of expectancy around the committee of the BHMS, expressed to their missionaries and agents in a letter sent to them early in 1830, and reprinted in the *NBMsc*.⁷⁶ It speaks of the "...special exercises of devotion which were held last year, to implore the outpouring of the Holy Spirit." The purpose of the letter is to enquire where it is the fervour that attended those meetings has gone, and to urge the missionaries to be constant in their devotions. The letter speaks positively of 1829 as a year in which previously unknown progress was made for the gospel, noting especially the revivals in America and the West Indies. In order to encourage the continuance of this move of the Spirit the missionaries and agents are urged.

...to stir up their several congregations, to hold a special prayer-meeting on the 9th day of April next, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God upon the labours of all Christian Missionaries, for an increase of labourers, and for the spread of the gospel throughout the world.⁷⁷

The 9 April 1829 was in fact Good Friday and considered by the committee suitable for the intended purpose though they acknowledged some would not find it so and urged them to choose another day. However, it was not until the mid-1830s that the main impact of the

⁷⁴ *BM*, June 1829, p. 254. See also *NBMsc*, June 1829, p. 255. See Table 117

⁷⁵ *BM*, April 1830, p. 163. See also *NBMsc*, April 1830, p. 158

⁷⁶ *NBMsc*, March 1830, p. 121-122

⁷⁷ *NBMsc*, March 1830. P. 121-122

BHMS would be felt. By 1835, the society employed 100 full-time itinerants who in 1834 reported they had provided 300 new members to Baptist Churches, seven new churches, and thirteen preaching stations/chapels erected.⁷⁸

iii *The Tools of the Itinerants Trade*

There is little doubt that the two principal tools used by itinerants were sermons and tracts, and well-known preachers such as Ryland and Booth were asked to prepare addresses for use by itinerants.⁷⁹ At the GQM on 19 July 1798 the society wrote to Palmer and asked him to prepare an address for immediate publication and distribution in addition to a similar address by Ryland entitled 'A Message from God unto thee.'⁸⁰ The Committee on 8 July 1800 resolved to search the publications of the newly formed Religious Tract Society (1799) for suitable items for use by its itinerants.

It seems clear that to a greater or lesser extent itinerants were expected to make extensive use of these prepared sermons in their own preaching. The BHMS did itself provide a few tracts for use by its itinerants but for the most part it was to the Religious Tract Society and the Bible society that itinerants looked for the supply of these much needed tools. Many of the reports we have noted here to the BHMS include an account of the distribution of tracts and Bibles and express a need for more.⁸¹

The *BM* of 1821 carries a letter from an itinerant who signs himself J.R.G. concerning what must have been a very novel tool, that of a tent provided to him by a London minister for his work in Surrey.⁸² J.R.G. reports that he has used the tent, "in some of the villages of Surrey, and in several it has proved a comfortable tabernacle..."⁸³ In one village regularly visited some 300 'peasants of all ages' gathered to listen to the gospel. J.R.G. is able to report that two chapels have already been erected with a third under construction as a result of the work enabled by the use of the tent.

⁷⁸ Brown, Charles (1897), p. 32

⁷⁹ BHMS Minutes, 8 December 1797 John Ripon and Abraham Booth were asked by the Committee to provide addresses that could be printed and distributed by the preachers.

⁸⁰ Itinerants distributed these addresses in the villages they visited.

⁸¹ For example *BM*, December 1817, p. 474; July 1818, p. 276; March 1821, p. 127 etc.

⁸² *BM*, February 1821, p. 96

d. Financial Limitations

There is little doubt that the BHMS was severely restricted by the low level of funding available to it. The *Baptist Magazine* in 1822 noted that the income of the Bible Society was £104,000, the BMS £11,600, and the BHMS a paltry £903.⁸⁴ The BHMS was funded entirely by donation or subscription. At the first AGM in 1798 the income was reported as £295 11s 6d against an expenditure of £202 9s 7d.⁸⁵ However by 1804 the BHMS were experiencing difficulties and the Committee resolved that no further money could be allocated.⁸⁶ The Committee responds to this crisis by appointing a 'collector' whose success in restoring the finances of the society, by September 1804, enabled the Committee to place £150 into an investment. Additionally they decided that in future no grants in excess of £5 per annum would be made to any individual except in unusual circumstances.⁸⁷

A long report appears in the *BM* in 1821,⁸⁸ which again illustrates the frustrations of the Committee. A successful appeal for additional funds to enable them to employ one extra itinerant has resulted in two being employed. The presentation then of two cases, one in Somerset and one in Northumberland, where despite the perceived need nothing may be done due to the lack of funds, immediately follow that success. Worse still the Committee reports that it was necessary to sell some of its assets to help defray its running costs and that despite this measure there are those still waiting to be reimbursed for their expenses.⁸⁹ The message that follows is simple enough; the income of £850 for the year to June 1821 is simply insufficient for the demands being made upon the Committee. By 1826 the situation had worsened and the salaries of the 'Agents' of the BHMS were only met thanks to generous loans from two supporters, there was a very real fear that a painful 'retrenchment might be necessary reducing the work of the society.'⁹⁰ During the years 1819-1826 the resources available to the BHMS had trebled but so had the number of missionaries supported. Early 1826 saw a downturn in the finances of the BHMS, which

⁸³ *BM*, February 1821, p. 96

⁸⁴ Briggs, John (1994), p. 294

⁸⁵ BHMS Minutes, AGM, 19 April 1798

⁸⁶ BHMS Minutes, Committee, 16 April 1804

⁸⁷ BHMS Minutes, GQM, 22 November 1804

⁸⁸ *BM*, June 1821, p. 261-264

⁸⁹ *BM*, June 1821, p. 263

⁹⁰ *BM*, May 1826, p. 238

the QR for April blamed upon 'commercial disasters' beyond the control of the society.⁹¹ Reluctant to reduce the work the committee took a step of faith securing sufficient loans of £400 to meet the outgoings of the society for the remainder of the year. This involved support of twenty-five full-time missionaries and 100 part-time village preachers. By December an extra £300 had been given in donations and legacies enabling the work to continue as planned.⁹² By June 1827, with the AGM pending, the BHMS were able to announce that, despite the problems afflicting the nation, the resources of the Society had continued to improve from their low point of 1826.⁹³

This renaissance was short-lived and in 1828 the BHMS published in the June edition of the *BM* advance notice of the AGM to be held on 17 June at the City of London Tavern. The notice was in the form of a report highlighting the financial plight of the BHMS. It stated the intention in 1827-1828 not to increase the number of missionaries but rather to improve the support given to existing missionaries.⁹⁴ However, with some twenty applications received the Committee felt compelled to change the plan and engage three further missionaries. This brought the number of employed missionaries to twenty-six with a further forty itinerants receiving gratuities. The Committee however reports that its income for the year was still below £1,000. The report concludes with the earnest hope of the Committee, "...that when the religious public are acquainted with these facts they will by their liberality evince at the approaching meeting that their zeal for the home department of the missionary field is not abated."⁹⁵ The hope was realised as the financial report given at the AGM indicated an income for 1827-1828 of £1489 8s 6d, though expenditure was still much greater at £1620 7s 8½d.⁹⁶

The situation remained much the same in 1830 with the BHMS receiving only half its income from subscriptions, which was still the usual means of Societies raising funds. As the monies received in this way were known in advance it gave the Societies a greater

⁹¹ *BM*, June 1826, p. 286. The report of the Committee to the AGM in July 1826 (*BM*, August 1826, p. 383-386) makes clear that the 'commercial circumstances' referred to are of a National dimension. The *NBMsc*, January 1826, p. 37 notes, "...the treasurer was called upon to advance a sum much larger than any previous deficiency has required at this season of the year." The nature of the financial shortfall is revealed in the *NBM* of May 1826, p. 193 that reveals that the treasurer of the BHMS is indebted to the sum of £1,000.

⁹² *BM*, December 1826, p. 576. See also *NBM*, Supplement 1826, p. 511

⁹³ *BM*, June 1827, p. 282

⁹⁴ cf. *BM*, July 1827, p. 322-323

⁹⁵ *BM*, June 1828, p. 279

⁹⁶ *BM*, July 1828, p. 320

security in their funding. The remainder of the income came from donations and church collections. One innovation for 1830 was a sale of ‘useful ornamental articles’ provided by the ladies of the society that raised £50.⁹⁷ The finances were further helped by an exceptionally generous collection at the AGM on 15 June 1830 of £430. The income for 1829-1830 at £1,825 16s 8d against expenditure of £1,954 15s 9¼d left a deficit on the year of £128 19s 1¼d, which meant the collection at the AGM put the BHMS in possession of a surplus of almost £302 to start the new decade, an almost unprecedented situation.

2. Other Baptist Itinerant Societies

As time progressed more and more auxiliary and other societies were formed. Some, such as the large county/regional societies of Yorkshire and Lancashire, would see themselves as separate institutions with aims common to the BHMS. Other smaller localised groups would see themselves as extensions of the work of the BHMS, as did the Walworth Auxiliary formed after the Society’s AGM of 1827. This auxiliary set itself the task of taking the gospel into one small neighbourhood in London undertaking to visit every house distributing tracts with the aim of establishing a prayer meeting.⁹⁸ In 1809 a London Baptist Preachers Society was formed, presumably to develop a city-wide ministry, but Lovegrove notes it appears to be a short-lived venture due to the proximity of the BHMS based in London who appeared to resent this new group, seeing in their formation an implied criticism of the work of the BHMS with respect to the capital.⁹⁹

An example of a large county/regional society is the formation of the Northern Baptist Itinerant society in 1809, inspired by William Steadman at a meeting in Halifax on 29 August 1810.¹⁰⁰ The first resolution passed that day states the purpose of the newly forming society. It says, “That, taking into consideration the state of the Baptist interest in these northern parts of the Kingdom, it seems very desirable that some effort be made for the revival of religion, by that denomination.” As with the BHMS membership was

⁹⁷ *BM*, April 1830, p. 164, and *BM*, June 1830, p. 250. See also *NBMsc*, April 1830, p. 158 and *NBMsc*, June 1830, p. 246

⁹⁸ *BM*, March 1828, p.128-129. See also *NBMsc*, March 1828, p. 113

⁹⁹ Lovegrove (1988), p. 153

¹⁰⁰ *BM*, October 1810, p. 539-540

initially by subscription set at ½ guinea per year. The first indication of success comes with an account of the baptism of five people at Dewsbury, Yorkshire in 1815 attended by 5,000 people, conducted by Steadman himself. Several more baptisms resulted from this event. In May 1815 a new church was formed at Pool, Yorkshire where twenty had been baptised and a meeting-house holding 200 persons ‘fitted up.’¹⁰¹ In 1812 a place of meeting holding 200 people was prepared in the Lancashire village of Chatburn with several baptisms and the establishment of a Sunday school. The village of Haslingden, Lancashire after four years of effort had a church of some forty members and was contemplating building a chapel. A new church was formed at Roebuck, Lancashire near Garstang on 22 July 1815 following fifteen baptisms, with services ‘generally crowded with attentive hearers,’ in an area noted for the strength of Roman Catholicism.¹⁰² The report of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Baptist Itinerant Society for 18 October 1815 stated that the society was aiding village preaching at eight different stations on Sundays and twenty other locations midweek. During the previous six months forty baptisms were recorded and two new churches formed and the work at Oldham and Staley-bridge was to be taken under the patronage of the Society.¹⁰³

The Bristol Baptist Itinerant Society was formed in 1824 and was concerned with the villages surrounding Bristol and also with the city itself as it expanded into new districts. There is evidence to suggest the Bristol Society took a more strategic approach by identifying likely places for commencing new work and concentrating resources to achieve success, such as at Chew Magna and Dundry where work commenced in 1824.¹⁰⁴

In many cases, these Itinerant Societies were more locally based than the associations. The *BM* carries reports of many of them. The January 1809 magazine records that on 28 September 1808, the Tiverton, Devon meeting of the Village Preaching Support Group occurred.¹⁰⁵ The *BM* of June 1809 and June 1810 record the meetings of the Wellington, Shropshire District Support Group for Village Preaching at their AGM’s on 25 April 1809 and 25 April 1810.¹⁰⁶ This presumably became the Shropshire Baptist Itinerant

¹⁰¹ *BM*, September 1815, p. 390

¹⁰² *BM*, September 1815, p. 390-391

¹⁰³ *BM*, December 1815, p. 523-524

¹⁰⁴ Hamlin (1965-1966), p. 321

¹⁰⁵ *BM*, January 1809, p. 38-39

¹⁰⁶ *BM*, June 1809, p. 246 states that members of the Group have travelled 4,000 miles and preached 400 sermons. Also *BM*, June 1810, p. 364

Committee, which reported in 1820 on its own appointment of two itinerants and the formation of four new churches, though lamenting its financial inability to aid a list of other preachers.¹⁰⁷ The February 1810 magazine reported on the Bath District Meeting and April 1810 on the Gloucester District Meeting.¹⁰⁸

By the mid-1820's the work of Itinerancy amongst English Baptists had become centralised under the auspices of the BHMS with the relationship between the BHMS and local Societies more linear than before. New auxiliary societies continued to form but often now at the behest of the central committee to oversee the ever-expanding work on a more local basis. The BHMS became more of a strategic planning body working through the local auxiliaries rather than a reactive body attempting to support local auxiliaries. The auxiliaries, however, did not totally lose their autonomy. The Hereford County Auxiliary Society, formed in 1818, reports in 1826 that it supports directly two missionaries and one assistant missionary with the £140 they had raised themselves and a grant of £30 from the BHMS.¹⁰⁹

3. The Academies

As the number of Dissenting Academies expanded into the nineteenth century, they gave added impetus to itinerancy. Lovegrove explains this when he writes:

Behind the practice of encouraging students to itinerate as distinct from merely supplying vacant pulpits in existing congregations lay several basic objectives. There was an obvious desire for evangelism and expansion either by means of visits made to hitherto untouched areas or through the more intensive penetration of communities adjacent to existing churches, and although the evangelistic potential of student preaching was not advanced as a reason for the foundation of any of the Baptist Academies, it was widely recognised as one of the benefits to be derived from any such institution.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ *BM*, November 1820, p. 469

¹⁰⁸ *BM*, February 1810, p. 85

¹⁰⁹ *BM*, December 1826, p. 576

¹¹⁰ Lovegrove (1979-1980), p. 131-132

A further benefit of making use of the students in this way was to ensure that as they themselves became settled in their pastorates/ministries the principle of itinerant preaching was firmly implanted in them.

William Steadman became in 1805 the first principal of the Northern Academy, he was already fully committed to the work of itinerancy, and he soon began to steer the Yorkshire and Lancashire Associations down this path. On retiring in 1825 Steadman was asked to write the *CL* for the association in which he maintains his indefatigable commitment to evangelism when he encourages them, "...to promote the spread of the Gospel, and to establish new churches within the limits of the association."¹¹¹ John Briggs writes, "Students at the new academies were put to work as evangelists and church planters, making the college not just a place of training but an immediate ministerial resource effective in the life of the churches."¹¹²

The work of itinerancy was to have a curious relationship with the Colleges in two ways. First, the success of itinerancy and the establishing of new congregations required more pastors/ministers, which gave further impetus to the expansion of Baptist Academies. Secondly, came the training of increasing numbers of ministers in whom the desire to work as evangelists was very powerful. Despite the physical difficulties and the variable financial rewards of accepting full time itinerant posts there was no shortage of men willing to undertake the work. However, such posts were often only occupied for as long as it took the post-holder to establish a new congregation better able to support them.¹¹³

This was a natural process for once sufficient converts were won in an area to form a congregation the likelihood that this congregation would invite the preacher responsible for their conversion to be their Pastor was high. When one added to this the often-extreme difficulties¹¹⁴ faced by itinerants and the poor financial rewards they received, their willingness to be tempted into the stability of the pastorate is understandable. It is important also to understand that the full-time itinerant evangelist and his methods

¹¹¹ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 128

¹¹² Briggs, John (1996), p. 76

¹¹³ See for example the case of James Pilkinton on p. 193 below

¹¹⁴ Lovegrove (1979-1980), *BQ*, 28, p. 136 where he quotes in some detail the story of a schoolmaster named Wastfield in respect of personal discomforts, and pp. 137-139 where he gives details of the kind of disruptions and legal problems faced at times by itinerants.

represented one of two main patterns of itinerant ministry. The other being the use of local men as village preachers/itinerants sent out by already established churches.¹¹⁵

4. *The Northamptonshire Association*

The work of itinerants in the NPBA provides a variant to the patterns above with the absence of any co-ordination of the work directly through the establishment of an auxiliary or society, though the association did establish a fund for the support of village preaching.¹¹⁶ A commitment to itinerancy can be found within the NPBA as early as 1779 when the minutes or breviates of the association state that it was agreed to "...promote village preaching as being a likely method to spread divine knowledge among multitudes who are ignorant; to encourage the chatechising of children; and to print the articles of the association."¹¹⁷ What transpired in PB circles in Northamptonshire was typical of the rest of the country as the hyper-Calvinism that dominated the early to mid-eighteenth century gave way to a more evangelical Calvinism. The breviates of 1792 record the association giving two guineas to support preaching in Derby and one guinea to support preaching in Braybrook.¹¹⁸ The latter would appear to bear fruit in 1802 when the presence of Braybrook is first recorded at an association Meeting.¹¹⁹ In 1801 there is an advertisement in the *CL* stating that the income from further sales of the *CL* for that year will go to the Association Fund, which is, "...principally applied to the Assistance of Village Preaching."¹²⁰ However, individual churches serving as a sending centre for itinerants carried the main responsibility for village preaching. Newly formed congregations would often be seen as daughter churches of the sending church that may in the course of time become independent churches. In fact, this pattern of itinerancy was the preferred pattern of the BHMS in its early years directing most of its limited funds to helping settled ministers to take the Gospel to surrounding villages.¹²¹ By 1825 under the leadership of John Edwards the *modus operandi* of the BHMS had shifted to the use of the evangelist

¹¹⁵ See p. 133 above

¹¹⁶ *CL* (NPBA, 1797), p. 12 and (1799), p. 16

¹¹⁷ *CL* (NPBA, 1779), p. 14. Lovegrove (1988), p. 32 notes the Western Association had informed its churches of the establishment of a similar fund in May 1775

¹¹⁸ *CL* (NPBA, 1792), p. 16

¹¹⁹ *CL* (NPBA, 1802), p. 11

¹²⁰ *CL* (NPBA, 1801), p. 11

¹²¹ Cawardine (1979-1980), p. 209

pattern with their employment of twenty-five full time itinerant evangelists, a figure set to grow to 100 by 1835.¹²²

Lovegrove writes of the late 1790's that, "...lay participation in itinerant preaching would appear to have been on a scale which dwarfed all the other categories put together,"¹²³ though he is also clear that leadership was given by ordained ministers.¹²⁴ It may be that the distinctions between lay and ordained were obscure, often depending on the local situation. Churches took very seriously the process by which a member was set aside as a village preacher, and it is clear in some cases that it was understood that those so acknowledged would in all probability become ministers themselves. Indeed the process by which a church set aside a member for the ministry was identical. In other words, the call to village preaching was a route to full-time employed ministry, just as was the route that took candidates to the Bristol Academy. Conversely, many ministers such as John Collett Ryland at College Lane, Northampton, were effectively lay pastors as they provided their own maintenance, in his case by running a school. Ryland, however, was the ordained minister at College Lane, whereas paid pastors who were not ordained as ministers led other churches.

a. Further Examples of Itinerancy in the NPBA

The churches, as we have seen, took very seriously the task of appointing village preachers. The pattern used at College Lane is one other churches also followed.¹²⁵ Candidates for preaching would preach at usually three Church Meetings over a period of time before they would be set aside.¹²⁶

It wasn't only the larger and well established churches that engaged in village preaching. The church at Spalding, Lincolnshire in 1788, which joined the NPBA in 1775, doubled its own capacity at the same time it built a meeting-house at nearby Billingborough, where the pastor preached, and by 1791 both were full to overflowing.¹²⁷ By 1795 some had left

¹²² Cawardine (1979-1980), p. 209

¹²³ Lovegrove (1979-1980), p. 134

¹²⁴ Lovegrove (1979-1980), p. 128

¹²⁵ See p. 136 above

¹²⁶ See pp. 131-162 above for examples within the NPBA of the successes and failures of this process.

¹²⁷ NthCRO, LA - 1775, 1778 and 1791, Spalding

Billingborough for Heckington, though without approval, and in 1796 a new meeting-house was opened at Peakhill, five miles away from Spalding.¹²⁸ The small church at Thorn was in membership of the NPBA from 1787 until it dissolved in 1804 to join with the Dunstable Church,¹²⁹ which was the result of the work of Thorn's Mr. Faulkner who was also preaching successfully in the village of Houghton.¹³⁰ The church at Ivinghoe, Buckinghamshire relates the story of Mr. George Clark a member of Braunstone, Northants, who in 1790 came to work on the canal in the neighbourhood...

...the ministers of the gospel hearing that he had been encouraged to exercise his gifts in preaching, by the church at Braunston, some of them invited him to preach. On hearing this, a Mr Meacher of Ivinghoe, who was favourable to the gospel, sent for him and asked him if he would preach in the neighbourhood of Ivinghoe; to which Mr Clark consented. Mr Meacher then gave Mr Clark a new suit of 'cloathes' and procured five houses in five different villages, viz. Ivinghoe, Pitstone, Cheddington, Horton, and Ivinghoe Aston. The three first of which Mr Clark continued to preach at ever since, and the Lord has evidently been with him and blest his labours. None have been baptized, and joined other Baptist Churches. In the year 1804, nine of us who are now members of the Church at Ivinghoe were baptized. The same year we were formed into a Church, on the 13 November, by the assistance of Mr. Clements, Mr. Morris, Mr Blundel, Mr Sleaf and Mr Wake, and Mr Clark was ordained Pastor the same day. The latter end of last Summer we had some additions to our number by Baptism; and our present number of members is nineteen... We have no place as yet to worship in, but the houses of our friends.¹³¹

A Mr. Griffin offered the church at Ivinghoe land for a new meeting-house in 1808¹³² on condition they did erect a building. Although they could not afford to do so by 1813 they report their building project to be well underway. Two years later they report that this is continuing.¹³³

¹²⁸ NthCRO, LA - 1795 and 1796, Spalding

¹²⁹ NthCRO, LA - 1804, Dunstable

¹³⁰ NthCRO, LA - 1792, Thorn

¹³¹ NthCRO, LA - 1806, Ivinghoe

¹³² NthCRO, LA - 1808, Ivinghoe

¹³³ NthCRO, LA - 1813, Ivinghoe

The church at Foxton in Leicestershire saw seventeen members set aside for the new church at Clipston in 1778.¹³⁴ By 1791 the sixty members of 1775¹³⁵ had decline due to a long period without a minister (1782-1791) to only nineteen members,¹³⁶ yet, by 1796 Pastor Burton is engaging in village preaching with some success at Gumley in 1803, despite opposition from the village priest.¹³⁷ The Bugbrook church, Northamptonshire reported in 1814 a ‘goodly number of hearers’ at four villages, Heyford, Grimscott, Litchboro and Stow.¹³⁸ The church at Newark, Nottinghamshire, was formed on the 10 May 1810 with twelve members who had by the following year formed a church at nearby Southwell pastored by a Mr Musson with a membership of twelve.¹³⁹ The Southwell church applied to join the NPBA in 1813.¹⁴⁰ The church at Sutton Ashfield had been a member of the NPBA since 1771¹⁴¹ and, though it only had nine members in 1792, it was by 1797 involved in itinerant work in the villages of Sutton¹⁴² and Hucknall through the pastor Mr. Holmes.¹⁴³ Finally we note the results of the work of the church at Oakham, Rutland, which in 1797 opened the meeting-house at Braunstone, Leicestershire, and in 1811, opened a further meeting-house at Hambleton, Leicestershire.

b. William Fletcher of Derbyshire

William Fletcher represents an example of a pastor committed to village preaching. In 1787 Fletcher was minister at Codnor and we read that ‘though weak in body he continues fervent in spirit. He frequently attends to field preaching.’¹⁴⁴ In 1788 the church reports that ‘Brother Briggs, and our ancient brother Skerrett’ assist Fletcher.¹⁴⁵ In 1790, they state that their meetings are well attended both at Loscoe and at several other places where they preach.¹⁴⁶ In 1791, Brother Briggs is reported to be going to Burton-on-Trent to a

¹³⁴ NthCRO, LA - 1778, Foxton

¹³⁵ NthCRO, LA - 1775, Foxton

¹³⁶ NthCRO, LA - 1791, Foxton

¹³⁷ NthCRO, LA - 1796, 1799, and 1803, Foxton

¹³⁸ NthCRO, LA - 1814, Bugbrook

¹³⁹ NthCRO, LA - 1810 and 1811, Newark

¹⁴⁰ NthCRO, LA - 1813, Southwell

¹⁴¹ CL (NPBA, 1771)

¹⁴² As was the Collingham church in 1814 as stated previously

¹⁴³ NthCRO, LA - 1792, 1797 and 1803, Sutton Ashfield

¹⁴⁴ NthCRO, LA - 1787, Codnor

¹⁴⁵ NthCRO, LA - 1788, Codnor

¹⁴⁶ NthCRO, LA - 1790, Codnor

new 'interest' there.¹⁴⁷ In 1795, now minister of the church at Loscoe,¹⁴⁸ Fletcher is reported as preaching in four different villages.¹⁴⁹ Despite being kept from his own pulpit for six Sundays, due to an intermittent fever, Fletcher continued to preach at Swanwick, about three miles distant, with great success over the space of one year. As a result '...ten were baptised at Swanwick, nine of them inhabitants of that village among whom are two whole households and five more besides since our last letter so that our increase this year is fifteen. There is hope of building a meeting-house there this summer.'¹⁵⁰ By 1798 Fletcher was restored in health and preaching regularly at both Swanwick and Loscoe, with four prayer meetings in the villages of Codnor, Swanwick, Heanor and Denby. By 1806, a church was formed at Swanwick with Fletcher exercising Pastoral care over it.¹⁵¹ The church reported that, 'Our congregations are larger both in the meeting-house, and on Sabbath day evenings, than in previous years.' Fletcher was using Swanwick as a base to preach in the villages of Codnor, Ripley and the Riddings every other Lord's Day evening with brother George Moore of Codnor assisting Fletcher with the ministry at one place or another every Sunday.¹⁵² By 1811, the work from Swanwick included the village of Greenhillane and in 1814, a meeting-house was erected there.¹⁵³ In the same year the church at Luscoe wished to build a meeting-house at Heanor, but with the commitment to building at Greenhillane they reported their need for help.¹⁵⁴ On 26 September 1826 the Swanwick church welcomed Mr. C. Stovel, of Stepney Academy, as its new pastor. William Fletcher took part in the service and in its report of the ordination the *BM* says of Fletcher, "This venerable individual has now arrived at the 81st year of his age, and Swanwick is only one of the deserts that has blossomed through his laborious and persevering exertions. The church, which consists of 110 members, has been raised to its present state entirely through his instrumentality."¹⁵⁵ Though the churches served by William Fletcher were never in a prominent part of the nation, and whilst he did not play a

¹⁴⁷ NthCRO, *LA* - 1792, Codnor

¹⁴⁸ Though not formerly stated either in the *LA*'s or the *CL* it is apparent that between 1793 and 1795 the church at Loscoe replaces the church at Codnor.

¹⁴⁹ NthCRO, *LA* - 1795, Luscoe

¹⁵⁰ NthCRO, *LA* - 1796, Luscoe

¹⁵¹ According to the NthCRO, *LA* - 1810, Swanwick's contact with Loscoe has been severed to the extent that they 'know so little about them.' This took place around 1806 when Fletcher moved to the new work at Swanwick and Joseph Swain began to minister at Loscoe.

¹⁵² NthCRO, *LA* - 1806, Swanwick

¹⁵³ NthCRO, *LA* - 1811 and 1814, Swanwick

¹⁵⁴ NthCRO, *LA* - 1814, Luscoe

¹⁵⁵ *BM*, November 1826, p. 531

large part in association or national Baptist affairs his story, typical of many, is one of dedication and commitment to the Baptist cause unperturbed even by serious illness.

c. Youth Itinerancy

Itinerancy was not the sole preserve of the mature in the churches. Olney reports in 1797 that “Young friends from our church and other churches in the town (usually one from each church) go to neighbouring villages on the Lord’s Day evening to sing, pray and read a short, but profound sermon. These are well attended, maybe out of novelty, but we seek God’s blessing on them.”¹⁵⁶ The church at Bugbrook, Northamptonshire also writes of the work of their young people at nearby Stow-nine-churches in 1813.¹⁵⁷ And the church at Collingham, Nottinghamshire states in 1814 that some of their young friends go into the villages preaching.¹⁵⁸

d. Some Consequences of Itinerancy

The data from the Church Books causes us to reflect that growth in the life of the church can be measured in more ways than simply growth in membership statistics, though ultimately this remains the most important discernible measurement of Church growth. During the period, 1871 to 1824, College Lane released members to train for the ministry and for overseas mission. It released members to become pastors of other churches, often having been village preachers first. It released members to form six new village churches at Guilsborough, Bugbrook, Kislingbury, Harpole, Ecton, and Kingsthorpe. All of these were a drain on the resources of the mother church, losing not only members, but frequently highly gifted members, whose contribution to the mother church had they stayed may, have been significant. It is irrelevant to consider what size the church might have been if these members had not left, for their dismissals only occurred as a result of the evangelistic and missionary endeavour of the College Lane church, without which there would have been no growth anyway. At least one of these churches, Guilsborough, went on to plant another church, Ravensthorpe, eight miles north of Northamptonshire, and two

¹⁵⁶ NthCRO, LA - 1799 and 1799, Olney

¹⁵⁷ NthCRO, LA - 1813, Bugbrook

¹⁵⁸ NthCRO, LA - 1814, Collingham. See p. 152 above for relationship between Collingham and Sutton-on-

south of Guilsborough, on 4 June 1819 when William Goodrich from Arnesby, Leicestershire was ordained its minister.¹⁵⁹ Even the small church at Fenny Stratford which first appears in the NPBA records in 1809 enjoys a newly enlarged meeting-house in July 1821,¹⁶⁰ and is recorded as ordaining as a Home Missionary for the BHMS, Mr. Hedge, in April 1830 with Mr. Edwards, one of the secretaries of the BHMS, taking part in the service.¹⁶¹

Both patterns of itinerant evangelism had their part to play in encouraging the growth and spread of Baptist churches, and indeed lay at the heart of that growth. In areas where Baptists already had a strong presence the church centre pattern was the most natural and the one most usually employed. In those places where the Baptist presence was weak or non-existent, the employment of full-time evangelists was the most plausible option. The eventual success of both patterns would, by the end of the nineteenth century, ensure that virtually every town in England, and many villages had a Baptist church within it. One effect of this was to see the demise of the itinerant societies and their replacement by other societies to support, not evangelists planting churches, but ministers pastoring the churches previously established. This shift from mission to maintenance would contribute to the eventual decline of Baptists throughout the twentieth century.

5. Other Examples of Village Preaching

Full-time itinerants were employed by some of the associations newly formed after 1792 sharing a concern for Home Mission with that for overseas mission.¹⁶² In a letter published in the *BAR* one Mr. W. Brackett describes the success of village preaching in Essex following the employment of a full-time itinerant.¹⁶³ The letter written from Waltham Abbey is dated July 1799. It would seem that following a meeting of the counties Baptists ministers it was decided to establish a fund to support village preaching by those ministers whilst also appointing a full-time village preacher.

Trent

¹⁵⁹ *BM*, July 1819, p. 395-396

¹⁶⁰ *BM*, November 1821, p. 494

¹⁶¹ *NBMsc*, May 1830, p. 206-207

¹⁶² Lovegrove (1979-1980), *BQ*, 28, p. 132-133

¹⁶³ Brackett (1793-1802), *BAR*, Volume 3, pp. 184-188

From a list of applicants, a Mr. James Pilkinton was appointed. Success is determined to have happened quickly as following a three-month effort in Rayleigh, Essex, sufficient progress had been made to erect a meeting-house in September 1798. Brackett records the events that transpired at the opening of the new church¹⁶⁴ on Tuesday 25 June 1799 beginning at 10.30am. Brackett himself preached the baptismal sermon following which Pilkinton baptised the eighteen candidates. After lunch, at 3.00pm, with ministers of the Essex Association officiating, the church was constituted, with James Pilkinton as its minister, his settlement service taking place the following morning at 10.30am. Pilkinton is an example of a common pattern whereby the itinerant evangelist quickly settles as Pastor of a church he has planted.

The *BM* carries a report on the success of village preaching in Sussex seemingly the result of the ministry of the church at Lewes.¹⁶⁵ On the 17 September 1809, Moses Fisher Pastor at Lewes presided over the opening of a meeting-house at Barcombe only a short time after the Gospel had been introduced to the village on 10 July 1808. The report speaks of the rapid growth of the congregation over the twelve-month period despite the inadequacy of the previous meeting place and the rigors of winter. The report states, "The house licensed from preaching not being large enough to contain the people assembled, many persons, after walking miles, have stood in the rain, around the door and the window of the house, during the whole of the service, seriously listening to the word preached."

The rapid success at Barcombe is complimented by a report in the *BM* of labours in the Hampshire village of Beaulieu undertaken by the Baptist Church at Lymington.¹⁶⁶ After seven years of fruitless endeavour, the pastor of Lymington, Mr. Giles, suddenly encountered a mini-revival when going to visit two individuals he found a crowd of fifty gathered to hear the Gospel. A regular Tuesday evening meeting was established that quickly outgrew the accommodation and a barn was made available for use. The report states, "...this was well filled, frequently not less than 150 persons being present." The other ministers of the district were sought as to the wisdom of erecting a meeting-house and their agreement received. A building 34 feet by 17 with a vestry and stable was built

¹⁶⁴ Brackett (1793-1802), *BAR*, Volume 3, pp. 185

¹⁶⁵ *BM*, December 1809, p. 507

¹⁶⁶ *BM*, November 1810, p. 591-593

at a cost of £161. It was opened on Tuesday 7 August 1810. The report is signed simply G. presumably for Mr. Giles of Lymington and it is intended along with other reports in the *BM* to stir up all the churches and pastors to involve themselves in Village Preaching.

Giles writes, "Ought not every pastor of a church, that has time or strength, to preach once or twice a week in the villages? While we laudably exert ourselves as a body to visit the shores of India with the light of life, are not some of us too negligent towards the souls of our countrymen, who are perishing for lack of knowledge, only a few miles from our own houses?"

The BHMS was birthed in the preaching tours initiated in 1797 by the BMS in the South-West of England. This method continued to be used for many years as a means of reaching villages and towns well beyond the scope of local Baptist churches. However, it became redundant as a method following the successful planting of churches all over the country, which meant that churches served as stations from which to reach surrounding villages. However, whilst the 'tour' ceased from being a common method it did not disappear altogether. In 1830, John and James Hinton conducted an experimental tour of villages in Oxfordshire. A third unnamed individual was sent before them delivering tracts that announced the impending visit of the preachers. When the Hintons arrived in a village they themselves delivered a further tract announcing their presence. Commencing the tour on Monday 12 July 1830 they preached to congregations in as many as six villages daily. In the course of their tour they preached twenty-eight times to congregations ranging from thirty to 1,000 people. They estimated that 75-80% of their hearers did not regularly attend preaching. The Hintons wrote, "Our journey has fully convinced us of the practicality, the adaptation, and the importance of the plan we have pursued." For their part they intended to repeat their experiment annually and urged others to do the same.¹⁶⁷

6. *Opposition to Itinerancy*

The work of itinerancy is never popular amongst existing churches. Brown believes that the poor spiritual state of the nation at the end of the eighteenth century is the responsibility of 'slothful, complacent, self-indulgent clergymen of the Church of

¹⁶⁷ *NBMsc*, August 1830, p. 331-332

England.’ His history of Baptist Home Missions was written in 1897, if, as is likely, his attitude reflected that of his colleagues a century earlier, it can be no surprise that Baptist itinerants were not welcomed in Anglican parishes.

Brown quotes the Anglican clergyman John Newton as saying in 1801 that “...9,000 of the 10,000 parishes were destitute of the Gospel.”¹⁶⁸ He reports also the belief held by many Baptists of the generally poor moral and spiritual state of the nation. Abraham Booth in the preamble to the rules of the BHMS is typical of these Baptist leaders when he writes, “It is very affecting to think, that in this country, though highly favoured with civil and religious privileges, the inhabitants of many villages are destitute of an evangelical ministry.”¹⁶⁹ In fact as early as 1798 the BHMS had noted in their minutes the likelihood of clerical opposition to their work.¹⁷⁰ The same edition of the *BM*, in May 1810, also carries an ‘*Anecdote of Village Ignorance.*’ The author, whilst unnamed, declares himself to be one ‘whose itinerant labours have been multiplied.’ He begins by telling of two gentlemen who had never before heard mention of the name of Jesus, and concludes with the tale of a man who was excited by the preaching of an itinerant as he discovered there was no difference between them, except that in Church (i.e. the Parish Church) they worshipped God whilst at the Meeting you worshipped Jesus Christ.¹⁷¹

The GQM of the BHMS received a report from Mr. Norman at its meeting on 21 October 1802 indicating a problem he had encountered in one of the villages. The local priest had taken possession of the house in which Norman was due to preach in order to prevent him from doing so, but was thwarted when another villager made his home available.

However, not all clergyman of the Church of England were so obstructive. The same GQM records the tale of the unnamed Bishop who was so concerned for the spiritual state of his diocese that he welcomed itinerants of all hues into it. This unnamed Bishop finds a stark contrast in the shape of the Samuel Horsley, Bishop of Rochester who was a prime mover in the attacks upon Dissenters. In 1800, his charge to the clergy was an open attack upon itinerants and dissenting congregations. He railed against illiterate preachers and spoke of plots to overthrow ‘Church and Crown.’¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Brown, Charles (1897), p. 17

¹⁶⁹ BHMS Minutes, preamble to the rules p. 1; *BM*, May 1810, p. 282

¹⁷⁰ BHMS Minutes, 19 April 1798. cf. Lovegrove (1988), p. 123

¹⁷¹ *BM*, May 1810, p. 296

¹⁷² Brown, Charles (1897), p. 18-19

Much later, in June 1812, the *BM* carries a report of the formation of a new church and the ordination of its first pastor at Shrewton, Hampshire ‘amidst great opposition.’¹⁷³ No examples of what this entailed are given, and perhaps this indicates that the understanding that the readers of the *BM* possessed of such ‘opposition’ rendered it unnecessary to spell out the details.

C. Conclusion

Itinerancy was not the sole cause of Baptist church growth but alongside the development of Sunday schools it was clearly the principal method, as Deryck Lovegrove acknowledges, when he writes, “In practical terms, apart from the influence of the Sunday school movement which grew rapidly in dissenting circles after 1790, this increase in the attraction of new members can only be attributed to organised itinerant preaching.”¹⁷⁴ It may not be possible always to distinguish between the two movements as in many instances it may be found that the moment at which a Sunday school is founded in a village or town is the same moment that itinerant preaching begins, or even that it was the planting of a Sunday School that gave rise to the formation of a new church. We deal with the Sunday school movement, and its impact on the growth of Baptist churches in the following chapter.

The impact of itinerancy on Baptist churches, indeed on Dissent in general, is quite evident. This impact can be seen where itinerancy can be defined as a local church either sending out preachers to establish village churches or to draw villagers into the centre, or a combination of both. It is demonstrated when itinerancy took the form of a group or association of churches using its limited funds to support itinerant evangelists or their own pastors. Finally the critical importance of itinerancy was revealed in the formation of a plethora of societies for itinerant preaching. Itinerancy became for Old Dissent the chosen and highly successful method of taking the Gospel to the people.

¹⁷³ *BM*, June 1812, p. 269-270

¹⁷⁴ Lovegrove (1988), p. 39

VII. Sunday schools

The Sunday school - all hail, celestial Plan!
A thousand ages hid from prying man:
While ancient sages of advent'rous flight
Convers'd with regions of ethereal light,
Weigh'd orbs, and measur'd the unbounded sky,
Why not this path of sov'reign good descry?
Intent the spangled heavens to explore,
Their tow'ring minds o'erlook'd the infant poor.¹

The rise in popular education can to a large extent be attributed to the work of Dissent and as a fruit of the revival of Dissent from 1770. T. W. Laqueur, from the position of social historian rather than church historian, points out that during the last fifty years of the eighteenth century Dissenters began to experience revival as the numbers of Congregationalists, Baptists, and Methodists in the country increased fourfold.² He writes, "In short, by 1780 an increasing number of people, particularly in the lower strata of society, came to take religion seriously. The education of the young in the ways of godliness was a product of this revival."³ At the heart of Dissent was a reverence for the Bible and the preached word, which demanded that hearers be able to read the Scriptures, and other Christian literature increasingly becoming available. This provided the motivation for people to learn to read and dissenting churches to teach them to read. Of equal importance was the fact that the expansion of the printing industry increasingly meant that materials for reading could be had readily and affordably by increasing numbers of people.

M. G. Jones attributes the rise of Sunday schools to the 'Methodist movement.' Jones writes,

The new evangel accompanied by a deepened sense of the spiritual needs and claims of the individual, broke the lethargy of the Anglican and Nonconformist Churches. It inspired the Anglican Church to take a lead in the provision of catechetical

¹ Emmett (1908), p. 3-4

² Laqueur (1976), p. 3

³ Laqueur (1976), p. 4

schools for the children of the poor, when the social and economic conditions at the end of the century called for fresh effort. The enthusiasm of two devoted Anglicans, Robert Raikes and Sarah Trimmer, for Sunday school instruction, revived the tradition for popular education associated with the church during the earlier years of the century. The idea particularly found favour with the Church of England, but no small part of the success that the new method achieved was due to the co-operation of Methodists and Dissenters.⁴

There is little doubt that Anglicans and Methodists became strong supporters of the Sunday school movement as the nineteenth century progressed but the true origins and initial impetus for the movement lay with Dissenters and with Baptists in particular. The founding of the Sunday School Society in 1785 was the key to the movement's success. Methodists were not involved in this event and prior to this had shown no inclination as a movement to establish Sunday schools. Anglicans, as we shall see, were at the same time strongly associated with Sunday schools from the beginning and also the major source of opposition to the growth and spread of the movement. Jones, in inferring that the prime role in the development of Sunday schools belongs to the Church of England and the Methodists, does an injustice to their true origins.

It would be difficult to overstate the extent of the influence of the Sunday school movement upon the entire development of English national and social life from its inception in 1785. Laqueur establishes the all-encompassing nature of the movement when he writes:

If there was a single experience common to the children of an agricultural labourer in Bedfordshire, of a stockinger or handloom weaver in the Midlands, or of a factory operative in South Lancashire, it was attendance at a Sunday school.⁵

And the influence of it when he says:

...the Sunday school provided more than literature and instruction; it was a central feature of working class community life. The annual school outing was a highlight of the year; the school anniversary was, in some areas, an occasion for giving a new pair

⁴ Jones (1938), p.142-143

⁵ Laqueur (1976), p. xi

of shoes, a cap, shirt, or pinafore; the tea meeting was an important monthly social engagement for teachers. The Sunday school, through various clubs, provided clothes, money during illness, and a proper funeral upon death. Teachers and other students brought comfort and companionship to scholars who were absent through sickness. Attended entirely by the working classes. Staffed largely by former students and their parents, often managed and financed by the community which it served, the Sunday school was a part of, and not an intrusion on to, popular culture.⁶

A. The Motive behind the Founding of Sunday schools

The development of the Sunday school movement was one of the most ambitious undertakings of the church at the turn of the eighteenth century. Its aim was to educate the vast mass of the population who couldn't read, write, or do much beyond the most elementary mathematics. Reading was taught initially using the Bible, and the Bible was used as the basis of moral teaching, and the curriculum included mathematics and a variety of innovative subjects from knitting to woodworking.

Jones believes that it was a combination of the industrial revolution and the rise in population that provided the social conditions in which the Sunday school movement arose. It was a combination that brought large masses of impoverished people into the cities of which the most noticeable group would have been the increased numbers of children. The large rise in population was essentially due to advances in medicine and basic hygiene that meant more children survived infancy and that initially the number of children as a percentage of the total population was significantly increased. Despite the fact that many of these children ended up in workhouses, where often-unscrupulous mill owners employed them in appalling conditions, the numbers of children roaming the streets on England's cities to little or no purpose was noticeable.⁷ On Sundays those children otherwise occupied at work exacerbated the problem. Jones writes, "The new puritans of the Methodist and Evangelical revivals were stirred in their consciences..."⁸

⁶ Laqueur (1976), p. xi-xii

⁷ Cliff (1986), p. 14

The motivation behind the early pioneers was not evangelism. A comment made by John Wesley at a visit to a Sunday school at Bingley, Yorkshire, in 1784 illustrates this point. He recorded in his journal, "I find these schools springing up wherever I go... Who knows but some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians."⁹ Jones comments on the true motive when he writes, "In dogma, Methodists, Evangelicals and Dissenters lacked agreement, but in their desire to rescue the children of the poor from the evils which they united in abhorring, they were of one mind."¹⁰ The design of Sunday schools was the ultimate transformation of society, it was spurred by the belief that poverty could be eradicated by education, that compassion and benevolence alone would not suffice. By contrast it should be understood that the motive for education did not arise from any conviction or agreed policies of any of the church bodies. No Synod or Convocation nor General Assembly of any of the Churches during the eighteenth century gave education a major place on its list of priorities.¹¹

There can be little doubt that churches very quickly became aware of the evangelistic potential of the Sunday schools, yet they never lost sight of the initial purpose of the schools, which was to educate the masses. It should be appreciated that there was little distinction between general education and religious education, especially in the education of children. The subject matter of elementary education was learning to read, learning to write, and learning to behave properly. The Bible was the means for learning all three and the notion that it might be wrong to use education to indoctrinate children into the Christian faith would not have been common. So, whether one believed passionately in the value of education to the poor, the value to society in general in improving the moral climate, or in the salvation of the souls of the children being taught, one could pursue those aims within the Sunday school system without difficulty.

In 1813 Robert Hall jnr. (1764-1831), the most renowned Baptist preacher and thinker of the early nineteenth century, preached a sermon at his church, Harvey Lane, Leicester¹² in aid of the Sunday school, subtitled 'The Advantages of knowledge to the lower classes.'¹³ Hall notes, in commenting on Proverbs 19:2, that whilst the author of Proverbs is primarily

⁸ Jones (1938), p. 145, cf. Also Cliff (1986), p. 12

⁹ *Journal*, Vol. II (1811), p. 3

¹⁰ Jones (1938), p. 146

¹¹ Cliff (1986), p. 10

¹² Harvey Lane was in membership with the NPBA

interested in divine knowledge, "...it is equally certain he by no means intended to exclude from these commendations, knowledge in general."¹⁴ Hall was similarly disposed in his thinking and applied his opening remarks to knowledge in general before coming to religious knowledge. In common with many of his contemporaries, whatever the premium they placed upon divine knowledge, they did not lose sight of the fact that they also had a responsibility for the general education of the people.¹⁵

At the same time it was clear that Baptists understood the value of ensuring their own children were properly taught the faith. Indeed, their success in ensuring that their children did follow in the faith of their parents is an essential ingredient in their growth and expansion from 1770. A successful retention policy would in and of itself ensure that churches would grow. Coupled with an increasingly proactive evangelism policy the result was a continuing generation by generation commitment to the 'mission of the church' that gave rise to the century long revival English Baptists would enjoy. However, without the former it is doubtful if the latter could have been possible. In many instances the formation of a new church followed a period of twenty to forty years work in a village, time enough not only for the winning of converts around the village but for the initial converts to have nurtured their own families, to see their children marry, and to see new children born. In thirty years one couple living in a village might themselves have five children who survive infancy. Each child then marries remaining either in the village or nearby, and in turn has an average of four children, producing a total after thirty years of thirty-two individuals plus converts and their families - more than enough to form a new church. An example of such a development is the church at Blaby, Northamptonshire. The *BM* gives the following account of the origins of the Blaby church in a report ostensibly concerning the opening of a new meeting-house.

It originated in the laudable exertions of a few serious characters at Blaby, who having to travel upwards of four miles to worship on the Sabbath, agreed to stay at home alternately, to take care of each others children and apprentices, and teach them to read the scriptures, with an intimation, that if any of their neighbours chose to put their children and apprentices under their care, they were ready to attend to them. The school was opened in Dec. 1789, and

¹³ Hall (1813)

¹⁴ Hall (1813), p. 2

¹⁵ For an example of an approach that was more clearly Gospel centred see the section on Hannah More on p. 209 below. See also the discussion on p. 220 below on this issue.

they had fifty children to teach the first day...In the course of last summer a young man in his twenty-fifth year, was received into the church, who was one of the fifty children who attended the school the first day it was opened in 1798. Besides this young man, two or three others ascribe their first impressions to the labours of the teachers. We now have twenty-four members who were first taught the principles of religion at this school; and one is a member of another Baptist church in the neighbourhood.¹⁶

Laqueur, in his analysis of the motivation behind the emergence of the Sunday school movement, attributes it to three factors.¹⁷ The first two we have already considered, being the desire to improve the moral standing of the population and to bring spiritual enlightenment to those being taught. However, whilst there is no doubt that the churches quickly came to appreciate the evangelistic potential of Sunday schools it would be wrong to see this as an initial motivation.¹⁸ It was not the churches that lay behind the founding and early spread of the movement, but individual Christian social reformers, and indeed one of the early characteristics of the movement was its interdenominationalism.¹⁹ The third motive is what Laqueur describes as, "...a new, soft, kind, more optimistic and sentimental view of children."²⁰ There is no doubt that attitudes towards children change significantly throughout the nineteenth century and that a concept of 'childhood' is a product of that change. However, it seems more likely that the Sunday school movement and the development of day schools give rise to this change than that they are a product of it.

The formation in 1803 of the Sunday School Union in some respects marks the beginning of the transition of Sunday schools from general educational institutions to 'mission agencies' of local churches. It was a transition aided by two things. One was the parallel development of day schools that came to take over the general educational role of the Sunday schools. The second was the success of Sunday schools, which had two effects.

¹⁶ *BM*, April 1814, p. 263-264. Whilst not explicitly stated it is likely that of the 24 mentioned some were from the original families that commenced the work.

¹⁷ Laqueur (1938), p. 4

¹⁸ *NBMsc*, August 1828, p. 319-320. An anonymous letter to the *NBMsc* adds to recent articles in the magazine on revivals an important omission, which is the role that Sunday schools can play in securing the objectives of revival.

¹⁹ It wasn't until 1840 that a clear divide in the movement occurred when the Church of England established its own Sunday school Institute. A decision occasioned when the committee of the Sunday School Union decided that same year to remove from its list of publications all denominational catechisms in order to preserve its interdenominational standing. See James (1910), p. 22.

²⁰ Laqueur (1976), p. 4

One was to increase attendance at services and subsequently the membership of churches serving to make apparent the evangelistic potential of Sunday schools. The other was that schools gradually lost their interdenominational status as the need for more schools was most quickly and easily met by the establishment of Sunday schools attached to individual churches rather than by establishing more interdenominational Sunday schools.

There is little doubt that the Union, when it formed, perceived its task in unequivocally Christian terms. Jabez Bunting²¹ in a sermon preached to the members of the Sunday School Union in 1805 was clear that the nature of the Union was derived from the Christian Faith of its founders.²² He was equally clear as to the task they had set themselves when he wrote, "It is another branch of your work, to communicate to those under your care the most interesting and momentous Instruction...by taking every opportunity of explaining to them the truths of religion, and of impressing on their hearts, by distinct and particular appeals to the conscience, the general principles and obligations of Christian Morality."²³

Bunting also sees the evangelistic opportunity presented by Sunday schools. He writes, "On the accession of the rising generation to her standard it is evident that this Church Catholic must depend, under God, for the future maintenance of her cause, and for the promised extension of her conquests. And I doubt not but Sunday schools will largely contribute, in connexion with others means, to recruit the number of her sons, and to accelerate her millennial triumphs."²⁴

By 1829 the transition was complete as the address for the Committee of the Sunday School Union for that year made clear. "The leading object of Bible classes may be stated in one sentence.²⁵ It is to convey to the minds of the young, as accurate and extensive a knowledge as may be found practicable, of the most important contents of the Bible."²⁶

²¹ He was perhaps the dominant Methodist figure of the early nineteenth century holding the Presidency of the Methodist Conference more times than any one else, before or since.

²² Bunting (1805), p. 6. Laqueur (1976), p. 81, describes the Wesleyan Conference of the early nineteenth Century as being 'Bunting Dominated.'

²³ Bunting (1805), p. 7

²⁴ Bunting (1805), p. 22

²⁵ The term Bible Class is almost synonymous with Sunday school the difference being that the latter is made up of a number of the former.

²⁶ *BM*, October 1929, p. 433

Any suggestion of a generally educative role was now gone from the stated purpose of Sunday schools.

B. Initial Reaction to the Sunday school movement

The establishment (the aristocracy, the Tory party and the Church of England) looked with great suspicion on any action that worked to improve the lot of the poor and weak in society, and it is a sad fact that the Church of England could not disassociate itself from these interests. Whitley states the established church's specific fear that, "...education would make youths unwilling to work with their hands, or to submit passively to the rule of a privileged class; and the attempt was made to forbid Sunday schools to teach writing, though reading the Bible could scarcely be forgiven."²⁷ Over the period from 1770 to 1850 the Anglican hierarchy was vocal in its opposition to almost every attempt by Whigs and Dissenters to bring about positive social and political change in the nation. William Howley, the Archbishop of Canterbury was foremost amongst those speakers in the House of Lords voicing opposition to such reforms as the abolition of slavery and the Great Reform Act of 1832.²⁸ One argument put forward by opponents of the Sunday school movement was the pretence that teaching on a Sunday was in opposition to the Ten Commandments. However, their objections may well have had more to do with the fact that the Sunday school movement sprang up independently of church control. Further Robert Raikes, the man mostly associated with the founding of the movement, may have attracted the opposition of the Church of England due to his connection to the Wesleys and to Whitefield.

The French Revolution proved a more tangible threat to the future of the Sunday school movement and led to the preparation of a Bill for their abolition.²⁹ Dissent in general was tainted by association with the libertarian and anti-establishment ideas that lay behind the Revolution, and the Sunday school movement therefore suffered similarly because of its

²⁷ Whitley (1923), p. 261

²⁸ See Cowherd (1959), p. 61 – Slavery, p. 78 – 1832 Reform Bill, p. 94 – Educational Reform, and p. 131 – the Corn Laws. It should be noted that Anglican Evangelicals were in the forefront of the campaign to abolish slavery. See also p. 26 – Charles Manners Sutton, the Archbishop of Canterbury also seconded Lord Sidmouth's abortive Bill of 1811 that was designed to curb the evangelistic activities of Dissenters.

association with Dissent, and the fear that educating the people might lead to a similar end. Because of the Napoleonic War Sunday schools were again brought under scrutiny by a government afraid that a population able to read was a population able to be influenced by the 'dangerous ideas' that had moved the French people to revolution. The association of many Dissenters with the libertarian views of the French Revolution caused many Anglicans to withdraw from interdenominational schools to start their own. Samuel Horsley, the Bishop of Rochester, writing a newly published magazine called the *Anti-Jacobin* strongly condemned Dissenting involvement with education arguing only the established church could be entrusted with running Sunday schools.³⁰ The *Anti-Jacobins* feared that educating the masses would mean the end of society as they knew it, and perhaps in the end they were proved to be correct. An educated people were not going to allow power and privilege to remain in the possession of the few, and the century from 1820 onwards was dominated by the struggle of the mass of the people of Britain to attain the same rights and privileges for so long held by so few.³¹

On 9 June 1827, Jonathan Fox, son of the founder of the Sunday School Society, William Fox, wrote to the Baptist minister and historian, Joseph Ivimey, outlining some of the problems his father encountered, for a memoir being prepared by Ivimey. Jonathan Fox wrote, "In this endeavour he was accused by the clergy, and by more than one of its dignitaries, of a design to proselyte, and render sectarian, the children for whom he was desirous of obtaining instruction."³² However, there were those who gave their support to the Sunday school movement. Fox's daughter recalled one prelate who sent his curate to question Fox with the result that the curate later returned with a donation of £20 for the society.³³ The Dean of Lincoln, the Rev. Dr. Kaye and the Bishop of Chester, Dr. Porteus, and the Bishops of Salisbury, Shute Barrington, and Landaff, Richard Watson, were amongst those senior churchmen who gave their support in varying forms to Sunday schools.³⁴ Indeed, a delegation from the Sunday School Society, accompanied by the

²⁹ Cliff (1986), p. 49

³⁰ Cliff (1986), p. 72-73

³¹ Laqueur (1976), p. xii. According to Laqueur the central tenet of E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York 1963), 'is that in the years between 1780 and 1832 most English working people came to feel an identity of interests as between themselves, and as against their rulers and employers.' Laqueur refers to Thompson (1963), p. 9-11 as the basis of his assertion. Laqueur, by his own admission, began his own research into Sunday to confirm Thompson's interpretation (Laqueur (1976), p. xiii).

³² Ivimey (1831), p. 51

³³ Ivimey, (1831) p. 52

³⁴ Ivimey (1831), p. 64, 72-73, 80-81, 81 respectively.

Bishop of Salisbury met with John Moore, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and was warmly received. The Archbishop noted, "That several Sunday schools were already established in his own diocese, and that at his next visitation, which would soon take place, he should strongly recommend them in his charge to the clergy."³⁵

The mixed reaction from the Church of England to the Sunday School Society is curious. Fox could defend himself on a personal level first by pointing to his own practice in Clapton. Clapton had no Dissenting church and Fox quite happily sent the children in his school to worship at the parish church. Secondly, he could point to his initial circular letter prior to the formation of the Sunday School Society, which gives testimony to his ecumenical outlook.³⁶ Thirdly the Sunday School Society could point to the fact that at its inception half of its committee members were to come from the established church.³⁷ The reaction of the established church may have two possible explanations beyond the general objections already discussed. It is likely that Anglican supporters of the Sunday School Society were predominantly from the evangelical wing of the Church. Therefore, it may be that the reaction of the traditional hierarchy of the Church was as much against the growing influence of the evangelicals as it was against the development of Sunday schools *per se*. Secondly, it may well be that for those same individuals the willingness of the Dissenters to share the benefits of a movement that originated within their ranks was perceived as a poisoned chalice. There were still many churchmen who would consider the notion of working alongside Dissenters as anathema. The same churchmen would perceive that co-operation with Dissenters gave to Dissent the approbation and approval of the Church that had long been denied to it, and would inevitably lead to the granting of full privileges under the law to Dissenters.

C. The Development of Sunday schools

Despite the difficulties outlined above there were many in the established church who did not look with such disdain or fear upon the Dissenters and many fine clergy and laymen

³⁵ Ivimey (1831), p. 84

³⁶ See this footnote 68 on p. 212 below

³⁷ See footnote 65 on p. 211 below

and women worked alongside their colleagues from Dissent in many of the Sunday school Societies established from 1780 onwards.

1. Robert Raikes (1736-1811)

Till Raikes arose, the sage of Glo'ster town:
Celestial sympathy his breast inspires,
And glowing charity his spirit fires:³⁸

Robert Raikes usually recalled as the father of the Sunday school movement organised his first Sunday school in 1780. What Raikes pioneered was the establishment of a method that would take Sunday schools forward as a movement but others take credit for establishing such schools before him. As early as the mid sixteenth century the diocese of Milan in Italy had a well-established Sunday school system thanks to the work of Cardinal Archbishop Charles Borromeo.³⁹ Early examples in England were the Sunday school run by Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, vicar of Catterick, Yorkshire (circa 1763), by Miss Ball at High Wycombe, Bucks in 1769, and the Sunday school of Rev. David Simpson of Christ Church, Macclesfield established in 1778 and run by him until 1786 when it was handed over to the 'committee for Sunday schools.' All of these predate Raikes' schools.⁴⁰ Philip Cliff in his study of the Sunday school movement notes that there was a Sunday school in Gloucester itself opened in 1777 by one Sophia Cooke.⁴¹ Additionally there were schools at nearby Oakridge started in 1777 by Benjamin Underwood, and one in the village of Sheepscombe run by William Twining with whom Raikes had some contact.⁴²

Raikes opened his school in Soot Alley, Littleworth, and a Mrs. Meredith kept it. The school had four teachers paid a shilling each Sunday, by Raikes himself. They each taught twenty children divided into classes of five and 'the children who show any superiority in attainments are placed as leaders of the several classes.' Lessons in Raikes' school began at 8 o'clock with the cleanliness of the children being an 'indispensable rule.' Attendance at public worship was included but not with the same urgency that later became apparent.

³⁸ Emmett (1908), p. 4

³⁹ Bain (1875), p. 4

⁴⁰ Bain (1875), p. 5-6, see also Cliff (1986), p. 20ff for other examples of early Sunday schools

⁴¹ Cliff (1986), p. 24

⁴² Cliff (1986), p. 24

Raikes himself wrote, "Their attending the service of the church once a-day has to me seemed sufficient, for their time may be spent more profitably perhaps in receiving instruction, than in being present at a long discourse, which their minds are not yet able to comprehend: but people may think differently upon this point."⁴³ Further schools with the support of others were opened in St. Cathrine Street and Northgate Street, Gloucester. By the end of 1783 eight schools had opened in Gloucester and several others in surrounding villages.⁴⁴

To a large extent it was Raikes' role as a newspaper man that enabled the work he commenced to spread.⁴⁵ When in late 1783 he published in the *Gloucester Journal* accounts of his experimental Sunday schools they were taken up and published by many of the leading national newspapers. As a result Raikes began to receive correspondence from all over the country. Among those who visited Raikes and his Gloucester schools were Hannah More, William Wilberforce and William Fox, and so "...Sunday schools on the Raikes pattern were established all over the country."⁴⁶

Cliff provides 'A Provisional List of early Sunday schools and their originators, where known' which shows that between 1780 and 1785 Sunday schools had been established in forty-eight towns and cities the length and breadth of the country.⁴⁷ Fourteen of them established by the 'Town Meeting,' eleven by individuals whose church background is unknown, and eight by individuals whose churchmanship is known (mainly Anglicans). Only seven are ascribed specifically to a particular church. From this and other evidence Cliff sees a three-fold pattern for the development of Sunday schools emerging:⁴⁸

- The Town Meeting or Interdenominational Pattern.
- Individual Initiative by ordained or lay people.
- That of a local church group

⁴³ Bain (1875), p. 7

⁴⁴ James (1910), p. 16

⁴⁵ At the age of twenty-two Raikes had inherited his father's printing business which included the *Gloucester Journal* the oldest newspaper in the west of England.

⁴⁶ James (1910), p. 17

⁴⁷ Cliff (1986), Appendix B., p. 335-336. Cliff is concerned here only with large towns (over 10,000 people)

⁴⁸ Cliff (1986), p. 32

2. **Hannah More (1745-1833)**

Hannah More began her work in 1789 in Somerset and within ten years had established schools in twelve parishes for 3,000 children, rising after twenty-five years to 20,000 pupils, mostly from mining families. Beginning at Cheddar, Somerset, she discovered a population of 2,000 with one Bible between them, ‘and that was used to prop a flower pot,’ that had no clergyman for forty years. Hannah More’s approach to her work is revealed in a publication entitled ‘The Sunday school.’⁴⁹ It is an anecdotal tale of the establishment of what appears to be a fictitious Sunday school, but it reveals an approach that is almost entirely ‘Gospel centred.’ The key, More revealed, to establishing a school is the selection of a suitable ‘mistress.’ “But there are three things which a mistress must not be without, good sense, activity, and piety. Without the first she will mislead others, without the second she will neglect them, and without the third, though she may civilize, yet she will never christianise them.”⁵⁰ For More ‘christianising’ the children was the *raison d’être* of her work. The fictitious founder of the school, Mrs. Jones, in attempting to persuade the mothers of the village to send their children to the new Sunday school says to them, “My dear women, which of you could bear to see your darling child condemned to everlasting destruction?”⁵¹ Again in the story of Hester Wilmott, Mrs. Jones, says to Hester’s mother, who is reluctant to allow Hester to attend the Sunday school, but willing to send her babies, “I am not at all this expense to take crying babes out of the mother’s way, but to instruct reasonable beings in the way to eternal life...”⁵²

3. **William Fox (1736-1826) and the Sunday School Society**

The foundation of the ‘The Society for the Establishment and Support of Sunday schools’ in 1785 makes clear the important link between the Sunday school movement and the day

⁴⁹ More (179?a), a copy of this work exists in the Glasgow University Library Special Collection where the GUL catalogue classification attributes it to Hannah More and dates it in the 1790’s.

⁵⁰ More (179?a), p. 6

⁵¹ More (179?a), p. 8

⁵² More (179?b), p. 8

school movement.⁵³ Instrumental in its formation was William Fox (1736-1826), a deacon of Abraham Booth's church in London.⁵⁴ Cliff writes of Fox and the Sunday School Society, "It was the brain child of William Fox, a wealthy Baptist merchant, who travelled widely over England, and had seen for himself the appalling ignorance and confusion of the people."⁵⁵

Fox was born at Clapton, Gloucestershire, on 14 February 1736. His parents rented and farmed the Clapton Manor Estate and were members of Benjamin Beddome's church at Bourton-on-the-Water. Fox was the youngest of eight children and his father died before he was three years old.⁵⁶ The family was not impoverished, but neither was life easy for the young Fox. Ivimey relates the anecdote that at the age of ten, whilst working to keep the birds away from the corn on the farm his brother worked, Fox determined to undertake a career in business and one day buy the farm and the whole village of Clapton where his family lived.⁵⁷ In 1752 aged sixteen Fox became apprenticed to a Draper in Oxford and within a few years had bought out his employer and cleared the debt of £3,000-4,000 incurred purchasing the business.⁵⁸ By the mid-1760s Fox had removed from Oxford to London where from his base in Cheapside he became an extremely successful wholesale merchant. He also became a member of the Baptist Church in Prescott Street, Goodman Fields and took an active interest in the London Baptist scene.⁵⁹

Travelling the country as he did on business Fox, like Raikes, became all too aware of the plight of most of the population, and of their low moral and spiritual state. In 1784 he fulfilled his childhood dream and purchased the village of Clapton and, true to his personal convictions, he clothed the poor of the parish and established a day school offering free instruction to all that attended.⁶⁰ Fox, however, was not content with small achievements. In May 1785 he attended the 'Baptist Monthly Meeting' in London, held at the Kings Head

⁵³ Underwood (1947), p. 180. Later it merged with the Sunday School Union founded in 1803 by William Gurney, Whitley (1923), p. 261. Hereafter 'Sunday School Society.' Also Bain (1875), p. 8

⁵⁴ Brown, Raymond (1986), p. 137. However, Bain (1875), p. 8 associates this with the names of Jonas Hanway, Henry Thornton, and Samuel Hoare with no mention of William Fox.

⁵⁵ Cliff (1986), p. 47

⁵⁶ Ivimey (1831), p. 8

⁵⁷ Ivimey (1831), p. 9

⁵⁸ Ivimey (1831), p. 10-12

⁵⁹ Ivimey (1831), p. 14-15

⁶⁰ Ivimey (1831), p. 16. In fact he was to surpass his ambition when in 1784 he added the purchase of the Manor itself to that of the village, though he never lived there, as it was not comfortable enough. Instead he lived in nearby Lechlade House from 1801-1823 (Ivimey (1831), p. 115-116)

in the Poultry. At his entreaty the meeting undertook to consider ‘Whether some plan might not be adopted by which all the children of the poor might receive a scriptural education, by being taught to read the Bible.’⁶¹ The national scope of Fox’s proposal was immense but the meeting received his ideas warmly by establishing a committee to further the plan and to open a subscription in its name. A public meeting was planned for 16 August 1785 and the newly formed committee sent to, ‘...the clergy and the principal inhabitants of the City of London’ an invitation addressed to them as ‘the Benevolent and Humane, in favour of the Illiterate Poor.’⁶² It was Fox’s intention to establish a national system of day schools, however, between the initial meeting in May, at the Kings Head, and the public meeting planned for August, Fox became aware of the work begun by Robert Raikes in Gloucester.

On 15 June 1785 Fox wrote to Raikes. He asked for further information and particularly desired to know if children could be taught to read utilising only one day a week. He also informed Raikes of the plans afoot in London for the establishment of a society to promote their common aims. It is apparent that Fox realised that Raikes proffered a simpler, more practical plan than his own.⁶³ Raikes’ response of 20 June 1785 was brief but suggested that Fox contact Jonas Hanway to whom he had sent a fuller answer to a similar enquiry. The fact that Hanway was amongst the committee members of the new society when formed indicates Fox took Raikes advice.⁶⁴

As a result Fox brought to the public meeting on 16 June 1785 an amended plan favouring the adoption of Sunday schools rather than day schools. The amended plan was agreed by the meeting, and a committee of fourteen men established, to carry the agreed plan into effect.⁶⁵ Fox was asked to draw up a circular letter that could be used to gain even wider support for the ‘Society for the Establishment and Support of Sunday-schools throughout the Kingdom of Great Britain.’⁶⁶ Hanway chaired the subsequent meeting on 30 August

⁶¹ Ivimey (1831), p. 16

⁶² Ivimey (1831), p. 22

⁶³ Ivimey (1831), p. 25-26

⁶⁴ Ivimey (1831), p. 26-28. Another member of the initial committee was Thomas Raikes, Robert’s brother.

⁶⁵ Ivimey (1831), p. 37 between the meeting on the 7 September 1785 and the next meeting on the 21 September the ‘Rules and Regulations of the Society were formulated. Some alterations were made to the decisions taken on the 7 September. In Particular the number of committee members was increased from fourteen to twenty-four with the stipulation that half of the committee be members of the established church.

⁶⁶ Ivimey (1831), p. 27-29

1785, and the one on 7 September 1785 at which the Sunday School Society was formally established.⁶⁷

In his circular letter Fox had written:

To effect these great, these noble ends, they hope to form a Society which will enable them to establish *Sunday-schools* upon a plan so extensive as to reach the remotest parts of this Island; and they flatter themselves they shall receive the support, assistance, and patronage of persons of every rank and description.

Private advantage and party-zeal are entirely disclaimed by the friends and promoters of this laudable Institution. However men may be divided into political parties, or however Christians may unhappily separate from each other on account of difference of sentiment, here they are all invited to join the common cause – the glory of God - the good of their country – and the happiness of their fellow creatures.⁶⁸

It is entirely typical of those early nineteenth century English Baptists that they did not for a moment conceive that a plan that had been formulated by one of their number and brought to reality through their own structures should be kept to themselves. Conceived by London Baptists the benefits of the new society were to be shared by all.

Raikes never attended a meeting of the Sunday School Society but in 1787 he was made an honorary member of the Society in recognition of his pioneering work.⁶⁹ Although the Sunday School Society was ecumenical in nature it was the Dissenters who provided the major incentive for the development of the work. The Sunday School Society did not found schools but offered help and support, in some cases to get them started.⁷⁰

The first report in 1786 revealed that already 147 schools had been established with more than 7,000 scholars.⁷¹ When William Fox died in 1826 Whitley notes that Manchester alone had some 40,000 scholars and that there was hardly a Baptist Church without a

⁶⁷ Ivimey (1831), p. 33-36

⁶⁸ Ivimey (1831), p. 30

⁶⁹ Cliff (1986), p. 47

⁷⁰ Cliff (1986), p. 32

⁷¹ Bain (1875), p. 9

Sunday school.⁷² The 1851 Census reveals there were 318,000 teachers in Sunday schools with 2,400,000 scholars.⁷³

Table 38 provides statistical evidence of the expansion of the Sunday School Society up to 1805 taken from Ivimey's memoir of Fox. Ivimey provides the statistics for 1812 alone revealing that in 1812 the number of new schools affiliating to the Sunday School Society was 440. The total number of scholars in all affiliated Sunday schools that year was 52,434 pupils and the society issued 30,429 Spelling Books (with an additional 6,967 other books), 5,596 New Testaments, and 2,191 Bibles.⁷⁴

If through the *Gloucester Journal* Raikes had been able by descriptions of his work to influence the way further schools were established and run, the founding of the Sunday School Society ensured the institutionalisation of what Raikes began. One of the first questions correspondents asked Raikes concerned the rule that he established for his schools, which demonstrates something of the obsession of the eighteenth century with the subject.⁷⁵ However, given the motivation of the founders to change the moral behaviour of society an emphasis on rules might be expected.

The *BM* carried regular reports on the progress of the Sunday School Society, which help to illustrate its rapid expansion. The half-yearly report of April 1810 reveals that fifty-five new schools had been added to the list. To facilitate the work of the schools some 292,832 spelling books, 63,565 New Testaments, and 7,764 Bibles had been distributed amongst the registered 270,000 plus scholars.⁷⁶

From 1785 to 1810 the principle of paying teachers went unchallenged. However, by 1810 the success of the movement and its growth had outstripped the ability of the Sunday School Society to sustain this practice. Were it not for the willing introduction of the 'Voluntary Principle' the movement might well have floundered.

⁷² Whitley (1923), p. 261. According to Bain (1875), p. 9 the first report of the fledgling society in 1786 revealed they had already established seventeen schools with seventeen hundred scholars. By 1791 this had risen to seven hundred schools and fifty thousand scholars, and by 1796 two hundred thousand scholars.

⁷³ Cowherd (1959), p. 37

⁷⁴ Ivimey (1831), p. 110

⁷⁵ Cliff (1986), p. 51

⁷⁶ *BM*, January 1811, p. 39

To aid an institution, see a band
Of male and female Tutors, nobly stand;
Whom piety excites to teach the youth,
And guide their erring steps by heavenly truth;⁷⁷

For Raikes and his fellow reformers education was a means to an end. The end was to improve the moral standing of the poor and thereby to prevent them from living in the morally degenerate manner that most educated and wealthy people believed to be their lot. There was only one way this could be achieved and that was through giving them a real understanding of the Christian Faith. Raikes wished to raise the moral standing of the masses and the means was introducing them to Christian values, though in this case ultimately the distinction between the end and the means may not be so clear. Laqueur makes the same point when he writes, "Sunday schools were one product of the deep rooted and philanthropic revival of the late eighteenth century; they were part of a movement to transform society, to change its sensibilities and moral perceptions, which had its roots in the middling classes but found expression in the classes both above and below."⁷⁸ Laqueur pictures the period of his study to be a time of great philanthropy mentioning the names of Jonas Hanway (1712-1786), John Scott, John Howard (the penal reformer) and Granville Sharp (who began the anti-slavery movement in 1765).⁷⁹ He also cites the 280 medical, religious, educational, and moral charities founded between 1770 and 1850.⁸⁰

For here no jarring sects shall disagree;
Lo, all are fir'd with this philanthropy:
Ten thousand living bless the Sacred Pow'r,
Which caught their careless youth in danger's hour;
Rescu'd from pleasure's path their wand'ring feet,
In Sunday schools have found a safe retreat:⁸¹

As Christians up and down the nation undertook freely to teach Christian values and the Christian faith to the untutored masses the fortunes of the Sunday school movement once again gathered pace. From this adverted crisis of 1810, with schools beginning to close,

⁷⁷ Emmett (1908), p. 7

⁷⁸ Laqueur (1976), p. 1

⁷⁹ Laqueur (1976), p. 2

⁸⁰ Laqueur (1976), p.2, Table 1

⁸¹ Emmett (1908), p. 8

the situation quickly reversed and an average of 300 new schools each year became the norm.

4. The Sunday School Union

The Sunday School Union had been formed in 1803 in Surrey Chapel, Southwark, on 13 July with the young Baptist William Gurney as the prime mover.⁸² The motivation behind the Union was to gather teachers together in order to improve the work of Sunday schools.⁸³ Membership was open to anyone who taught in a Sunday school.

It soon became the dominant society though Fox's original society continued until 1864 when it was wound up and its remaining funds transferred to the Sunday School Union.⁸⁴ The Sunday School Union stated its aims in an 'Advertisement' of 1 June 1805 prefacing a sermon by Jabez Bunting preached before the members of the Union and subsequently published. The three fold objectives of this 'Protestant' body are given as:

"First to stimulate and encourage each other in the religious instruction of children and youth; secondly, by mutual communication, to aim at improving each other's method of instruction; and, thirdly, to promote the opening of new schools by their influential and personal assistance, wherever it may be deemed expedient."⁸⁵

In 1817 the Sunday School Union was able to report that its network of auxiliary and county unions is teaching some 200,000 scholars in its Sunday schools.⁸⁶ By 1819 the number of scholars had increased significantly to 360,000 with 26,000 teachers.⁸⁷ Two anecdotes from the meeting of the Sunday School Union on 12 May 1819 help illustrate the joint aims of the Union, to encourage faith and to educate. The first was of a boy who was asked by his father to deliver a package. The boy objects as it was the Sabbath, but the father says to put the package into his pocket. The child replies to his father that God

⁸² Briggs (1994), p. 309

⁸³ Cliff (1986), p. 74

⁸⁴ James (1910), p. 20, 24

⁸⁵ Bunting (1805), p. iii

⁸⁶ *BM*, June 1817, p. 237

⁸⁷ *BM*, June 1819, p. 251

can see into his pockets. On hearing this anecdote, “A inexpressible pleasure pervaded the crowded assembly.”⁸⁸ The second anecdote is that of another young boy, who on returning home from his first Sunday school class, shows his father what he has learnt with the result that after a few weeks both father and son are able to read the Bible together.⁸⁹ In 1821 the Annual Report provided more detailed statistics than previously as a result of the concerted effort being made to oppose the Brougham Bill.⁹⁰ There were still nine counties without a Union of their own and most of Wales lacked this internal organisation, but despite this the continuing rapid expansion of the work of the Union is apparent.

The report for 1826 serves to illustrate the extent to which the Union has become the dominant of the two Sunday school organisations especially in England and Wales, in the latter of which there are no separate statistics given for schools under the auspices of the Sunday School Society.⁹¹ Present at the meeting in 1826 were two missionaries from the Sandwich Islands, Rev. William Ellis and Rev. Charles Stewart, who reported on the remarkable progress made by Sunday school on the islands. Addressing the meeting Ellis declared, “The mighty change which had taken place in the religious world within the last twenty years, might be ascribed to the formation of that and similarly praise-worthy institutions.”⁹²

D. Sunday schools in the Northampton Particular Baptist Association

Under the leadership of Robert Hall snr, the church at Arnesby, Leicestershire was one of the first in the NPBA to establish a Sunday school and it was able to report to the association in 1785 that it maintained Sunday schools in various parts of the county. However, there was no purpose built accommodation for these schools, not even at the mother church where, “...part of the children were taught in our Vestry, and part in the house of the Clark (sic) of the Parish (The Clark (sic) and his son Mr. Mastors teach alternatively), they that are taught in the Vestry attend at the Meeting, and the others at

⁸⁸ *BM*, June 1819, p. 251

⁸⁹ *BM*, June 1819, p. 251

⁹⁰ See the *BM*, October 1821, p. 446 and Table 39

⁹¹ See the *BM*, June 1826, p. 284 and Table 40

⁹² *BM*, June 1826, p. 284

Church.”⁹³ The church at Thrapston was another to begin a Sunday school before the turn of the century. The church was only formed on 13 March 1797 but the Church Book reports the appointment of Mr. W. Griffin and Mr. R. Vorley as school inspectors on 18 January 1798. An early decision of the church was, “That if any of the Charity Children neglect attending the School a fortnight except in Harvest, they are to be immediately excluded.”⁹⁴ The next mention of the Thrapston Sunday School is in 1807 when it would appear that a difficulty concerning funding had arisen. On 2 January 1807 the church wrote to the school’s trustees urging them to rectify the financial insecurity of the school. The Thrapston Church Book also contains a letter written on 22 January by one of the trustees to his fellow trustees in support of the church’s letter. This trustee also went further and because of vacancies suggests that the trustees of the chapel and of the school merge. Raymond Hogg, the Thrapston Pastor also records the letter he sent supporting this proposal, though he notes that nothing came of it.⁹⁵ The Church Book does not report the resolution of the matter but the incident serves to show the difficulties that even the most worthy of causes may encounter.

The advent of Sunday schools in the NPBA reflects their development on the national scene with most mention of them in the period following the turn of the century. For example the church at Leicester reported a flourishing Sunday school in 1804 at which “...about seventy poor children are taught to read the good words of God. Friends have been engaged to teach gratis.”⁹⁶ The church at Friar Lane in 1806 noted that some have come into the church as a result of the Sunday school.⁹⁷ Dunstable, Bedfordshire reported in 1809 that a Sunday school had been started attended by 250 children,⁹⁸ and the nearby church at Luton, Bedfordshire in 1810 a Sunday school with upwards of 180 scholars.⁹⁹ Also in 1810 the small twenty-five member church at Fenny Stratford reported ninety Scholars in their Sunday school.¹⁰⁰ By 1814 the same church reported that in a village of 600 people that both the membership and the Sunday school are increasing despite the

⁹³ NthCRO, LA - 1785, Arnesby

⁹⁴ NthCRO, Thrapston Church Book 18 January 1798

⁹⁵ It seems probable that the school originally run by the church was then placed into the hands of trustees who were not all members of the church, but who it appears to be assumed would bear the financial responsibility for running the school personally.

⁹⁶ NthCRO, LA - 1804, Leicester

⁹⁷ NthCRO, LA - 1806, Friar Lane, Nottingham

⁹⁸ NthCRO, LA - 1809, Dunstable

⁹⁹ NthCRO, LA - 1810, Luton

¹⁰⁰ NthCRO, LA - 1810, Fenny Stratford

presence of 'a new Wesleyan church since Michaelmas,' which also, along with the Church of England, has a Sunday school.¹⁰¹ In what was a good year for Sunday schools in the association the church at Swanwick, Derbyshire related that they had started a Sunday school.¹⁰² Later in 1819 the small Bugbrook church recorded a Sunday school of 130 scholars.¹⁰³

In 1810 the church at College Lane, Northampton decided to revamp its Sunday school work. Prior to this they had run a school jointly with Castle Hill Congregational church, but this had dwindled to no more than fifteen to twenty-nine students. "The inefficiency and languid state of this school, suggested the desirableness of an increased effort being made, and led to the consideration of the best way of accomplishing it."¹⁰⁴ The impetus appeared to have come from four families, the Hickson, Barnes, Rogers and Essex families, doubtless out of a concern for the welfare of their own children. A thorough investigation was made of the system that Joseph Lancaster had implemented with two of the fathers taking advantage of regular trips to London to visit Lancaster's school in Borough Road, Southwark. So impressed were they that they undertook to establish a school on such lines initially for their own children. In August 1810, with the support of Mr. Blundell, minister of College Lane, it was decided to launch the school more widely. On 16 September 1810 they commenced with an initial forty children (sixteen of them their own) but within a fortnight this had increased to eighty-eight, and then within a few more weeks to 127. Such was the success of the school that in the 'Spring of 1811' it moved to large premises and was forced in the summer of 1812 to restrict entry to 150 students aged seven or over for a period of no more than four years. It would appear that the restrictions were imposed due to financial constraints. The method was to follow that pioneered by Lancaster, with the principal subjects to be reading, spelling, and writing. Additionally it would be required that they "...commit to Memory and Repeat portions of Scripture, Hymns, or Catechisms, according to their ability."¹⁰⁵

The account of the College Lane Sunday school includes a set of 'directions to the Monitor General of Reading; to Reading Teachers; to Writing Teachers and rules for the

¹⁰¹ NthCRO, LA - 1814, Fenny Stratford. The membership was now forty-one.

¹⁰² NthCRO, LA - 1810, Swanwick, Derbyshire

¹⁰³ NthCRO, LA - 1819, Bugbrook

¹⁰⁴ Bain (1875), Appendix p. vii-viii

¹⁰⁵ Bain (1875), Appendix p. viii

children.’¹⁰⁶ They are very much a product of their time for whilst they are not in any way draconian they reveal an attention to detail and a precision in the matter of conduct that in another time might be thought obsessive. For example we read, “To commence the school with reading and prayer at nine. – To command ‘Monitors Dictate’ at a ¼ past nine which command to be repeated every ¼ of an hour, allowing five minutes of that time for inspecting and sponging slates...” This structured orderliness that even accounts for the words to be used by the teacher was, of course, not the whim of the College Lane committee, but a central tenet of Joseph Lancaster’s ‘Monitorial System.’ Even more precise are the instructions for attending public worship, “When going to a place of public Worship to walk Two and Two, at a regular and proper distance from each other, and on entering the Meeting Yard to walk singly according to their different stations on the class to which they belong...and in taking their seat to observe the same order – and to put their hats and patterns under the seat on which they sit at Meeting.” The attitude toward discipline revealed here does reflect to a large extent the prevailing attitudes of the day, at least the prevailing attitudes of the establishment, of which in this instance even nonconformist churches were a part.

However, we also find reflected in the College Lane story something else, which is the extent to which even the nonconformist churches were willing to impose themselves upon others where they had the opportunity, and the power, to do so. At a time when even the humblest and poorest of citizens could recognise the value of education, the churches suddenly discovered they had a monopoly on something that people desperately desired. It was the policy at College Lane to suspend any student for two consecutive unexplained absences, with the probability of them being excluded. This policy was made possible because another child could soon be found to replace the absentee in question, and because in any but the most extreme cases it was a threat sufficient to deter the absences. Sadly, whatever the benevolent motives of the original pioneers, there is no doubt that the church quickly saw the potential of Sunday schools and exploited them to the full.

The established clergy of Northamptonshire were also quick to take up the cause of Sunday schools following the triennial visitation of the Bishop of Peterborough in July 1786. In a charge to the clergy he urged the establishment of Sunday schools upon them and they

¹⁰⁶ Bain (1875), Appendix p. viii

responded swiftly. In October 1786 "...the largest congregations ever known in Towcester assembled in the parish to hear of Sunday schools and help them."¹⁰⁷ Sunday schools were now rapidly being established in parishes across the county though not necessarily as Church of England Sunday schools, but as schools where the term parish serves as a geographical location.¹⁰⁸

In his work on Sunday schools in Northamptonshire, Bain notes a change that occurs in the early nineteenth century with a move away from the original 'ecumenical' nature of the Sunday school. He writes, "They spring up more and more rapidly; but now they are associated with particular places of worship, become the appendages of sect and denomination, are merged in the shadow of the nonconformist chapel."¹⁰⁹ Bain is not interested in the reason for this change which can be found in the growing realisation amongst the churches that through Sunday schools and through education they had a means of recruitment such as had never been presented to them before. They did not abandon the benevolent motives that had given rise to Sunday schools, but the churches increasingly shaped the Schools to their own ends.

In this the churches eventually crossed what was a very fine line. Accept for a moment the definition of education as the 'equipping of a child with the skills to participate in and contribute to society'. It was accepted that reading, writing, spelling and the Christian faith were all essential and necessary ingredients of such an education. The fine line that the churches crossed was when they began to place recruitment to their own cause above the general aims of education. The early pioneers certainly shared a passion for their faith and a desire to see the lives of their charges changed to reflect that faith, but when sectarianism entered in, the cause began to lose something of its nobility.

However, it is important to pay tribute to that benevolence for the running of Sunday schools was an expensive business. Churches did not possess space for the teaching of children so rooms had to be hired. Voluntary help was greatly used, but the principal teachers in schools were usually paid for their labours. Bain adds, "There were the materials for secular instruction as well as religious to provide. Slates, sponges, spelling

¹⁰⁷ Bain (1875), p. 9

¹⁰⁸ Bain (1875), p. 11-12. See Table 41

¹⁰⁹ Bain (1875), p. 13

books, reading books, desks.”¹¹⁰ In the very early years it was common practice to reward children for their attendance with a penny a Sunday, a considerable expense for even the smaller schools. The money was raised by subscriptions from supporters, by means of annual services with special collections, and often most important of all through the generosity of one wealthy individual who would act as patron to a school or a group of schools. The latter was especially necessary when a school required a purpose built building in order to continue its work. James Dore the minister of Maze Pond, Southwark preached a sermon on the 27 September 1789 on behalf of the Sunday School Society in which he expressed his view that the purpose of Sunday schools was to teach children to read in order that they could read the Bible.¹¹¹

This benevolent spirit continued even after the movement entered its sectarian phases and indeed continued, although the practice of effectively paying scholars to attend was quickly abandoned, as was that of paying teachers. Both practices became financially untenable and the increase of day schools alongside Sunday schools provided an income for teachers that decreased the need to pay them for Sundays. Sunday schools increasingly were run on the ‘Voluntary Principle’ by willing, enthusiastic and eager volunteers giving freely of their time.

Bain is interested in the county of Northamptonshire and not the area covered by the NPBA so he makes no reference to the Sunday School established by Friar Lane, Nottingham on 8 January 1799 at Wheeler Gate as a non-sectarian school which initially attracted 80-100 pupils.¹¹² That the school adhered to the principles laid down by Raikes and then taken up by Fox and the Sunday School Society can be seen from the following quote from the Sunday School minute book:

The Committee appointed visitors from amongst themselves to superintend the business of the school each Sabbath whose duty were to admit, reward and correct the scholars, and give such general directions as circumstances required.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Bain (1875), p. 17

¹¹¹ Dore (1789)

¹¹² Godfrey and Ward (1903), p. 260

¹¹³ Godfrey and Ward (1903), p. 261 the original minute book no longer exists

In 1807 the various Nottingham Sunday Schools formed a city-wide Union establishing a Board of Investigation to prevent scholars moving between schools without good cause. In 1809 the Union requested all the schools to consider the impropriety of teaching accounts on the Lord's Day. This was resolved in 1815 when the teachers agreed not to teach accounts on the Sabbath and instead initiated mid-week classes to teach them.¹¹⁴ In August 1815, perhaps at the instigation of the Friar Lane church a Sunday school with seventy pupils was established at Arnold.

Table 42 shows the changes in the Sunday school at Friar Lane between 1809 and 1816. The figures fluctuate greatly especially in 1815-1816 when the size of the school doubled in one year. There is no specific column to indicate the number of scholars who are deemed to have graduated in each year; this could be hidden in dismissals except that in 1814 only five are recorded, which would surely be too low. The large number of dismissals in 1811 and 1813 would logically be explained by the establishment of another school elsewhere but there is no evidence that this is the case. When the Sunday school is established at Arnold where the Friar Lane church has been overseeing the Baptists cause since 1807 there is no indication of any loss of pupils at Friar Lane. The minutes account for the doubling in size of the school in 1815 as being the direct result of the efforts of the teachers. "They have gone into the streets and lanes of the villages and from house to house in search of the youth who were perishing for lack of knowledge, who had no friends to teach them, and whose guardians were probably as ignorant as themselves of the blessings derived from early instruction."¹¹⁵

The decision to stop teaching accounts on the Sabbath and instead to teach them at mid-week evening classes indicates the desire of the churches to maintain a balance between genuine education and religious instruction. This had further been demonstrated when in October 1813, a sewing school was established on a Tuesday evening, which was a development of great significance given the part played in the economy of Nottingham by the lace and textile industries. In February 1814 the teaching of writing was also moved from Sundays this time to Monday evening.¹¹⁶ The removal of accounts in 1815 meant that Sunday was effectively being used exclusively for religious instruction.

¹¹⁴ Godfrey and Ward (1903), p. 262

¹¹⁵ Godfrey and Ward (1903), p. 262-263

¹¹⁶ Godfrey and Ward (1903), p. 264

Between January 1799 and July 1815 the Friar Lane Sunday School had admitted 449 boys, 651 girls, and 145 teachers. In 1815 there were forty-eight teachers of whom eight had been scholars in the school. Of the 251 scholars on the school's books on 1 July 1815 only 101 attended the mid-week evening classes with the vast majority attending on the Sunday. During this period only seventeen pupils had gone on to become members of the Friar Lane church and thirteen others to have found faith in God, only 4% of the children taught in the school to this point.¹¹⁷

E. Other Baptist Sunday schools

One of the earliest Baptist Sunday schools to be inspired by the Sunday School Society was the one formed at Abingdon by the Rev. Daniel Turner. Turner wrote to Fox on the 24 December 1785 to inform him that he commenced his Sunday school after receiving the circular letter for the Society. He reported that his expectation of a dozen scholars was surpassed as the school was attended by, "...nearly fifty of the poor ignorant, ragged wretches, that begged to be instructed."¹¹⁸ On 27 May 1786 Fox received a letter written by Caleb Evans, Principal of the Bristol Academy. Evans reported on the two Sunday schools run at Mangotsfield with which he was personally involved. They had between them eighty-nine boys and fifty-four girls. Despite the heavy demands of his work in Bristol Evans writes, "You may depend, and the other gentlemen of the committee, that I shall carefully attend to the prosperity of the institution, and esteem it a very great happiness indeed to be subservient to the important design of it."¹¹⁹

The church at Meeting-House-Alley Portsea is also a good example of a successful Sunday school. Opened in 1808 it had by 1816 seen some 1,500 pupils through its classes. Whilst some of the children had gone on to become members of the church it is interesting to note that of the teachers fifty had come to faith in Christ and had been baptised. The fact that the church would use unconverted teachers perhaps indicates that educating the children rather than converting them was the prime reason for the existence of the Sunday school.

¹¹⁷ Godfrey and Ward (1903), p. 264

¹¹⁸ Ivimey (1831), p. 61

¹¹⁹ Ivimey (1831), p. 74

A junior missionary society had been formed with 300 children contributing ½ pence a week to the BMS.¹²⁰ In 1815 a member of the church at Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire described as a ‘benevolent youth’ began a Sunday school in the ‘poor and profligate’ village of Ascott,¹²¹ leading to the erection on 29 December 1816 of a place of worship to accommodate both the growing church and the seventy to eighty scholars.

Not all were convinced of the usefulness of Sunday schools and an article appeared in the *BM* of August 1816 aimed at those London churches that disapproved of, and were indifferent to Sunday schools. This included the anonymous writer who attributed his conversion to the cause of Sunday schools to:

...our dear and highly respected country ministers; whose communications at our different public meetings, have set this subject in so interesting a light, as to excite a wish in the minds of some, that the period may soon arrive, when there shall not be a Baptist church in the metropolis without its Sunday school.¹²²

It would, however, be wrong to imagine that the London churches were uninterested in the work of education. ‘The City of London Society, for the Instruction of Adults’ was founded in 1815. Its president was no less a figure than the Lord Mayor and counted the Recorder of London, the Sheriff of London, Aldermen and other figures of repute in the city, the committee consisted of twenty-four gentlemen, twelve from the Church of England and twelve from the dissenting churches.¹²³ In two years over a thousand men and women had been taught in the Society’s schools with a successful completion to their education being judged as their ability to read the Bible and scripture lessons. The Sunday school at South Street, Walworth Common was one of the first in London to erect purpose built buildings for its use at a cost of £189 to cater for the 380 children who attended it.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ *BM*, January 1816, p. 42

¹²¹ *BM*, August 1817, p. 314

¹²² *BM*, August 1816, p. 328

¹²³ *BM*, December 1817, p. 478-479

¹²⁴ *BM*, March 1819, p. 171

VIII. Other Factors influencing the growth of English Baptist Churches

This study had two main purposes. The first of which is to demonstrate, especially through the focal point of the NPBA, that English Baptist Churches entered, during the eighteenth century, a period of sustained growth that would last until 1906, although the parameters of this study do not extend beyond the middle of the nineteenth century. Chapters IV and V are concerned with the statistical evidence and they demonstrate categorically that this was so revealing a story of growth that enables us to speak in terms of this period in English Baptist Church life as a Revival.

The second purpose was to investigate the principal means by which this growth was achieved. In Chapter VI we considered the impact of itinerancy and village preaching and saw the way English Baptists evolved a national strategy for itinerant evangelism coupled with equally vigorous work done by more local itinerant societies, by the sustained efforts of local churches, and by some outstanding individuals. It is almost possible to talk of itinerancy, village preaching, and evangelism, as being as common to English Baptist Churches as Sunday Services. In Chapter VII we investigated the extraordinary undertaking that was the Sunday School Movement. The initial stimulus for the movement was educational, even though reading was taught using the Bible and the morality taught was Christian. It was the immense success of the schools that led to their proliferation to the extent that few churches did not organize one. It is difficult to underestimate the eventual impact of this movement upon the transformation of English society. In terms of church growth it is evident that the movement established for churches a powerfully positive entry into the lives of children and adults that resulted in many establishing a life long involvement with the church concerned.

There are other factors either of lesser importance or already well documented which must be mentioned briefly to complete this study.

A. Societal Changes

England in 1770 was not the England of 1700 and the changes were to have a major impact on Dissent. In 1703 the government granted to the Church of England an income of £17,000 per annum, Queen Anne's Bounty. It was intended to supplement the livings of poor churchmen. It was sufficient given a stable situation to transform the 'age old problem of clerical poverty.'¹ However, the situation did not remain stable in the one vital aspect of population growth, and nothing was to have as great an effect as the increase in population.

Ward couples this with what he describes as the weakness of the English state, "...too weak to put down dissent, too weak to allow its clergy to play at politics in their Convocation, too weak to root the Anglican establishment in the American Colonies, far too weak to overhaul a Church still largely mediaeval in its administrative forms, and incapable of generating policy."²

What was occurring was a shift in the traditional method of government in which the relationship between state and church was breaking down. This had begun when the Civil War had ended the divine right of English Monarchs to rule the land placing power into the hands of Parliament. The restoration had provided a false dawn for the Church of England quickly reversed by the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the Toleration Act of 1689.³ For all the inadequacies of the Act it did signal the failure of the church to destroy Dissent and the acceptance by the state of the legitimate existence of Dissenters. A process, long and slow though it was, had begun that would see the Church of England gradually lose its immense political powers, and the main beneficiaries were to be the Dissenters. Alan Gilbert marks 1740 (the advent of the Methodist Revival) as the crucial point in this process when he writes, "...it was only in the century after 1740 – and in the context of the societal upheaval of the Industrial Revolution – that popular extra-Establishment religious movements arose which were capable of challenging and ultimately subverting the traditional monopolistic role of the Church of England."⁴ Indeed it is the central theme of Gilbert's work that the history of the church in the period 1740-1914 can be defined in

¹ Ward (1972), p. 7

² Ward (1972), p. 1

³ Gilbert (1976), p. 3

terms of the conflict between the Established Church and Dissent, between Church and Chapel. E. R. Norman is justly able to commentate on the relationship between the Church of England and the State in the last two decades of the eighteenth century as one in which, “Church and State seemed at last to have become the ideal to which medieval Christendom had aspired: two aspects of an agreed unity.”⁵ At least in as much as the State was represented by the Tory party rather than the emerging Whigs.

It is possible that without the surge in the population the church would have been able to maintain its political ascendancy. To understand this fully it is important to realise the extent to which Britain identified itself as a Christian nation demonstrated by the concern of the 1851 Census with sittings.⁶ Instilling the people with Christian values lay at the heart, as the state understood it, of what it meant to be British. By 1851 being Christian was no longer synonymous with being a communicant member of the Church of England, but in 1703, despite the Toleration Act, this was far less true.

The extent to which the parish system was the means of governing large parts of the nation should also be recognised. John Wilks, in his address to the Society in London for the Protection of Religious Liberty⁷ on 15 May 1819 at the Albion Tavern makes clear how fallacious is the notion that Dissenters were no longer oppressed by legislation.⁸ His speech revealed how essential the parish system remained to the governance of the realm. Despite the Toleration Act successive Tory governments had no qualms about increasing the power of the Church of England, and suppressing Dissenters. In the early nineteenth century it was not possible to govern the country without the parishes. Within many parishes political power still existed in the hands of the principal landowners and priests appointed by patronage, and frequently absentee landowners apportioned clergy to their traditional roles as local magistrates and Justices of the Peace. This would mean Dissenters applying for licences to priests acting as JPs who were predisposed to refusing them. It was only in the towns that the situation was changing where men, whatever their religious hew, were rising to positions of influence. It is this continuing transfer of political influence from the landed gentry and the countryside to the towns that is the real

⁴ Gilbert (1976), p. vii

⁵ Norman, E. R. (1976), p. 15

⁶ See p. 106 above

⁷ Hereafter Religious Liberty Society

⁸ *BM*, July 1819, p. 288-296, August 1819, p. 338-341

reason behind the alleviation of injustice not only to Dissenters but also to the people in general.

The Religious Liberty Society was formed in 1811⁹ as a response to efforts by the Tories to transfer power into the hands of the Church of England at the expense of Dissenters. It was, however, formed out of strength not weakness, a strength gained in part from the fact that there were more Dissenters than Anglicans in the country. Diocesan returns for 1812 revealed that only five of twenty-five Dioceses contained more Anglican churches than dissenting meeting-houses, and that in total there were 2,547 churches against 3,457 meeting houses.¹⁰ Alan Gilbert describes the fortunes of the church between 1740 and 1830 as "...an era of disaster." He notes that by the end of this period the church was "...on the point of becoming a minority religious Establishment,"¹¹ having become over the period fifty per cent weaker.¹²

The surge in population commencing at the beginning of the eighteenth century was of vital significance in bringing this about as hamlets became villages, villages became towns, and towns became cities. In addition new villages and new towns began to emerge. There were now population centres with no parish churches, and others where one parish church was unable to meet the needs of growing communities. The church did not help itself by allowing absenteeism amongst its clergy, and by allowing clergy to hold multiple parishes for reasons of income. An increasing religious vacuum developed that the church could not fill for reasons of finance and the availability of clergy.¹³ It was a vacuum into which Old Dissent and the Methodists were more than willing to enter.

It was the emergent Methodists who set the standards for itinerancy under Whitefield and the Wesleys. Whilst Old Dissent distanced itself from them essentially because they saw

⁹ John Wilks formed 'the Religious Liberty Society' in 1811, and served as its secretary for twenty-five years. He owed his own prominence to the influence of the Society. *BM*, July 1811, p. 391 for the announcement of the deputies, at their meeting immediately after the defeat of the Sidmouth Bill on 28 May 1811, of their intention to form a Religious Liberty Society. *BM*, August 1811, p. 342-344 for the announcement of the Societies formation.

¹⁰ *BM*, July 1812, p. 311; also cf. Table 31 which shows that in 1851 that Anglicans were in the minority amongst church-goers although they were by far the largest single church grouping (48.6%) followed by the Methodists (24.6%), with Baptists ranked fourth (8.5%).

¹¹ Gilbert (1976), p. 27

¹² Gilbert (1976), p. 29

¹³ Although Ward (1972), p. 8 does point out that Anglican ownership of land yielded increasing income to the church in the eighteenth century. See also p. 9-10 as to the beneficial effects of enclosure for the Church.

them as Anglicans¹⁴ the bulk of the Church rejected them branding them secessionists and separatists. The result was that the church denied to itself the most powerful tool in its possession with which it might have addressed the problems caused by the growth in the population. Ward writes, "In the new circumstances it was inevitable that increasing numbers should slip through the traditional network of pastoral oversight, and form a standing invitation to the zealots to go out into the highways and hedges, and compel the lost to come in."¹⁵

Ward perhaps inadvertently raises an important issue here when he speaks of 'zealots.' In the main the church had rejected its zealots, the Methodists. Within its ranks Anglicanism possessed the means to fill the vacuum created, and to do so before Old Dissent began to mobilise itself, which it had failed to do before 1770. Norman writes, "The Church stood for the maintenance of the existing social order, and a wide range of social values...The interdependence of Church and state, or religion and civil government, remained the first consideration which men proposed for a right social constitution."¹⁶ If it can be determined, as possibly it can, that the church was so preoccupied with the maintenance of its relationship with the state that the spiritual welfare of the people was of little concern to it we have a further powerful argument to explain the failure of the church to fill the vacuum perceived above. Of course, the extension of the parish system over the rapidly expanding populace would have served its ends but the church lacked the means to do this once it rejected the work of the revival. The church took the view that organised religion was the glue that held society together, and the advent of the French Revolution in 1789 was seen, amongst others by Edmund Burke, as proof of this.¹⁷ From this perspective the maintenance of the relationship between church and state can be understood as the primary function of the church. Dissenters and Methodists took a different view looking to the spiritual welfare of the nation, and to the spiritual well being of each individual citizen, as of paramount importance. Indeed, the sentiments that lay behind the Revolution in France found accord amongst the Dissenters, and resulted in a resurgence of the power of the Church of England that was not broken until after 1815.

¹⁴ John Wesley never wavered from his insistence that he had no intention of separating from the Church of England.

¹⁵ Ward (1972), p. 8

¹⁶ Norman (1976), p. 16

¹⁷ Norman (1976), p. 17

The growth in population had other effects on society, of which Dissenters were able to take advantage. New population centres meant new markets and led to new roads greatly easing the task of itinerants, and also the gathering together of often widely scattered dissenting communities. Whatever the spiritual impetus for the formation of the NPBA in 1765 one cannot ignore the fact that it had become much easier for the representatives of churches as far flung as St. Albans, and Nottingham to come together. The population growth also spurred the processes of the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions and the creation of new wealth and intense poverty. The religious sympathies of wealthy industrialists provided the capital that the growing 'evangelical conscience' required. A plethora of charitable societies emerged of which the Sunday School Movement, and the Anti-slavery Movement were among the most significant.

The eighteenth century was a time of immense social change not only in England but also throughout Europe. The same forces that combined in France to produce the French Revolution would eventually give way in England to the 'evangelical revival' and the growth in size and influence of the Dissenters in particular.¹⁸ It was the advent of evangelicalism that would eventually save the Church of England from extinction, though it could not serve to regain the position of total pre-eminence it had enjoyed before the revival of Dissent. If evangelical revivalism was the major preserve at the turn of the nineteenth century of Old and New Dissent, by the middle of the century it had come to include an equal numbers of Anglicans.

B. Ministerial Education

One of the founding ideals of English Baptists, which they shared with Independents, was a commitment to what they understood to be the Biblical principle of the priesthood of all believers. In part it was also a reaction against the example of priesthood set for them by the clergy of the Church of England. Early Baptists were therefore suspicious of attempts to train ministers, for all that many of their early church leaders were themselves ejected ministers of the established church. In a strange way it was the drying up of this supply of trained clergymen that by the late seventeenth century brought about a change in the

¹⁸ Ward (1972), p.1

climate sufficiently for serious steps toward the training of ministers by Baptists to begin.¹⁹ Old prejudices against an educated ministry continued but in the minority, although as late as 1707 a meeting of the Western Association at Bridgewater considered the question, ‘Whether it is not a dishonour to the Holy Spirit to raise up a ministry of human learning or to send them to schools who have gifts to preach the Gospel?’²⁰

However, it should be noted that throughout the eighteenth century and on into the nineteenth century the vast majority of Baptist ministers were not trained in Baptist Academies or any academy at all. Most were self-taught, many self-supporting, and increasingly from 1770 onwards men were being called to pastor churches that they had themselves had a large hand in forming as itinerant evangelists.

1. *The Bristol Academy*

The founding of the Bristol Academy following the legacy of Edward Terrill (1634-1685) was the first attempt by English Baptists at ministerial education. In 1679 Terrill made known the terms of his will by which the bulk of his considerable estate was bequeathed for the support of a minister at the Broadmead church, Bristol, who was to devote three and a half days a week to the training of young men for the ministry. It stated that the funds he provided should be used, “...for the subsistence of a holy learned man, well schooled in the tongues, to wit, Greek and Hebrew, and should profess and practice the truth of believers baptism as a pastor or teacher to the congregation aforesaid...”²¹ The first tangible attempt at fulfilling the terms of the Terrill Will was made in 1714 when the Broadmead Church as appointed Caleb Jope co-Pastor and Tutor. A GB by origin Jope proved somewhat unsatisfactory and moved on to Plymouth in 1719.²²

The beginnings were small with Bernard Foskett (1685-1758) appointed in 1720 training only two students between 1720 and 1727, but the crucial beginning had been made and consolidated. Hugh Evans (1713-1781) was appointed as Foskett’s assistant in 1739. He

¹⁹ Brown (1986), p. 47

²⁰ Moon, Champion & Mowvley (1970), p. 8.

²¹ Moon (1979), p. 106. The Thomas Bodenham bequests of 1715 and 1720 further enhanced the provision for ministerial education at Bristol

²² Moon (1979), p. 3

was not new to Broadmead having lived with his aunt in Bristol from 1730 whilst undergoing medical treatment. Whilst attending the church he had come to Foskett's attention, and was baptised by Foskett on 17 August 1730, with the sermon preached by Dr. Samuel Stennett.²³ Over the next nineteen years over fifty men were trained for the ministry.

Upon the death of Foskett in 1758 Hugh Evans was invited by the Broadmead Church to continue as Senior Pastor of the church and Principal of the College. To assist him in his work the church appointed his son Caleb. In the event Hugh and Caleb Evans (1737-1791) would work together harmoniously for the next twenty-three years. John Rippon writes, "The influence of the father was apostolic, the popularity of the son was proverbial."²⁴

Hugh Evans died on the 8 April 1781 at the age of sixty-nine and Caleb succeeded him both as Principal of the College and senior Pastor of the Broadmead church. Caleb Evans in an address to his students delivered on 12 April 1770, entitled 'Advice to Students having in view the Christian Ministry'²⁵ includes remarks on such diverse subjects as time spent sleeping (six hours recommended), the importance of establishing good routines, and reading habits. For Evans the principal quality required for ministry was that of an "...unfeigned love to Jesus Christ and to the souls of men."²⁶ Evans considered all subjects to be worthy of study because, he believed that, in the end all studies enlarge our understanding of God. He exhorts his students to diligence, regularity, steadiness, and perseverance.²⁷ Caleb's Evans death in 1791 at the age of fifty-four was untimely and the College was unprepared for it. It would be almost two years before a suitable replacement could be found, but the College was by this time sufficiently strong to withstand the delay.

During the eighteenth century the college provided only two ministers to the NPBA and the principal connection between the college and the NPBA came when John Ryland came to Bristol to succeed Caleb Evans. He did so a little reluctantly because of his love for the work and people in Northampton with whom he maintained strong contact, first because of his ongoing involvement in the BMS, based there until 1814, and secondly because his

²³ Evans, Caleb (1781), p. 26

²⁴ *BAR*, Vol. 2, p. 441

²⁵ Dunscombe (1770). Evan's address is appended to an address given by Thomas Dunscombe at the AGM of the Bristol Education the year after Caleb Evan's died.

²⁶ Dunscombe (1792), p. 38

heart never quite left College Lane to which he returned frequently to preach and visit his family.

Under Ryland's leadership the College entered a further phase of expansion as the number of students in training increased by 1797 to twenty with an average of five new students arriving each year. A third full-time tutor was appointed in 1802, Henry Page, to teach alongside Ryland and Isaac James. In 1805 Benjamin Donne became a part-time tutor bringing the staff to four. Work on a new College was undertaken in 1806 and was completed in 1811, accommodating thirty students at a cost of £12,000 (the debt was cleared in 1820). With Ryland's support for, and involvement in, the work of the BMS it was not long before Bristol students began to go overseas. Indeed of the two hundred or so students who passed through the College under Ryland some twenty became missionaries.

2. Other Attempts at Ministerial Education in the Eighteenth Century

Mention should be made of the Trosnant Academy near Pontypool in Wales. Miles Harry of Pen-y-garn and John Griffiths of Pontypool established it in 1734. The Academy closed in 1770 due to lack of suitable tutors and financial support. The migration of Griffiths to America in 1761 had not helped. Additionally there was the Academy run by John Sutcliff at Olney from 1798,²⁸ which also was an attempt to address the need for a more educated Baptist ministry. The London churches had expressed a desire to establish an Academy early in the eighteenth century and it is somewhat surprising that it is almost one hundred years before those hopes for London are finally realised. Foreman in an article in the *Baptist Quarterly* which attempts to explain London's failure in this venture is right to point to the fact that the Bristol College found support from two churches, Broadmead and Pithay, that represented the wealthiest Baptist churches in the land.²⁹ There can be little doubt that the bequests of wealthy members of these two churches laid the foundation upon which the College could be built. Foreman goes on to say that, whilst there were equally wealthy individuals in the London churches, their wealth was never channelled into

²⁷ Dunscombe (1792), p. 40ff

²⁸ See p. 145

ministerial education in London.³⁰ Foreman, however, fails to ask one further question, which is why was Bristol able to channel the funds where London was not? The answer again is to be found in the two churches of Broadmead and Pithay.³¹ Where the two churches of Bristol were able to focus on the project of ministerial education and channel the wealth of their members to its support, the many more and dispersed churches of London were not. Whereas a project may require a wide support base to continue, it often requires a narrow support base to commence.

3. Conclusion

By the end of the eighteenth century the argument over the need for a trained ministry was long settled, and in the early years of the nineteenth century the cause of ministerial education flourishes.

The influence of the Bristol College though significant should not be overestimated. On the 19 March 1795 Joshua Thomas (1719-1797) wrote to John Rippon the editor of the Baptist Annual Register. Thomas was a Welsh minister and something of an early Baptist Historian. The letter contains, presumably for inclusion in the *BAR*, a list of students who attended the Bristol Baptist College from 1720-1777.³² Of the eighty-three men trained at Bristol during this time Thomas reckoned that some fifty-three came from Wales.³³ Only twenty-one of the Welsh students returned to Wales with seven of them returning to pastor their home church. This contrasts with only two of the English students who returned to pastor their home churches. Six students died before taking up pastorates and a further five students for varying reasons did not take up Pastorates. Of the students who went to English Baptist churches twenty-one went to churches in the Western Association, nine to churches in the heart of England (Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire), four to London, two to Northamptonshire, two to the East of England, three to the North and

²⁹ Foreman (1997-1998), p. 359-361

³⁰ Foreman (1997-1998), p. 361-362

³¹ Foreman (1997-1998), p. 362. However, he does acknowledge that there being only two churches involved in Bristol the work was able to progress without 'any undue hindrance.

³² The original copy of this letter can be seen in the Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford.

³³ Many of the students from the Trosnant Academy near Pontypool in Wales came on to Bristol, but are recorded by Thomas as being from Pen-y-garn. Pentre the home village of the Evans family also provided a unusual number of students from so small a village and it may be that they came from a school or other

five to the South. Two more went to Ireland and a further two became itinerants. If one were to draw a line down the centre of England it would determine that only fifteen were placed east of that line and forty-three west of it with no information provided for twelve of the students. However, given amongst those men were John Collet Ryland, and John Sutcliff one must not belittle the contribution that Bristol men made even where they were spread thinnest.

C. The Birth of the Baptist Missionary Society

From their inception Baptist activity was focused around the cities of Bristol and London until around 1770 when the focus switched to Northamptonshire culminating in 1792 with the birth of the BMS, the first of the modern missionary societies.

The origin of the BMS has been well documented most recently by Brian Stanley in a work commissioned to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of the BMS.³⁴ Stanley writes, "...the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 marks a turning point in the history of Christian missionary endeavour. The BMS set the pattern for the voluntary society model of missionary agency which became so widespread in the nineteenth century."³⁵

William Carey (1761-1834) was the man who can be fairly said to take most responsibility for the founding of the BMS.³⁶ A shoemaker by trade he began the journey from the Anglicans to Baptists when, in May 1781, he was the third person to sign the constitution of the new Baptist Church at Hackleton, Northamptonshire. However it wasn't until his baptism by John Ryland jnr. in the river Nene at 6.00am on the first Sunday of October 1783 when Carey was twenty-three years old that this journey was completed.³⁷ Although a member of Hackleton, Carey regularly made the journey to Northampton to hear the preachers at the Baptist and the Congregational Church. Between 1782 and 1785 he regularly preached at Earls Barton and Pury's End.

academy located there.

³⁴ Stanley (1992), especially pp. 1-29

³⁵ Stanley (1992), p. 2

³⁶ For a detailed account of Carey's life see S. Pearce Carey (1923)

³⁷ S. Pearce Carey (1923), p. 38

John Sutcliff became Carey's mentor and on 14 July 1785 Olney received him into membership and was given permission by the church to continue to preach in the villages of Burton and Moulton. It wasn't until 17 June 1786 that they fully approved Carey's call to ministry and released him 'to preach the Gospel, wherever God in his providence might call him.' On 25 March 1785 Carey moved to Moulton, Northampton, where he opened a school and then on 1 February 1787 accepted a call to be pastor. Carey became a member at Moulton on 3 May 1787 and was ordained on Wednesday 1 August 1787 with Sutcliff preaching. Carey stayed at Moulton until 1789 when he moved to the pastorate of the church in Harvey Lane, Leicester that he served until he left for India in 1793.

Carey first made his interest in foreign mission publicly known he attended a meeting of the Association's ministers in September 1785. Asked, as a newcomer, to provide a question for discussion he offered, "Whether the command given to the apostles to 'teach all nations,' was not obligatory on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world, seeing that the accompanying promise was of equal extent."³⁸ J. C. Ryland who was chairing the meeting is famously said to have responded to Carey's suggestion, 'Young man, sit down sit down. You're an enthusiast.' Carey laid the theological foundation for his views with the publication on 12 May 1792 of his work *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*.

It was on 2 October 1792 in the back parlour of Mrs. Beeby Wallis' home in Kettering that, what we know today as the Baptist Missionary Society was formed.³⁹ Present was a group including eleven ministers, one deacon of the Kettering church, and a student from the Bristol Academy.⁴⁰ For all that Samuel Pearce had travelled from Birmingham to be present at this momentous occasion the new society was a child of the Northamptonshire Particular Baptist Association, and it is likely that Pearce and Staughton were present only as observers, even though their subscriptions were welcomed.⁴¹

³⁸ Stanley (1992), p. 7 and also S. Pearce Carey (1923), p. 50

³⁹ The original name was 'The Particular Baptist Society for propagating the Gospel among the heathen.'

⁴⁰ The thirteen known participants are recorded as they pledged an annual subscription to support the new society. The obvious omission from the list is the name of Carey himself who perhaps saw little point in subscribing to a society that would soon be sending him overseas. Stanley's explanation (1992, p. 15) that Carey is omitted because he could not afford a subscription is insufficient for few of the others present were any better placed than Carey, and he could hardly be said to be less willing to sacrifice than they. See S. Pearce Carey (1923), p. 93

⁴¹ The student William Staughton was present as he was being considered for the pastorate at College Lane,

For the next twenty years control of the BMS would lie with the Northamptonshire triumvirate of Fuller (as secretary of the Society), Sutcliff and Ryland. Though almost immediately Ryland moved to Bristol to become Principal of the Bristol Academy and minister of the Broadmead Church. Despite this the BMS soon began to gain widespread support across the denomination. Pearce was perhaps instrumental in this, as by the second meeting of the committee in November 1791 his own Cannon Street church had already raised the significant sum of £70 and formed a Birmingham auxiliary society to support the mother society in Northampton. The committee welcomed Pearce's initiative inviting Pearce to join it, and it was decided that all other such auxiliary societies would be able to send delegates to the meetings of the mother society.⁴²

The evidence suggests that the BMS was born out of the theological change that throughout the 1770s and 1780s moved PBs from hyper-Calvinism to Evangelical Calvinism or Fullerism. The BMS acted as a spur to work at home not only with the formation of the BHMS⁴³ but also as it gave to Baptists a sense of their own collective worth by encouraging them toward national unity. Through the BMS English Baptists saw that the work of foreign mission could be carried out more effectively through a nationally recognised body. The committee of the BMS, and Andrew Fuller in particular found themselves increasingly active at a national level with other church leaders and at a national political level. The need for such exposure and the advantages that came with it were evident. It was also becoming evident to some, at least the way that other churches were benefiting from their various attempts at union.⁴⁴ The resulting 'General Union of Baptist Ministers formed in Dr. Rippon's study on 25 June 1812 was a small beginning as only about a seventh of the Particular Baptist churches in the country were present, though Payne does indicate, "...the company included most of the better known ministers of the day."⁴⁵

Northampton, and was in fact a member of Pearce's Birmingham church. Pearce had been preaching at the ministers meeting that had taken place in the afternoon, though possibly his invitation to preach had been made in order to facilitate his presence at the evening meeting.

⁴² See Stanley (1992), p. 16

⁴³ See p. 168 above

⁴⁴ See for example the article by J. Lind in the *BM*, April 1813, p. 148. Lind also points out that as a result the churches he mentions are able to give support far more effectively to foreign mission than Baptists.

⁴⁵ Payne (1959), p. 20

The formation of the BMS provided an important stimulus to evangelism and placed, for a short while, English Baptists in the position of pioneers, but it was not long before a plethora of Missionary societies formed as a direct result of the initiative taken by the Baptists.

D. Baptists and the Reform of English Society as evidenced in the campaign to abolish slavery

We have noted that the later eighteenth century and the early nineteenth centuries were times of immense economic change brought about by the huge rise in the population and the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions. This was also a time of great social and political change spurred by the evangelical revival as the lives of ordinary people changed dramatically. Our purpose here is not to suggest that Baptists alone transformed society in the early 1800's but that they did not shirk their responsibility to stand up for and fight against injustice thereby establishing credibility especially in the eyes of a rapidly expanding and increasingly discriminating middle class. We will do this by looking at perhaps the great social issue of the early nineteenth century, slavery. Space precludes looking in any detail at Baptist involvement in the development of popular education, the ongoing fight for religious liberty, the Great Reform Bill of 1832, the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the plethora of charitable societies formed to alleviate the conditions of the mass of the people.

In 1807, Parliament abolished the slave trade; in 1833, it abolished colonial slavery; and in 1838, it emancipated the colonial slave apprentices. These three bare facts hide fifty years of concerted campaigning which included Dissenters, for whom the crusade was a matter of religious principle. The campaign was directly related to the work of the missionaries for it was their activities and their letters home, that turned a philosophical debate into one that touched the very lives of those fighting for it.

By 1807, there was little opposition in Parliament where the Whigs, in power following Pitt's death in 1806, supported the Wilberforce's Bill to abolish the Slave Trade.⁴⁶

Cowherd writes, "The abolition of the slave trade was, to a large extent, the achievement of the evangelicals..."⁴⁷ It was a timely victory for the Whigs soon found themselves out of office for a period of twenty-three years. The abolition of the slave trade in 1807 was not going to bring about the end of slavery as by the time of its passing there were sufficient slaves already in the Americas to perpetuate the institution without bringing more from Africa. Indeed the act itself had done little more than bring to an end a trade that was naturally dying anyway. The act did not prevent the sale of slaves between owners and it did not free children born to slaves. Whilst these two conditions persisted slavery would continue.

Baptists' major contribution to the campaign for reform was not so much their influence upon changing times and attitudes in Britain but the activities of their Jamaican Missionaries. Michael Craton notes of the Baptist Missionaries that "Their ministers had fewer social aspirations and their congregations were, and remained, almost exclusively black."⁴⁸ It was anecdotal stories from the mission fields that truly captured the imagination of the British people. The *BM* contains the following 'Anecdote of a Negro Christian Slave.' An owner threatened with punishment those of his slaves who had been baptised by a 'Mr. B. (a man of colour) in Jamaica' and were attending worship at his meeting-house. The owner compelled the slaves to work from 5.00am to 6.00pm in chains until all but one promised not to attend the meeting-house again. For a month the last man was flogged daily and forced to work in chains. This continued until the Governor of Jamaica visited the plantation and seeing the man's plight asked its cause. The governor immediately ordered the man to be released and from that time on no slave on that plantation was prevented from attending at Mr. B's meeting-house.⁴⁹ Further stories of the way in which owners used slaves further fuelled opposition at home.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Wilberforce it should be noted was in fact a Tory, despite his championing of Dissent and Reform.

⁴⁷ Cowherd (1959), p. 52

⁴⁸ Craton (1982), p. 108

⁴⁹ *BM*, January 1817, p, 18

⁵⁰ See for example *BM*, February 1817, p. 77-78

In January 1823, the Abolition Committee was replaced by the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions.⁵¹ Many pamphlets were issued to support the campaign. The pamphlet issued by the Baptist minister William Cuttriss in 1825 entitled *Slavery: Inconsistent with Christianity* was typical of the genre, and representative of the way Baptists could influence opinion at home.⁵² In 1811 Cuttriss was minister of the Baptist Church at Arnesby, Leicestershire within the Northamptonshire Association, having been ordained there on 2 April 1809. Cuttriss begins with a simple statement of his thesis, “Whatever is inconsistent with humanity, is equally inconsistent with Christianity.”⁵³ For Cuttriss the enslaving of one man by another clearly falls into the category of inhumanity. Slavery he argues is inconsistent with Christianity in ‘its principles, its practices, and its effects. To this extent Cuttriss is part of a strong Northamptonshire response to the issue of slavery, which includes William Knibb and Robert Hall jnr. Cuttriss and Hall combined powerfully in the Leicester Anti-Slavery Society one of the foremost of its kind in the country.

Robert Hall jnr. widely acknowledged as one of the great orators of the early nineteenth century turned his eloquence upon the slave trade in an address to the Leicester Auxiliary of the Anti-Slavery Society reported in the *BM*.⁵⁴ Hall points out the detrimental effects of the progress of faith when slaves are only allowed the Sabbath to attend to the land allotted to them for personal cultivation. He also points to the economic folly of slavery when he contrasts the production of sugar in the slave owing West Indies with that of the non-slave owning East Indies. He points out that in order to maintain the West Indian Trade heavy levies are placed upon East Indies sugar with the result that the British people were effectively subsidising slavery in the West Indies to the tune of £2,000,000 per annum.

The fight was further encouraged by the behaviour of colonial farmers and administrators who began to persecute the missionaries. The Baptist missionary William Knibb returned to England from the West Indies in 1831 telling his story of persecution in print and at mass meetings across the length and breadth of the country strongly influencing public

⁵¹ Hereafter the Anti-Slavery Society

⁵² See for example *BM*, July 1825, p. 306-307 that carries extracts from a report of which 33,000 copies were in circulation. Also, *BM*, August 1830, p. 342-345

⁵³ Cuttriss (1825), p. 1

⁵⁴ *BM*, March 1824, p. 124-125. The *BM*, April 1825, carries a further *Essay on Slavery*, by G. S. of Salisbury and the *BM*, December 1830, 524-525 carries extracts from the second volume of *Dr. Walsh's views of Slavery in Brazil*

opinion at the most crucial moment. C. Duncan Rice notes the significance of Knibb's contribution when he writes, "...the imprisonment of missionary Knibb in Jamaica, had a major political impact on the campaign against West Indian Slavery."⁵⁵

Knibb was born 7 September 1803, at Kettering, Northamptonshire and died in late 1845 whilst only forty-two years of age. He completed his education in Northampton without distinguishing himself as a scholar and went eventually to Jamaica as a teacher, not a preacher – a work thought beyond him.⁵⁶ A member of the Kettering Church, which was still in his early years under the guidance of Andrew Fuller, Knibb was sent to the West Indies by the BMS. He was baptised by John Ryland jnr. with the words, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."⁵⁷ His invalid mother recalled them to him when he left for Jamaica with the parting words, "Remember I would rather hear that you have perished in the sea than that you have disgraced the cause you go to serve."⁵⁸

In Jamaica Knibb experienced first hand the true reality of slavery and slave owning and if anything transformed him from teacher to passionate and persuasive orator it was this experience. Such an opponent of slavery did Knibb become that when he came home to England in 1832 it was in fear of his own life. Once home Knibb continued his passionate opposition to slavery with such affect that the population was moved to his cause and the law, at great expense to the nation, was changed.

The BMS committee had enforced upon its missionaries a policy of non-intervention in political matters but Knibb would not be silenced. In the summer of 1832 Knibb addressed the BMS at the Spa Fields Chapel with great passion and fervour persuading them to drop their policy of non-intervention. Not all on the General Committee supported Knibb and when addressing the Spa Field congregation his coattail was pulled by one of the platform party, Mr. Dyer, to restrain him. To this act Knibb replied, "Mr. Chairman, whatever may be the consequences, I will speak, at the risk of my connection with the Society, and of all I hold dear, I will avow this, and if the friends of Missions will not hear me, I will turn and

⁵⁵ Rice (1982), p. 150

⁵⁶ Katterns (1866), p. 7

⁵⁷ Katterns (1866), p. 7

⁵⁸ Katterns (1866), p. 8

tell it to my God, nor will I desist till this greatest of curses is removed, and glory to God in the highest is marked upon the British flag.”⁵⁹

Having persuaded the BMS Knibb embarked on a tour of the country that was little more than a procession of triumph for him as, “...sceptics were convinced, waverers (*sic*) were decided, the apathetic were roused, and vast audiences were kindled to irrepressible enthusiasm.”⁶⁰ Knibb was also called to give exhaustive evidence to Parliament with the result that in 1833 the Whig government finally agreed to introduce a Bill, which they did on 12 May. Slave-owners were to be compensated⁶¹, and only children under six years granted immediate freedom, existing slaves were required to work a period of ‘apprenticeship’ before being freed. Despite this the opponents of slavery received the Bill with great rejoicing, the Dissenters having extra cause to rejoice for they had also defeated amendments that tried to restrict the Negroes freedom of worship. Cowherd concludes, “Of all the reform movements that swept over England during the first half of the nineteenth century, the crusades against slavery did most to transform morals and opinions.”⁶²

E. The Integrity of English Particular Baptists

There can be little doubt that what distinguished Baptists from their co-religionists was their commitment to Believers’ Baptism and the effect this would have on their ‘order and discipline.’ Even in those churches such as College Lane, Northampton who adopted open-membership constitutions, Believers’ Baptism remained the norm. It was this doctrinal position, peculiar to Baptists, that would seem to have created the climate whereby a church like Olney could have a membership of seventy but a weekly congregation of over 400. The 1851 Religious Census confirmed that Olney was no exception as the number of hearers in Baptist churches exceeded the number of members by around four to one. However, there is no evidence to suggest that open-membership churches had a significantly higher ratio of members to hearers and so we must look further for an explanation. The answer in all probability lies in the attitude taken by

⁵⁹ Katterns (1866), p. 17

⁶⁰ Katterns (1866), p. 18

⁶¹ Cowherd (1959), p. 60. This amounted to some £20,000,000

⁶² Cowherd (1959), p. 63

Baptists to the issue of membership, which is revealed to us by their approach to Church Discipline. Baptists were not alone in exercising a strong disciplinary code and in an age when moral conduct was high on the agenda of the shapers of public opinion it was necessary for a successful church to exhibit such an approach.

1. *The Role of the Association*

It became a feature of Association life in the NPBA that unresolved disputes between churches would be referred to the Association demonstrating its authority and the measure of acceptance of inter-dependence by the churches. When the Rushden church refused to dismiss one Mrs. Wright to Kettering arguing that Kettering was no longer true to its principles, Kettering following an exchange of letters turned to the Association.⁶³ The Association advised sending a second letter stating that if Rushden failed to respond in six weeks that Kettering would accept Mrs. Wright into membership without her dismissal from Rushden.⁶⁴

The case, of the dispute between Rev. Richard Hopper and his Friar Lane Church brought to the Association on 25 May 1803 was altogether more complex.⁶⁵ It concerned Hopper's son Richard who in 1798 had been visited by appointed Messengers of the church with concern over his gambling and other pursuits. The matter remained unresolved until in 1802, in the minister's absence the church excluded Richard from membership. The church believed it had acted with patience and sensitivity for four years, the minister (and father) considered the events of 1802 to be separate from those of 1798 and that the church had acted underhandedly and precipitously. Unable to resolve the dispute that grew increasingly bitter it was eventually brought to the Association.

In his defence Richard Hopper pointed out that he had been a faithful member of the association for thirty-four years, and a faithful servant of the Friar Lane church throughout that time. He wrote, "I have crimes enough to be humbled for before God, but have none

⁶³ AFBC, Kettering, Minute Book, 28 July 1785, p. 84. Rushden was not in the NPBA and presumably objected to the move to evangelical Calvinism inspired by Fuller.

⁶⁴ AFBC, Kettering, Minute Book, 29 September 1785, p. 88

⁶⁵ The case is reported in full in the records of the NPBA held in the Northamptonshire PRO

that I have caused to be ashamed before them, not being conscious that I have for the above term ever lost sight of their interest; but studied to promote it in the full sense of the word..." Hopper's contention is that because his own son was the object of the issue he correctly stood back to avoid accusations of partisanship and did not interfere in the actions of the church. Those actions however, he considered precipitous, as they failed to make allowance for his son's youth, and previously unblemished conduct. As further evidence of the improper way in which the matter was dealt with Hopper points to the fact that only fifteen members were present to take such a decision, and that he himself was absent. In addition he contends that such a decision could not and should not have been taken without his assent as the presiding elder.⁶⁶

The NPBA considered the matter, and John Sutcliff, as the Moderator, sent their response to both Hopper and the Church following the Assembly at Sheephead on 31 May-3 June 1803. In essence the NPBA upheld the actions of the church and whilst acknowledging some fault on the part of members nevertheless placed most of the blame upon Hopper. They hoped for reconciliation but perhaps aware that matters had gone too far for this they suggested Hopper should resign and gave the church permission to act should he fail to do so.

In the event the relationship between Hopper and the Church was damaged beyond repair and he left. Richard Hopper junior remained in Nottingham joining the nearby Anglican church of St. Nicholas where six of his children were baptised. A hosier he went on to become a member of the City Corporation and in 1815 one of the Sheriffs of Nottingham a position of great standing held by the leading citizens of the city. This fact may serve to some extent to put his misdemeanours of 1802 into perspective.⁶⁷

2. General Evidence of Church Discipline

Table 43 showing the reported exclusion in NPBA churches between 1766 and 1830 clearly indicates that every church in the Association took discipline seriously. There were

⁶⁶ A fair point perhaps as the letter sent to the Association by the church had been signed by forty-four members.

⁶⁷ Godfrey and Ward (1903), p. 22-23

nine years in the period when the number of exclusions was greater than the increase in membership, and in the six years that the Association showed a decline in its membership a more lenient discipline policy may have seen the decline reversed. There can be little doubt that these statistics demonstrate the commitment of the churches to the purity of their faith and to the integrity of their membership.

Hopper's dispute with his Friar Lane, Nottingham church, leading to his enforced resignation, was by no means unusual. John Pewtriss, the pastor, was excluded from Roade in 1786 for financial irregularities,⁶⁸ Raymond Hogg resigned as pastor of Thrapston in difficult circumstances,⁶⁹ Rev. Blackshaw was dismissed from the pastorate at Kegworth for intoxication,⁷⁰ James Rowling was excluded from membership and thus the pastorate of the church at Earl's Barton,⁷¹ and Thomas Blundell left College Lane after a dispute with his deacons.⁷² The Guilsborough church in 1815 faced a situation with as great a potential for disaster as that at Friar Lane when an undisclosed happening caused them to ask their assistant minister, the son of John Edmonds (their minister since 1783), to leave.⁷³ Although the intervention of Thomas Edmonds (the eldest son and brother to John Edmonds jnr.) appeared to settle matters amicably John Edmonds' ministry ended unhappily two years later.⁷⁴

The Church Book for the Sheepshead church from November 1803 until April 1812 shows a high degree of interest in church discipline matters, and hardly a meeting went by without some case or another being considered by the Church Meeting. It is interesting to note that during this period the minutes constantly bemoaned the very low attendance at such meetings, often as few as ten from a membership of around seventy were present.

Some of the individual tales of indiscretion that can be read in the church books are worth of recounting in and of themselves. For example the case of John Cook of Collingham exhibits the black humour that accompanies tragedy. He is suspended for drunkenness on

⁶⁸ Payne (1938:2), p. 25. However Pewtriss goes on from Roade to several successful ministries and he is spoken highly of following his death. See the *BM*, April 1827, p. 182

⁶⁹ NthCRO, Thrapston Church Book, 30 October 1807. See p. 155 above

⁷⁰ LCRO, Harvey Lane, Church Book 1794-1867, entries for 1788

⁷¹ NthCRO, Earl's Barton Church Book, entries for 1811

⁷² NthCRO, College Lane Church Book, entries for 1824

⁷³ NthCRO, Guilsborough Church Book, entries for March 1815

⁷⁴ NthCRO, Guilsborough Church Book, 22 June 1817

24 May 1812, and restored on 23 September. However, on 4 October 1812 Cook was again drunk and placed unconscious into a cart which subsequently bolted; when finally caught Cook was found dead through suffocation. Drunkenness was one of the most common grounds for suspension or exclusion from membership. Sexual immorality in the form of fornication, adultery, and premarital pregnancy was another regular ground for discipline evidenced by the case of Thomas Hunt, also of Collingham, who had left his wife and was touring the country as a ragman in the company of another woman and was excluded on 30 January 1828.

It was not considered a sin to hold a view different to the pastor, but how you conducted yourself was a different matter. James and Elizabeth Hewitt were excluded from College Lane on 7 February 1790 for their opposition to John Ryland. It seems that they were hyper-Calvinists and were opposed to the evangelical Calvinism espoused by Ryland. The Church Book devotes some twenty pages to this case and the related case of John Adams who was excluded on 23 October 1791. In the end the Hewitts are dismissed after 'Seven Articles of Accusation' are found proven against them by the church. Adams is excluded, "...for endeavouring to excite disaffection toward the pastor of the church." Specifically he had also been involved in an attempt to establish a preaching venture in the Hewitts home in opposition to College Lane. Adams was not present on 9 September 1791 when his case was first discussed but his wife was and she left the meeting to inform him. The Church Book records, "...while we were deliberating he [Adams] burst into the meeting-house, pale and nearly breathless with Rage (*sic*), and began most violently to abuse Mr. Rudd, who had spoken with some degree of warmth against his conduct, and after raving for a few minutes, declared his resolution not to receive any letter into his house, and then ran off, without allowing any time for a reply." About an hour later Adams and his father sent to have their pew cushions and their pew desks returned to them! The churches also took application for church membership seriously. It was not unusual for the process to take three months whilst the church ascertained the appropriateness of a candidate for membership. Once in membership failure to attend services and in particular to attend communion services was cause for removal from membership. Preaching without authorisation was also a serious matter, and the Olney church on 28 February 1820 appointed messengers to visit James and Robert Lett about "...the impropriety of their conduct in taking upon them to preach without the approbation of the church." Mediation fails and by early March both men are excluded, and given the exacting process that many

of the churches seemed to follow with regard to authorising lay preachers it is no surprise that they take equally as seriously those members who preach without permission.

Doctrinal issues also exercised the ire of the churches as the exclusion of John Wood and his wife from the Friar Lane, Nottingham in April and May 1815 for being 'irreclaimable antinomians' demonstrates.

Libertine or 'scandalous' behaviour, which included such sins as attending the playhouse⁷⁵ was another cause for expulsion as was that of business failure. Olney excluded Thomas Dunton on 9 February 1786 for 'his failure in the world' in circumstances the church considered 'dishonourable to religion.' The case of William Sherritt of Collingham reveals a different aspect of the business world into which the church felt it had the right to intervene. The church determined on 1 December 1819 that Sherritt was paying his labourers 1s 10d whilst charging 2s 2d for their hire. The church ordered Sherritt to increase the pay to the 2s common to labourers at that time.

On average each church in the NPBA excluded one member every other year between 1766 and 1830. There is little doubt from the evidence available that PB churches took the issue of discipline seriously. We have seen elsewhere that they also took seriously the issue of setting members aside to serve the wider church as lay preachers.⁷⁶ It would seem that the whole area of membership was a distinctive of the Particular Baptists. On the ethical and moral issues of their day they sought to hold a clear line, and it could well be argued that had they shown a more tolerant attitude on these questions that many more of those who attended their churches as hearers might have made the transition into membership. However, as on the subject of Religious Liberty and to a lesser degree with regard to Baptism, the Particular Baptists demonstrated in the realm of Church Discipline that they were not willing to compromise the principles upon which they stood.

⁷⁵ For which College Lane, Northampton excluded John Mitchell on 11 June 1784

⁷⁶ See p. 187 above

Conclusion

The 'other factors' discussed in Chapter VIII indicate that English Baptists along with other Dissenters were better able to take advantage of the population changes and shifts brought about by the agricultural and industrial revolutions, and population growth, than the state church, and consequently benefited at their expense. In Chapter III we saw that English Baptists were also blessed during the latter part of the eighteenth century with a large number of extremely gifted leaders notably the influential Northamptonshire triumvirate of Andrew Fuller, John Sutcliff and John Ryland. Our consideration of the birth of the BMS, Baptist involvement in national political life, and their demonstrable integrity all contributed to a positive public perception of English Baptists, playing their part in making their churches attractive to non-churchgoers.

In setting the context for the revival of English Baptists we discovered a reality that contrasted with the picture so often painted of early to mid-century English Baptist church life. In Chapter IV we presented clear statistical evidence to demonstrate that between 1715 and 1773 there was tangible growth amongst English Baptist Churches, a fact that required a reassessment of the true impact of hyper-Calvinism, and in particular to question the extent to which it truly gripped English Particular Baptists. Prior to 1770 Baptist church life is focussed in London, and Bristol and the south west. The Western Association as we saw in Chapter III was strongly evangelical in its Calvinism and its influence stretched along the south coast and into the west Midlands, and increasingly further as a result of the work being done at the Bristol Academy. There is no question that hyper-Calvinism placed restrictions on those who adhered to it but John Gill emerges from the eighteenth century as one of its principal divines, as a man of immense integrity, as a theological giant, and a preacher of great eloquence. For all his adherence to hyper-Calvinistic views there is little in his life and ministry of the dusty, languid, stagnation by which hyper-Calvinism is characterised. The picture of a church locked into a theology that bred stagnation and decline is a wholly false one and this period in the life of English Baptist churches is deserving of a much more positive image than hitherto it has received.

Another assumption challenged was that the revival enjoyed by English Baptists was simply an overflow of what had taken place amongst the Methodists with the Wesleys and

Whitefield. This is demonstrably shown to be a false premise in Chapter II. The link between the Pan-European revival of the seventeenth century to the early revivalist movements in America and to the Methodist Revival is traceable but not direct. It is apparent that Old Dissent in general wanted little to do with Wesley and his methods at first. However, as time passed some of those methods became more acceptable to Dissenters, as a younger generation of Dissenting leaders were more willing to see the benefits that were accruing to the Methodists, and Methodism ceased to be a new unwelcome intrusion upon the scene and increasingly 'part of the furniture.' It would be proper to see the revival amongst English Baptists not as a child of the Methodist Revival but a cousin once removed.

Throughout, the focus of our attention has properly been directed at English Baptists, English Particular Baptists, and the Particular Baptists of the NPBA. At times we have touched upon the relationship between Baptists and Old Dissent and at the last something must be said of this here. The relationship between Independents and Baptists was especially close, the distinction being only in the fact that for most Baptists churches membership was restricted by the mode of Baptism. In every other respect Independents and Baptists were of the same ilk, brothers in the same family. They had little in common with either the Quakers or the Presbyterians. It is important to appreciate that neither the Presbyterians nor the Quakers enjoyed the benefits of revival along with the Baptists and Independents. We have not therefore been considering one aspect of a general revival of Old Dissent. In fact the Presbyterians, who during the Protectorate had been within a hair's breadth of permanently replacing the Church of England as the state church, entered a decline at the Restoration that would continue to their extinction.⁷⁷ The fate of the Quakers, whilst not dissimilar, followed an independent path that has seen them remain a small and somewhat separate part of the English Church scene. The close affinity of Baptists and Independents would explain why they enjoyed similar success in this period of study. The story of English Independents of this period would reveal parallel themes to that of English Baptists but it would also highlight important differences and contain, as the Baptist story does, elements unique to it. Were it not for the fact that the spread of evangelicalism in the Church of England in the nineteenth century also saw a revival of

⁷⁷ The Presbyterian Church that joined with the Congregational Church in 1971 to form the United Reformed Church was a later development with its roots in Scottish Presbyterianism whose fate was quite different to its original English counterpart.

their fortunes it is not improbable that they too would have dwindled toward insignificance.

The formation of the NPBA in 1765 was the first signal that English Baptists were on the move as they began to look beyond their local concerns to begin to see their mission as having wider implications. The formation of the BMS at Kettering in 1792 saw the acceptance of a mission that had international consequences, and with the BHMS in 1797 came the acceptance of a national vision.

Appendix I – Comparative Tables for All Churches and for Baptist Church Lists

Church	No.	Attendance			Total Attendance	Actual Attendance	Average Attendance
		am	pm	eve			
General Baptists	93	5404	8130	8562	22096	15467	166
Particular Baptists	1947	292656	175572	272524	740752	518526	266
Seventh Day	2	27	40	16	83	58	29
Scotch	15	649	986	312	1947	1363	91
New Connexion	182	23951	15718	24652	64321	45025	247
Undefined	550	38119	23882	39050	101051	70736	129
	2763	360806	224328	345116	930250	651175	236

Table 1: 1851 Census: National attendance, churches and averages for all Baptist Groupings¹

Year	Minister	Church	Salary
1705	Francis Turner	Hill Cliff	30.00
1730	John Turner	Liverpool	19.00
1737	Mr. Haydon	Shortwood	30.00
1753	Robert Hall	Arnesby	14.00/32.00
1761	Robert Robinson	Cambridge	13 4s
1763	John Fawcett	Hebden Bridge	25.00
1764	James Pyne	Lyme	36.00
1770	David Kinghorn	Bishops Burton	26.00
1786	George Whitfield	Hamsterley	30.00

Table 2 Ministerial Salaries in the Eighteenth Century²

¹ PP, 1851 Census, vol 33, Table A, Supplement II (England and Wales). See p. 106

² See p. 16 footnote 37

Years	No. New Churches	Closed Churches	Number of Members						
			1785	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1845
1770-1785	20	2	1826	2123	2181	2602	2653	3557	4855
1785-1800	16	1		587	915	1166	1562	1950	2427
1800-1820	42	6				1234	2906	3981	5301
1820-1846	55	13					975	2352	4199
TOTALS	133	22	1826	2710	3096	4002	8096	11840	16822

Table 3: General Baptist Church Growth from 1770-1845³

In studying the figures in Table 3, it should be realised that the 'number of new churches' column indicates the total number of new churches formed between the indicated dates by the end of the period. So for example the 975 members shown for 1830 during the period 1820-1846 is for the seventeen new churches welcomed into the NCGB after 1820 and prior to 1830 and not for all fifty-five new churches from 1820 to 1845.

Years	Number of extant Churches	Average membership in 1845
Pre-1785	20	243
1785-1800	16	151
1800-1820	42	126
1820-1846	55	76

Table 4: NCGB - Average membership of churches by length of existence⁴

Country	Total
England	197403
Wales	92394
Scotland	12304
Ireland	1847
Total	303948

Table 5 Membership of the Baptist Union by country in 1891⁵

³ See I.D Comparative Statistics, p. 21

⁴ See p. 21 and footnote 61 for sources

⁵ See p. 21 and footnote 61 for sources

Year	England	Wales
1716	247	
1772	404	59
1790	432	
1808		165
1832	1126	
1839	1526	244

Table 6 1851 Census: Horace Mann's Statistics of Baptist Church Numbers⁶

County	Number of Churches Reporting damage	Total Amount		
		£	s	d
Staffordshire	11	1722	17	8
Worcestershire	2	470	16	5
Warwickshire	2	436	12	5
Salop	5	1063	16	21/2
Oxfordshire	2	146	8	3
Lancashire	Not given	939	13	8

Table 7 Evans List: Damage to Dissenting meeting-houses during riots of 1715⁷

⁶ PP, 1851 Census, vol 33, p. lxi. See p. 106

⁷ See p. 89, also for information regarding the source for this table

County	Number of Hearers	Churches with statistics	Churches without statistics
Bedfordshire	4,760	18	-
Berkshire	1,760	5	4
Buckinghamshire	250	1	4
Cambridgeshire	220	2	2
Cheshire	-	-	3
Cornwall	-	-	2
Cumberland	280	2	-
Derbyshire	-	-	-
Devonshire	1,555	5	2
Dorsetshire	217	1	3
Durham	-	-	-
Essex	1,400	5	2
Gloucestershire	1,910	11	3
Herefordshire	200	1	-
Hertfordshire	2,170	6	6
Huntingdonshire	200	1	-
Kent	-	-	18
Lancashire	-	-	1
Leicestershire	935	9	-
Lincolnshire	-	-	-
Middlesex	-	-	23 ⁸
Norfolk	-	-	3
Northamptonshire	2,560	23	-
Northumberland	-	-	-
Nottinghamshire	-	-	1
Oxfordshire	400	2	4
Rutlandshire	80	1	-
Salop	90	2	-
Somersetshire	3,392	11	2
Southampton	621	8	4
Staffordshire	-	-	1
Suffolk	-	-	-
Surrey	-	-	13
Sussex	813	6	2
Warwickshire	700	4	1
Westmoreland	-	-	-
Wiltshire	2,700	7	-
Worcestershire	1,820	8	-
Yorkshire ⁹	-	-	-
TOTALS	29,814	151	98

Table 8 Evans List: Baptist churches by County 1715-1717¹⁰

⁸ Included here are 5 'inside the walls of London', and 7 'without the wall of London'; 12 'within the Bills of Mortality', and 1 'without the Bills of Mortality.'

⁹ The List divides Yorkshire into West, East and North Riding, and Richmondshire but records no Baptists churches in any of them.

¹⁰ See p. 88

Area (county)	Hearers		Churches		Average Attendance
		% of whole	With stats	% of whole	
South West: (Devon & Somerset)	4,947	16.5	12	7.9	412
West: (Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, and Worcestershire)	6,430	21.5	23	15.23	321
Central: (Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire Northamptonshire and Leicestershire)	10,425	34.97	50	33.11	208
TOTALS	21,802	72.97	85	56.24	313

Table 9 Evans List: Areas of Concentrated Baptists strength in England 1715-1717¹¹

Region	No. Churches
London and the South East ¹²	38
Bristol and the West of England	18
North of England ¹³	51
Total	107

Table 10 Particular Baptist Ministers in England and Wales in 1751¹⁴

Area	No. Churches	Average Members	Total
West	18		1,260
North Association	14		700
London	8		610
East and South	23	40	900
New North Association	31	30	930
Welsh			500
Total	94	N/A	4,900

Table 11 Ryland List: Baptist Churches by Region 1 – 27 December 1753¹⁵

¹¹ See p. 91

¹² In fact covered the area from Warwick to Norwich to Kent to Newbury and Reading. Ryland begin with the names of the twelve ministers he identifies as being in London.

¹³ In fact covered the area from the West Midlands to the North of England.

¹⁴ See p. 92, also for information regarding the source for this table

Area	No. Churches	Average Members	Total
London	9	50	450
East and South	24	40	960
West of England	18	40	1,200 ¹⁶
South Wales	20	40	800
North of England	50	40	2,000
Total	121	N/A	5,410

Table 12 Ryland List: Baptist Churches by Region 2¹⁷

Church	Number ¹⁸
Gill	150
Brine	30
Stennett	60
Wallin	100
Anderson	60
Dew	40
Stephens	150
Townsend	20
Total	610

Table 13 Ryland List: London Ministers/Churches and their members in 1751¹⁹

County	No. Churches	County	No. Churches
London	7	Leicestershire	1
Buckinghamshire	3	Lincolnshire	7
Cambridgeshire	1	Norfolk	2
Cheshire	1	Northamptonshire	2
Devonshire	4	Nottinghamshire	1
Essex	3	Suffolk	1
Hampshire	1	Surrey	2
Hertfordshire	1	Sussex	5
Huntingdonshire	1	Wiltshire	4
Kent	12		
		Total	59

Table 14 Langley: General Baptist Strength by county in 1751²⁰

¹⁵ See p. 92 footnotes 18 and 19

¹⁶ See p. 92 footnotes 18 and 19. Ryland alters the total to 1,200 but not the figures in columns 1-2.

¹⁷ Ivimey (1823), Volume III, p. 278-279

¹⁸ Presumably members not hearers but Ryland does not specify.

¹⁹ See p. 93 footnote 21

²⁰ See p. 93

County	No. of Churches	No. of Ministers
Bedfordshire	17	16
Berkshire	5	4
Buckinghamshire	15	12
Cambridgeshire	8	6
Cheshire	3	2
Cornwall	3	1
Cumberland	2	2
Derbyshire	3	2
Devonshire	15	13
Dorsetshire	2	2
Durham	3	3
Essex	14	14
Gloucestershire	26	26
Hampshire	8	7
Herefordshire	4	3
Hertfordshire	8	5
Huntingdonshire	5	4
Kent	30	39
Lancashire	14	14
Leicestershire	21	16
Lincolnshire	17	18
London ²¹	46	-
Middlesex	13	15
Norfolk	9	8
Northamptonshire	16	16
Northumberland	3	2
Nottinghamshire	9	6
Oxfordshire	3	2
Rutlandshire	3	2
Shropshire	3	3
Somersetshire	14	13
Staffordshire	0	0
Suffolk	3	3
Surrey	2	1
Sussex	12	13
Warwickshire	9	10
Westmoreland	0	0
Wiltshire	19	17
Worcestershire	6	6
Yorkshire	21	21
TOTALS	414	347

Table 15 Thompson List: Baptist churches by County 1773²²

²¹ Thompson, Josiah (1912-1913) p. 267-269. The statistics for London are presented in a totally different manner for those relating to the other counties and no statistic is given for the number of ministers. See p. 93 footnote 26 and p. 95 footnote 30

²² See p. 96

County	Evan's List 1715-1717: No of Churches	Thompson List 1773: No. of Churches
Bedfordshire	18	17
Berkshire	9	5
Buckinghamshire	5	15
Cambridgeshire	4	8
Cheshire	3	3
Cornwall	2	3
Cumberland	7	2
Derbyshire	4	3
Devonshire	-	15
Dorsetshire	7	2
Durham	-	3
Essex	7	14
Gloucestershire	14	26
Hampshire	12	8
Herefordshire	1	4
Hertfordshire	12	8
Huntingdonshire	1	5
Kent	18	30
Lancashire	1	14
Leicestershire	9	21
Lincolnshire	-	17
London	n/a	46
Middlesex	23	13
Norfolk	3	9
Northamptonshire	23	16
Northumberland	-	3
Nottinghamshire	1	9
Oxfordshire	6	3
Rutlandshire	1	3
Shropshire	2	3
Somersetshire	13	14
Staffordshire	1	-
Suffolk	-	3
Surrey	13	2
Sussex	8	12
Warwickshire	5	9
Westmoreland	-	-
Wiltshire	7	19
Worcestershire	8	6
Yorkshire	-	21
TOTALS	249	414

Table 16 Evans and Thompson: Comparative Numbers of Churches 1715 and 1773²³

²³ See p. 96

Date	Source	No. churches	Change	% Growth	Yearly increase
1717	Evan's List	249	-	-	-
1773	Thompson List	414	+165	+66%	2.94

Table 17 Evans and Thompson: Growth in Church Numbers 1717-1773²⁴

Area (county)	Evan's List 1715-1717: No of Churches	Thompson List 1773: No. of Churches	Rate of Growth
South West: (Devon & Somerset)	20	32*	60%
West: (Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, and Worcestershire)	29	51	37%
Central: (Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire Northamptonshire, Leicestershire)	62	62	0%
London: (London, Middlesex, Surrey, Kent and Sussex)	62	104	68%
North: (Yorkshire and Lancashire)	1	35	3500%
TOTALS	162	282	-
% of total churches	65%	70%	-

Table 18 Evans and Thompson: A Comparison of Areas of Concentrated Baptist Strength in England in 1715 and 1773 (* includes Cornwall)²⁵

Decade	Temporary	Permanent	Decade	Temporary	Permanent
1691-1700	1,247	32	1771-1780	978	158
1701-1710	1,219	41	1781-1790	1,154	251
1711-1720	875	21	1791-1800	3,413	832
1721-1730	448	27	1801-1810	3,964	1,470
1731-1740	424	24	1811-1820	7,493	2,645
1741-1750	502	27	1821-1830	7,667	2,880
1751-1769	703	55	1831-1840	4,540	2,784
1761-1770	701	85	1841-1850	3,077	2,661

Table 19 All Dissenting meeting-house Registrations 1691-1850²⁶

²⁴ See p. 96

²⁵ See p. 96

²⁶ Gilbert (1976), p. 34. See p. 12 footnote 18 and p. 97 footnote 34

County	1790	1794	1798	County	1790	1794	1798
Bedfordshire	16	18	18	Lincolnshire	4	3	4
Berkshire	6	7	8	Middlesex ²⁷	3	3	8
Buckinghamshire	9	10	10	London	15	20	21
Cambridgeshire	8	7	9	Southwark	8		
Cheshire	3	3	3	Norfolk	11	11	14
Cornwall	2	2	2	Northamptonshire	19	20	19
Cumberland	2	2	3	Northumberland	2	1	1
Derbyshire	2	2	2	Nottinghamshire	3	3	3
Devonshire	11	12	14	Oxfordshire	5	7	5
Dorsetshire	3	3	3	Rutlandshire	1	1	1
Durham	3	2	3	Shropshire	4	4	4
Essex	10	11	12	Somersetshire	15	15	15
Gloucestershire	17	16	16	Staffordshire	2	4	6
Hampshire	8	8	9	Suffolk	2	2	6
Herefordshire	2	2	2	Surrey	2	4	7
Hertfordshire	9	8	8	Sussex	8	8	9
Huntingdonshire	3	5	7	Warwickshire	7	7	7
Kent	16	16	18	Wiltshire	13	15	16
Lancashire	15	16	19	Worcestershire	9	11	12
Leicestershire	7	6	8	Yorkshire	28	30	29
				TOTALS	312	32	361

Table 20 Growth of numbers of Baptist Churches by County 1790-1798 derived from the *BAR*²⁸

Italics indicate statistics derived from the *BAR*, and where an entry contains both plain text and italics it is because the plain text information was not in the *BAR*, but derived from the *CL*. Where I have found statistics both in the *BAR* and in a *CL* I have retained the *BAR* as the source, but not cross-referenced to the *CL*, as little is gained from so doing.

²⁷ Whereas I have given one figure on the Evan's List for London and environs under Middlesex in Ripon's List Middlesex, London, and Southwark are considered separately in 1790, but in 1794 and 1798 one figure is given for London and Southwark under London.

²⁸ See p. 99

County	No.	County	No.
Bedfordshire	18	Leicestershire	7
Berkshire	9	London	28
Buckinghamshire	14	Middlesex	12
Cambridgeshire	7	Norfolk	19
Cheshire	1	Northamptonshire	26
Cornwall	7	Northumberland	2
Cumberland	2	Nottinghamshire	5
Derbyshire	3	Oxfordshire	6
Devonshire	16	Rutlandshire	1
Dorsetshire	4	Shropshire	4
Durham	4	Somersetshire	19
Essex	16	Staffordshire	5
Gloucestershire	19	Suffolk	19
Hampshire	14	Surrey	8
Herefordshire	3	Sussex	11
Hertfordshire	8	Warwickshire	9
Huntingdonshire	12	Wiltshire	20
Kent	25	Worcestershire	13
Lancashire	20	Yorkshire	35
		Total	451

Table 21 Particular Baptist Churches in England in 1811²⁹

²⁹ See p. 102 footnote 51, also for information regarding the source for this table

County	Presbyterians	Independents	Baptists	Total
Bedfordshire	0	4	16	20
Berkshire	1	12	8	21
Buckinghamshire	3	14	17	34
Cambridgeshire	0	24	20	44
Cheshire	12	20	5	37
Cornwall	0	28	7	35
Cumberland	15	7	5	27
Derbyshire	10	20	11	41
Devonshire	19	30	16	65
Dorsetshire	5	23	4	32
Durham	14	3	6	23
Essex	1	47	17	45
Gloucestershire	3	17	16	36
Hampshire	2	26	17	65
Herefordshire	2	3	4	9
Hertfordshire	1	13	10	24
Huntingdonshire	0	5	14	19
Kent	7	28	24	59
Lancashire	33	57	27	117
Leicestershire	4	11	17	32
Lincolnshire	3	21	22	46
Middlesex	20	53	33	106
Norfolk	3	10	20	33
Northamptonshire	0	18	16	34
Northumberland	37	7	5	49
Nottinghamshire	1	7	9	17
Oxfordshire	3	8	6	17
Rutlandshire	0	2	2	4
Shropshire	3	20	11	34
Somersetshire	6	29	15	50
Staffordshire	4	22	6	32
Suffolk	5	26	16	47
Surrey	1	20	15	36
Sussex	2	7	16	25
Warwickshire	5	16	8	29
Westmoreland	2	4	3	9
Wiltshire	2	38	17	57
Worcestershire	3	4	9	16
Yorkshire	20	95	42	157
Totals	252	799	532	1583

Table 22 Comparative numbers of Dissenting churches by English County 1815³⁰

³⁰ See p. 102 and footnote 52, also for information regarding the source for this table

Date	General Baptists	Particular Baptists	Congregationalists ³¹	Methodists ³²
1750		10,000	15,000	
1772	1,221			26,580
1790	2,843	17,000	26,000	55,705
1800	3,403	24,000	35,000	93,793
1838	13,947	86,000	127,000	398,541
1851	18,277	122,000	165,000	436,971

Table 23 Nonconformist Church Memberships in England³³

Date	GB	PB	Independent	Methodists
1715-1718	206	122	203	0
1773		378		
1815	81	451		
1851		2,347	2,604	10,474

Table 24 Comparative Numbers of Nonconformist Congregations in England³⁴

County	No.	County	No.
Bedfordshire	21	Lincolnshire	11
Berkshire	9	London	32
Buckinghamshire	26	Middlesex	17
Cambridgeshire	20	Norfolk	31
Cheshire	6	Northamptonshire	28
Cornwall	10	Northumberland	3
Cumberland	2	Nottinghamshire	6
Derbyshire	4	Oxfordshire	9
Devonshire	29	Rutlandshire	1
Dorsetshire	5	Shropshire	15
Durham	6	Somersetshire	33
Essex	21	Staffordshire	13
Gloucestershire	25	Suffolk	32
Hampshire	24	Surrey	15
Herefordshire	6	Sussex	14
Hertfordshire	14	Warwickshire	16
Huntingdonshire	13	Wiltshire	27
Kent	35	Worcestershire	18
Lancashire	30	Yorkshire	46
Leicestershire	9		
		Total	682

Table 25 Particular Baptist Churches in England 1823³⁵

³¹ Wood (1847), p. 149f Table A4 – Sources given p. 151 Notes and Sources 2.

³² Wood (1847), p. 139f Table A3 – Sources given p. 145 Notes and Sources 1. The figures given are an amalgamation of Methodists membership across the Methodist spectrum.

³³ Relevant to p. 102f

³⁴ Watts (1995), p. 23. Relevant to p. 102

³⁵ See p. 102 footnote 55 and p. 103 footnote 59

County	No.	County	No.
Bedfordshire	21	Lincolnshire	14
Berkshire	11	London	32
Buckinghamshire	28	Middlesex	23
Cambridgeshire	19	Norfolk	32
Cheshire	5	Northamptonshire	40
Cornwall	12	Northumberland	3
Cumberland	1	Nottinghamshire	7
Derbyshire	5	Oxfordshire	12
Devonshire	31	Rutlandshire	1
Dorsetshire	5	Shropshire	15
Durham	7	Somersetshire	37
Essex	24	Staffordshire	16
Gloucestershire	27	Suffolk	35
Hampshire	25	Surrey	21
Herefordshire	9	Sussex	13
Hertfordshire	13	Warwickshire	16
Huntingdonshire	12	Wiltshire	31
Kent	30	Worcestershire	22
Lancashire	29	Yorkshire	51
Leicestershire	13		
		Total	748

Table 26 Particular Baptist Churches in England 1827³⁶

County	No.	County	No.
Bedfordshire	15	Lincolnshire	4
Berkshire	5	London	24
Buckinghamshire	11	Middlesex	3
Cambridgeshire	8	Norfolk	10
Cheshire	3	Northamptonshire	17
Cornwall	2	Northumberland	2
Cumberland	3	Nottinghamshire	3
Derbyshire	2	Oxfordshire	5
Devonshire	11	Rutlandshire	1
Dorsetshire	2	Shropshire	4
Durham	2	Somersetshire	15
Essex	9	Staffordshire	-
Gloucestershire	16	Suffolk	2
Hampshire	11	Surrey	1
Herefordshire	2	Sussex	9
Hertfordshire	9	Warwickshire	7
Huntingdonshire	2	Wiltshire	13
Kent	14	Worcestershire	10
Lancashire	15	Yorkshire	28
Leicestershire	6		
		Total	307

Table 27 Particular Baptist Churches in England in 1789³⁷

³⁶ See p. 102 footnote 57

³⁷ See p. 103 footnote 64

In addition to the 1789 list J.P.A provides amendments to the 1823 list.

County	1823 list	J.P.A.
Bedfordshire	21	21
Berkshire	9	9
Buckinghamshire	26	26
Cambridgeshire	20	20
Cheshire	6	6
Cornwall	10	10
Cumberland	2	2
Derbyshire	4	4
Devonshire	29	30
Dorsetshire	5	5
Durham	6	6
Essex	21	21
Gloucestershire	25	24
Hampshire	24	24
Herefordshire	6	6
Hertfordshire	14	14
Huntingdonshire	13	13
Kent	35	35
Lancashire	30	30
Leicestershire	9	9
Lincolnshire	11	11
London	32	32
Middlesex	17	17
Norfolk	31	31
Northamptonshire	28	28
Northumberland	3	3
Nottinghamshire	6	6
Oxfordshire	9	9
Rutlandshire	1	1
Shropshire	15	14
Somersetshire	33	32
Staffordshire	13	13
Suffolk	32	32
Surrey	15	15
Sussex	14	14
Warwickshire	16	17
Wiltshire	27	27
Worcestershire	18	18
Yorkshire	46	49
Total	682	684

Table 28 J.P.A.'s amendments to the 1823 list³⁸

³⁸ See p. 103 footnote 65

County	1789	1811	1823	1827	1812 ³⁹
Bedfordshire	15	18	21	21	16
Berkshire	5	9	9	11	8
Buckinghamshire	11	14	26	28	17
Cambridgeshire	8	7	20	19	20
Cheshire	3	1	6	5	5
Cornwall	2	7	10	12	7
Cumberland	3	2	2	1	5
Derbyshire	2	3	4	5	11
Devonshire	11	16	29	31	16
Dorsetshire	2	4	5	5	4
Durham	2	4	6	7	6
Essex	9	16	21	24	17
Gloucestershire	16	19	25	27	16
Hampshire	11	14	24	25	17
Herefordshire	2	3	6	9	4
Hertfordshire	9	8	14	13	10
Huntingdonshire	2	12	13	12	14
Kent	14	25	35	30	24
Lancashire	15	20	30	29	27
Leicestershire	6	7	9	13	17
Lincolnshire ⁴⁰	4	-	11	14	22
London	24	28	32	32	20
Middlesex	3	12	17	23	33
Norfolk	10	19	31	32	16
Northamptonshire	17	26	28	40	5
Northumberland	2	2	3	3	9
Nottinghamshire	3	5	6	7	6
Oxfordshire	5	6	9	12	2
Rutlandshire	1	1	1	1	11
Shropshire	4	4	15	15	15
Somersetshire	15	19	33	37	6
Staffordshire	-	5	13	16	16
Suffolk	2	19	32	35	15
Surrey	1	8	15	21	16
Sussex	9	11	14	13	8
Warwickshire	7	9	16	16	3
Wiltshire	13	20	27	31	17
Worcestershire	10	13	18	22	9
Yorkshire	28	35	46	51	42
Total	307	451	681	748	532

Table 29 Comparative Statistics 1811, 1823 and 1827⁴¹

³⁹ This list includes GB as well as PB churches

⁴⁰ The 1811 list contains no record for Lincolnshire

⁴¹ See p. 103

Number of Church of England Benefices	10,421
Population	9,940,391
established churches	10,192
Chapels	11,743
Sittings (CofE only)	4,770,975

Table 30 1851 Census: National Distributions of Churches and Chapels⁴²

In Table 31 to Table 33 the following abbreviations apply, GB for General Baptists, PB for Particular Baptists, NC for the NCGB, and UD for undefined Baptists churches that have no affiliation.

Church	Total Attendances	Actual Attendance	% of Attendance
Baptists	930,190	651,133	8.5
Independent	1,214,059	849,841	11.1
Methodists	2,684,165	1,878,916	24.6
Lady Huntingdon's	44,462	31,123	0.4
Presbyterians & Unitarians	118,813	83,169	1.1
Church of England	5,292,551	3,704,786	48.6
Roman Catholic	383,630	268,541	3.5
Others	228,196	159,737	2.1
Total of all Churches	10,896,066	7627246	

Table 31 1851 Census: National Comparative Attendance Figures⁴³

Church	No. of Places			No. of Sittings				Attendance		
	Separated	Not Separated	Total	Free	Appropriated	Not Distinguished	Total	AM	PM	Evening
GB	85	8	93	10,593	6,889	1,050	18,532	5,228	7,865	8,283
PB	1,776	171	1,947	260,596	281,459	8,720	550,775	2,86944	1,72145	267,205
NC	170	12	182	24,125	26,268	766	51,159	2,3688	1,5545	24,381
UD	441	109	550	49,900	30,415	2,355	82,770	36,525	22,826	37,417
Total	2472	300	2,772	345,214	345,031	12,851	703,236	353,385	218,381	337,286

Table 32 1851 Census: National figures for Baptist meeting-houses, Sittings and Attendance⁴⁴

⁴² See p. 106

⁴³ PP, 1851 Census, vol. 33, Table A, Supplement II, p. clxxxii. This includes the Censor's calculation for 'Estimates for Defective Returns, and uses his own method for estimating Actual Attendance, i.e. the actual number of individuals who attended on Census Sunday. See p. 228

⁴⁴ PP, 1851 Census, Vol. 33, Table A p. clxviii. This is taken from those churches that made returns and does not include an estimate for the remaining churches. See p. 93 and 107

Church	Average Attendance		
	AM	PM	Evening
GB	58	87	92
PB	150	90	140
NC	132	86	135
UD	69	43	71

Table 33 1851 Census: National Average Attendance at Baptist churches⁴⁵

	Pre-1801	1801-1811	1811-1821	1821-1831	1831-1841	1841-1851	Not stated	Total
GB	30	7	8	15	8	16	9	93
PB	419	149	205	295	365	380	134	1947
NC	64	9	18	22	19	38	12	182
UD	75	20	51	69	111	123	101	550
Total	588	185	282	401	503	557	256	2772

Table 34 1851 Census: Date of Erection of Buildings⁴⁶

Date	Source	No. churches	Change	% Growth	Yearly increase
1717	Evan's List	249	-	-	-
1773	Thompson List	414	+165	+66%	2.94
1798	1851 Census	588	+184	+46%	7.36
1851	1851 Census	2772	+2184	+371%	41.2

Table 35 Growth in number of Baptist churches 1715-1851⁴⁷

Date	No. Members	Scholars	No. churches	Average Members	% Growth	Yearly increase
1866	213767		2382	90	-	-
1881	295035	433801	2586	114	8.5%	13.6
1891	334163	483921	2812	119	8.7%	22.6
1906	434741	590321	2998	145	6.6%	12.4

Table 36 Growth in number of Baptist churches and members 1866-1906⁴⁸

⁴⁵ See p. 107

⁴⁶ PP, 1851 Census, vol. 33 Table A p. clxviii.

⁴⁷ See p. 96 and 107

⁴⁸ The statistics here are from Payne (1959), p. 267 who cites the BU Handbook as his source. See p. 96

Church	Total	As % of Attendance
Baptists	651,133	8.5
Independent	849,841	11.1
Methodists	1,692,147	22.2
Lay Huntingdon's Connexion	31,249	0.4
Presbyterians & Unitarians	61,379	0.8
Church of England	3,704,786	48.6
Roman Catholic	268,541	3.5
Total of all Churches	7627246	95.1 of 100%

Table 37 1851 Census: English Church Attendance 30 March⁴⁹

Year	No. Schools	No. Scholars	Literature Distributed			Ref. to page in Ivimey
			Spelling Books	New Testaments	Bibles	
1786	36	1,790				82-83
Jan 1787	147	7,242	7,052	2,249	424	92
Apr 1787	201		10,186	3,334	566	94-95
Jul 1787	282	16,000+	20,295	6,217	1,141	98
1789	610	41,295	45,639	13,144	3,261	102
1796	1,086	69,222	110,389	26,321	5,749	106
1805	2,542	226,945	219,410	50,126	7,213	109

Table 38 Growth of the Sunday School Society 1785-1805⁵⁰

Location	Schools	Teachers	Scholars
Four London auxiliaries	324	4,438	48,862
Fifty-eight English County Unions	2,456	29,217	270,894
Unions in Wales	160	310	14,683
Isle of Man	46	344	2,861
Scotland	676	1,918	44,683
Ireland	1,353	-	135,600
Grand Total	5,015	36,227	517,583
Increase over 1820	789	3,890	90,030

Table 39 Sunday schools in the United Kingdom 1821⁵¹

⁴⁹ Statistics derived from PP, 1851 Census, vol. 33, Supplement II to Table A, pp. clxxxii. See p. 108

⁵⁰ See p. 213, also for information regarding the source for this table

⁵¹ *BM*, October 1821, p. 446. See p. 216

Location	Schools	Teachers	Scholars
Four London auxiliaries	413	5,533	60,831
English and Welsh County Unions	4,300	49,952	547,187
Sunday School Union for Scotland	1,577	5,200	80,190
Sunday School Society for Ireland	1,804	13,255	152,391
Hibernian Societies Sunday schools	405	-	27,046
Grand Total	8,499	73,940	868,245
Increase over 1821 numerically	3,484	37,663	350,662
Increase over 1821 as a percentage	69.47%	104%	67.74%

Table 40 Sunday schools in the United Kingdom 1826⁵²

Year	No	Year	No
1786	11	1800	1
1787	12	1805	1
1788	3	1811	2
1789	1	1812	1
1790	1	1814	1
1791	2	1815	2
1793	1		

Table 41 Establishment of Sunday schools in Northamptonshire⁵³

Year	Scholars	Dismissed	Excluded	Added	Change
1809	107	7	0	12	-
1810	112	34	0	26	5
1811	104	54	7	70	-8
1812	113	19	1	64	9
1813	157	61	2	12	44
1814	106	5	2	9	-51
1815	108	12	1	119	2
1816	214	N/A	N/A	N/A	106
Totals		192	13	312	

Table 42 Friar Lane Sunday School 1809-1816⁵⁴

⁵² *BM*, June 1826, p. 284. See p. 216

⁵³ Bain (1875), p. 11-12. See p. 220

⁵⁴ See p. 222 statistics derived from Godfrey and Ward (1903),

YEAR	Exclusions	Membership Change	YEAR	Exclusions	Membership Change
1766	2	13	1799	50	11
1767	2	21	1800	17	19
1768	6	37	1801	21	39
1769	3	38	1802	22	8
1770	7	66	1803	27	(44)
1771	10	41	1804	30	(6)
1772	13	14	1805	50	27
1773	10	41	1806	24	76
1774	4	8	1807	23	51
1775	6	137	1808	19	97
1776	7	37	1809	15	65
1777	14	17	1810	24	79
1778	14	23	1811	32	116
1779	6	53	1812	28	37
1780	13	33	1813	14	109
1781	18	17	1814	25	35
1782	17	(8) ⁵⁵	1815	28	124
1783	7	(7)	1816	52	15
1784	2	(8)	1817	24	90
1785	14	(14)	1818	34	84
1786	6	62	1819	37	71
1787	5	44	1820	21	56
1788	12	82	1821	25	52
1789	17	31	1822	31	50
1790	7	51	1823	21	18
1791	17	38	1824	35	44
1792	13	31	1825 ⁵⁶		
1793	10	42	1826	41	(13)
1794	22	21	1827	37	72
1795	14	75	1828	15	184
1796	25	97	1829	25	156
1797	16	76	1830	46	77
1798	22	8			
			Totals	1254	3016

Table 43 Exclusions in the NPBA 1766-1830⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Figures in parenthesis indicate a decrease in membership for the given year.

⁵⁶ No statistics are available for 1825

⁵⁷ See p. 244, statistics derived from NPBA CL's

Appendix II - NPBA Tables

Statistics for NPBA Member Counties¹

County	Population
Bedfordshire	124,478
Derbyshire	296,084
Hertfordshire	107,298
Leicestershire	230,308
Lincolnshire	407,222
Northamptonshire	212,380
Nottinghamshire	270,427
Rutlandshire	22,983
Staffordshire	608,716
Totals	2,279,896

Table 44 1851 Census: Population of NPBA Counties²

Horace Mann compiler of the official analysis of the Census Statistics considered the actual attendance to be 70% of the total.³ In the following Tables 'Actual Attendance' is calculated using Mann's formula.

County	No. Churches	Actual Attendance	Church of England Attendance			Sittings
			am	pm	eve	
Bedfordshire	133	35749	20559	24905	5606	42557
Derbyshire	250	49415	31709	30675	8209	87829
Hertfordshire	162	49680	32799	32689	5483	55193
Leicestershire	289	57235	34701	32632	14431	82904
Lincolnshire	657	78183	51789	46723	13178	142844
Northamptonshire	292	66949	40759	46313	8570	84816
Nottinghamshire	248	45443	31205	19783	13931	70928
Rutlandshire	53	6832	4509	4631	620	12231
Staffordshire	317	93840	66264	44331	26319	161217
Totals	2401	485326	314294	282682	96347	740519

Table 45 1851 Census: CofE attendance and sittings in the NPBA Counties⁴

¹ The statistics in this section are taken from PP, 1851 Census, vol. 33, Table C, pp. cxcx-ccxxxiv

² See p. 115

³ Mann (1854), p. 58-59

⁴ See p. 115, 117 and 280

County	No. Churches	Baptist Attendance	Sittings
Bedfordshire	55	17505	14902
Derbyshire	39	10480	10664
Hertfordshire	44	13398	12069
Leicestershire	85	19018	11001
Lincolnshire	62	9342	13620
Northamptonshire	87	20721	23200
Nottinghamshire	53	10808	13208
Rutlandshire	12	1638	1941
Staffordshire	35	7610	10057
Totals	472	110520	110662

Table 46 1851 Census: All Baptist attendance and Sittings in the NPBA Counties⁵

County	No. Churches	Actual Attendance	Particular Baptist Attendance			Sittings
			am	pm	eve	
Bedfordshire	47	17205	8811	8140	7628	13935
Derbyshire	7	2089	961	619	1404	2108
Hertfordshire	28	9625	4902	4123	4725	9452
Leicestershire	25	5827	3665	1752	2907	7349
Lincolnshire	22	2775	1777	1014	1173	4786
Northamptonshire	63	16664	8031	8219	7556	20066
Nottinghamshire	14	3646	2013	823	2372	4885
Rutlandshire	7	1055	533	493	481	1331
Staffordshire	26	6126	3948	1931	2872	8561
Totals	239	65012	34641	27114	31118	72473
Average		272	145	113	130	303

Table 47 1851 Census: Particular Baptist attendance and Sittings in the NPBA Counties⁶

⁵ This information relates to V.A.3 Distribution of Baptists in the NPBA Counties p. 114

⁶ See p. 117 and 123

County	No. Churches	Actual Attendance	New Connexion Attendance			Sittings
			am	pm	eve	
Bedfordshire	16	4327	1947	1266	2969	5274
Derbyshire						
Hertfordshire	45	11701	5933	3249	7534	1422
Leicestershire	31	5953	3385	1479	3640	7948
Lincolnshire						
Northamptonshire	23	4827	1979	1732	3185	5633
Nottinghamshire	4	363	286	36	196	490
Rutlandshire	4	552	357	44	388	726
Staffordshire						
Totals	123	27724	13887	7806	17912	21493

Table 48 1851 Census: New Connexion attendance and Sittings in the NPBA Counties⁷

County	No. Churches	Actual Attendance	General Baptist Attendance			Sittings
			am	pm	eve	
Bedfordshire	1	295	145	217	60	260
Derbyshire	11	1994		847	587	1431
Hertfordshire	3	1267	522	401	887	950
Leicestershire	10	788		663	463	1530
Lincolnshire	3	269	92	67	110	316
Northamptonshire	1	188	100	60	45	100
Nottinghamshire	14	1934	112	1323	1330	2320
Rutlandshire						
Staffordshire						
Totals	43	5622	971	3578	3482	6907

Table 49 1851 Census: General Baptist attendance and Sittings in the NPBA Counties⁸

⁷ See p. 117

⁸ See p. 117

County	No. Churches	Actual Attendance	Undefined Baptist Attendance			Sittings
			am	pm	eve	
Bedfordshire	7	855	114	265	476	707
Derbyshire	5	2070	702	356	1012	1851
Hertfordshire	13	2506	603	811	1092	1667
Leicestershire	5	702	94	178	430	700
Lincolnshire	6	345	100	125	120	570
Northamptonshire	23	3869	1235	1329	1305	3034
Nottinghamshire	2	401	30	213	158	370
Rutlandshire	1	220	80	20	120	120
Staffordshire	5	932	290	325	317	770
Totals	67	11900	3248	3622	5030	9789

Table 50 1851 Census: Undefined Baptist attendance and sittings in the NPBA Counties⁹

County	Church of England	Particular Baptists	General Baptists	New Connexion	Undefined Baptists
Bedfordshire	319.97	296.49	260.00		101.00
Derbyshire	351.32	301.14	130.09	329.63	370.20
Hertfordshire	340.70	337.57	316.67		128.23
Leicestershire	286.87	293.96	153.00	31.60	140.00
Lincolnshire	217.42	217.55	105.33	256.39	95.00
Northamptonshire	290.47	318.51	100.00		131.91
Nottinghamshire	286.00	348.93	165.71	244.91	185.00
Rutlandshire	230.77	190.14		122.50	120.00
Staffordshire	508.57	329.27		181.50	154.00
Average	308.42	303.23	160.63	174.74	146.10

Table 51 1851 Census: Average sittings per place of worship in NPBA Counties¹⁰

⁹ See p. 116

¹⁰ This information relates to V.A.3 Distribution of Baptists in the NPBA Counties p. 114

County	Baptists	Church of England
Bedfordshire	333	269
Derbyshire	269	198
Hertfordshire	305	307
Leicestershire	224	198
Lincolnshire	151	119
Northamptonshire	238	229
Nottinghamshire	204	183
Rutlandshire	137	129
Staffordshire	217	296
Average	234	201

Table 52 1851 Census: Average attendance of All Baptists and Anglicans in NPBA Counties¹¹

County	Particular Baptists	General Baptists	New Connexion	Undefined Baptists
Bedfordshire	366.06	295.00		122.14
Derbyshire	298.43	181.27	270.44	414.00
Hertfordshire	343.75	422.33		192.77
Leicestershire	233.08	78.80	260.02	140.40
Lincolnshire	126.14	89.67	192.03	57.50
Northamptonshire	264.51	188.00		168.22
Nottinghamshire	260.42	138.14	209.87	200.50
Rutlandshire	150.71		90.75	220.00
Staffordshire	235.62		138	186.40
Average	272.02	130.74	225.00	177.61

Table 53 1851 Census: Average attendance at Baptist churches by grouping in NPBA Counties¹²

Church	%
Church of England	56.2
Particular Baptists	89.7
New Connexion	12.9
General Baptists	81.4
Undefined Baptists	121.6
All Baptists	99.6

Table 54 Attendance expressed as a percentage of sittings in NPBA Counties¹³

¹¹ See p. 115 and 116

¹² See p. 116

¹³ This information relates to V.A.3 Distribution of Baptists in the NPBA Counties p. 114

Large Town Statistics¹⁴

According to the 1851 Census five towns in the nine counties were deemed to be large.

County	No. Churches	Actual Attendance	Church of England Attendance			Sittings
			am	pm	eve	
Derby	11	6712	4700	2299	2590	8564
Leicester	9	11861	6884	4036	6024	8828
Northampton	11	3942	2087	1031	2513	6840
Nottingham	8	7141	5570	508	4124	7142
Stoke-on-Trent	18	7605	5681	2852	2331	17163
Totals	57	37261	24922	10726	17582	48537

Table 55 1851 Census: Church of England attendance and Sittings in Large Towns within the NPBA Counties¹⁵

County	No. Churches	Actual Attendance	All Baptist Attendance			Sittings
			am	pm	eve	
Derby	5	3160	1262	326	1572	3000
Leicester	10	8857	4799	200	3858	6643
Northampton	5	3715	1545	675	1495	2121
Nottingham	7	5134	2359	84	2691	4601
Stoke-on-Trent	4	735	442	44	249	605
Totals	31	21601	10407	1329	9865	16970

Table 56 1851 Census: All Baptist attendance and Sittings in Large Towns within the NPBA Counties¹⁶

¹⁴ The statistics in this section are taken from PP, 1851 Census, vol. 33, Table F, pp. cclii-cclxxii

¹⁵ This information relates to p. 116 and to V.A.4 The Effect of Land Ownership on the Distribution of Church and Chapel in the NPBA Counties, p. 118ff

¹⁶ This information relates to p. 116 and to V.A.4 The Effect of Land Ownership on the Distribution of Church and Chapel in the NPBA Counties, p. 118ff

County	No. Churches	Actual Attendance	Particular Baptist Attendance			Sittings
			am	pm	eve	
Derby	1	523	220	111	192	500
Leicester	5	4464	2549	200	1715	3214
Northampton	5	3715	1545	675	1495	2121
Nottingham	3	2373	1098	50	1225	2370
Stoke-on-Trent	3	580	371		209	525
Totals	17	11655	5783	1036	4836	8730

Table 57 1851 Census: Particular Baptist attendance and Sittings in Large Towns within the NPBA Counties¹⁷

County	No. Churches	Actual Attendance	New Connexion Attendance			Sittings
			am	pm	eve	
Derby	2	982	472		510	1250
Leicester	5	4393	2250		2143	3429
Northampton						
Nottingham	3	2670	1231	20	1419	2131
Stoke-on-Trent	1	155	71	44	40	80
Totals	11	8200	4024	64	4112	6890

Table 58 1851 Census: New Connexion attendance and Sittings in Large Towns within the NPBA Counties¹⁸

County	No. Churches	Actual Attendance	Undefined Baptist Attendance			Sittings
			am	pm	eve	
Derby	2	1655	570	215	870	1250
Leicester						
Northampton						
Nottingham	1	91	30	14	47	100
Stoke-on-Trent						
Totals	3	1746	600	229	917	1350

Table 59 1851 Census: Undefined Baptist attendance and Sittings in Large Towns within the NPBA Counties¹⁹

¹⁷ This information relates to p. 116 and to V.A.4 The Effect of Land Ownership on the Distribution of Church and Chapel in the NPBA Counties, p. 118ff. See also p. 124 footnote 37

¹⁸ This information relates to p. 116 and to V.A.4 The Effect of Land Ownership on the Distribution of Church and Chapel in the NPBA Counties, p. 118ff

¹⁹ This information relates to p. 116 and to V.A.4 The Effect of Land Ownership on the Distribution of Church and Chapel in the NPBA Counties, p. 118ff

Town	Church of England	Particular Baptists	New Connexion	Undefined Baptists
Derby	778.55	500.00	625.00	625.00
Leicester	980.89	642.90	685.80	
Northampton	621.82	424.20		
Nottingham	892.75	790.00	710.33	100.00
Stoke-on-Trent	953.50	175.00	80.00	
Average	851.53	513.53	626.36	450.00

Table 60 1851 Census: Average sittings per place of worship in Large Towns within the NPBA Counties²⁰

Town	Church of England	All Baptists	Particular Baptists	New Connexion	Undefined Baptists
Derby	610	632	523	491	828
Leicester	1318	886	892	879	
Northampton	358	743	743		
Nottingham	893	733	791	890	91
Stoke-on-Trent	423	184	193	155	
Average	654	697	745.45	745.45	582.00

Table 61 1851 Census: Average attendance per place of worship in Large Towns within the NPBA Counties²¹

²⁰ This information relates to p. 116 and to V.A.4 The Effect of Land Ownership on the Distribution of Church and Chapel in the NPBA Counties, p. 118ff

²¹ This information relates to p. 116 and to V.A.4 The Effect of Land Ownership on the Distribution of Church and Chapel in the NPBA Counties, p. 118ff

General Statistics for the NPBA

County	Total Sittings	Dissenters		Rank ²²	Baptist		Church of England	
			%			%		%
Bedfordshire	87,814	45,257	52	8	14902	17	42,557	48
Derbyshire	182,581	94,752	52	7	10664	6	87,829	48
Hertfordshire	93,230	38,037	41	23	12069	13	55,195	59
Leicestershire	156,678	73,714	47	13	11001	7	82,964	53
Lincolnshire	279,247	136,403	49	10	13620	5	142,844	51
Northamptonshire	150,472	65,656	44	17	23200	15	84,816	56
Nottinghamshire	150,024	79,096	53	6	13208	9	70,928	47
Rutlandshire	17,299	5,168	30	40	1941	11	12,131	70
Staffordshire	279,516	118,299	42	22	10057	4	161,217	58
Totals	1,396,861	656,382	47	N/A	110,662	8	740,481	53

Table 62 1851 Census: Comparison of Anglican, Dissenter and Baptist sittings in the NPBA Counties²³

County	Church of England	Baptist	As % of population ²⁴	
			CofE	B
Bedfordshire	37549	18355	30.3	14.7
Derbyshire	49415	10480	16.7	3.53
Hertfordshire	49680	13398	46.3	12.5
Leicestershire	57235	19018	24.9	8.3
Lincolnshire	78183	9342	12.2	2.3
Northamptonshire	66949	20721	31.5	9.8
Nottinghamshire	45443	10808	16.8	4
Rutlandshire	6832	1638	29.7	7.1
Staffordshire	93840	7610	15.4	1.25
Totals	483326	110258	21.2	4.8

Table 63 1851 Census: Comparison of Anglican and Baptist attendance in the NPBA Counties²⁵

²² e.g. Bedfordshire at rank 8 is the county with the eight largest percentage of Dissenters

²³ Everitt (1972), p. 69. Everitt includes Methodists within Dissenters for the purposes of these statistics

²⁴ See Table 45 for population statistics

²⁵ This information relates to V.A.3 Distribution of Baptists in the NPBA Counties p. 114

	Leicestershire			Northamptonshire		
	No. Churches	Sittings	% Sittings	No. Churches	Sittings	% Sittings
Acreage		514,164			630,358	
Population 1851		230,308			212,380	
Anglicans	289	82,964	53	292	84,816	56
Independents	41	11,988	8	56	17,444	12
Baptists	85	24,001	15	87	23,200	16
Methodists	202	33,192	21	122	21,371	14
Other Dissenters	26	4,533	3	29	3,641	2
All Dissenters	354	73,714	47	294	65,656	44
Total Sittings		156,678			150,472	
As % of population		66			65	

Table 64 Distributions of Church Sittings in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire²⁶

²⁶ See p. 117 and 119

Church	Date Formed	Group	Adult Attendance			Scholars			Average
			am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	
Kings Sutton	1826		80	-	116	-	-	-	140
Lulworth	1842		45	20	80	35	35	35	-
Brackley	c1830		-	-	97	-	9	-	90
Sulgrave	1844		80	-	50	30	-	-	150
Helmdon	1841		-	45	60	-	46	10	70
Bradden	-		-	-	55	-	-	-	40
Western	p1800		125	165	71	38	38	-	-
Woodend Hamlet	1813		-	50	120	-	40	-	-
Stichborough	-		140	-	140	-	-	-	-
Old Wigham	1838		-	47	41	-	36	27	-
Pattishall	1835		-	50	-	-	-	-	-
Eastcote Chapel	1838		-	60	-	-	22	-	-
Pattishall Chapel	1839		60	-	130	26	-	20	-
Blisworth	1825		83	120	144	70	70	-	160
Gayton	1845		35	-	26	-	-	-	-
Tiffield	-		-	-	40	-	-	-	-
Towcester	1822		170	274	-	120	124	-	300
Deanshanger	1830		40	78	100	35	30	-	100
Stony Stratford	1657		190	130	240	120	124	-	210
Ashton	1824		-	-	58	-	-	-	80
Martish	-		-	-	30	-	-	-	20
Denton	1804	Un	96	-	210	33	-	33	-
Bradfield on the Green	1829		-	85	71	36	36	-	60
Wicknore	1843		-	-	6-	-	-	-	-
Hackleton	1809		117	191	208	96	100	80	200
Hardington	1820		-	-	38	-	-	-	-
Roade	p1800		135	214	310	57	64	-	-
Milton	1827		90	110	100	30	40	-	-
Rothersthorpe	1840		-	-	53	-	-	-	65
St. Giles	c1836		15	-	15	-	-	-	-
St. Giles	1822	PB	100	150	150	-	-	-	-
Grafton Street Chapel			82	-	215	53	67	-	-
Grey Friars St.	1839		130	200	230	120	150	-	300
Mount Zion	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	550
Kingshall St.	1834		50	35	100	30	40	-	-
College St.	p1800		750	-	680	230	-	120	850
Kingsthorpe	p1800	PB	56	106	102	67	65	-	-
Duston	1844		-	61	59	-	52	35	80
Harpole	1808		72	67	98	34	34	-	-

(Table 65 1851 Census: Analysis of returns for Baptist Churches in Northamptonshire: continued on next two pages)

(Table 65 continued)

Church	Date Formed	Group	Adult Attendance			Scholars			Average
			am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	
Thurslingbury?	-		130	90	100	60	60	20	-
Braybrook	1808		-	116	-	-	56	-	200
Farthingstone	1848		-	45	45	-	45	45	-
Braunstone	1796		50	80	100	28	23	20	100
Zion Chapel	1831		39	50	49	26	27	26	-
Long Buckby	1800		247	320	-	130	135	-	-
West Haddon	1821		80	70	150	35	33	-	-
Hallowell	1820		-	-	70	-	-	-	80
Spratton	1840		70	100	80	31	31	-	120
Ravensthorpe	1812		110	150	212	61	63	60	250
East Haddon	1811	Un	30	60	40	52	45	50	60
Little Brington	1836		84	82	126	46	42	-	120
Harleslowe?	1821		59	70	101	?	14	14	-
Ritsford?	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moulton	p1800		136	148	112	59	65	-	170
Hocott	1814		-	-	-	-	-	-	45
Walgrave	1786		45	80	-	25	26	-	150
Soham	1800		10	20	40	-	-	-	-
Earls Barton	p1800		174	224	224	126	126	126	350
Gunton	1813		-	25	44	-	-	-	60
Union Chapel	1844	Un	48	50	80	-	-	-	90
Wollaston	1835		40	-	-	-	-	-	40
Higham Ferries	1796	PB	100	153	240	101	100	-	250
Rushden Elim	1848	PB	80	100	100	-	-	-	-
Rushden Succoth	1905	PB	91	156	30	-	-	-	200
Higham Ferries	1830	PB	-	-	24	-	-	-	24
Wilmington	1771	PB	170	250	200	-	-	-	300
Wellingborough	-	PB	-	-	120	-	-	-	140
Wellingborough	1808		80	100	100		none		-
Burton Latimer	1744	PB	105	160	130	70	75	-	-
Kettering	1697	3	340	451	144	193	124	-	-
Kettering	1824	SB	74	80	76	40	42	26	80
Broughton	1850	Un	-	120	200	52	50	-	200
Desborough	1845	PB	68	95	107	48	66	-	-
Titchmarsh	-		-	-	10	-	-	-	-
Islip	-		-	-	10	-	-	-	-
Aldwinckle	1823	PB	150	200	200	50	50	-	200
Thrapston	1784	PB	211	189	280	84	78	-	300

(Table 65 1851 Census: Analysis of returns for Baptist Churches in Northamptonshire: continued on next page)

(Table 65 continued)

Church	Date Formed	Group	Adult Attendance			Scholars			Average
			am	pm	eve	am	pm	eve	
Woodford	1823	PB	70	120	125	70	60	-	140
Ringstead	p1800	PB	109	159	183	66	66	-	200
Thrapston Rotten Row	1837	PB	76	130	90	No school			200
Stanwick	1840		70	105	130	40	40	-	-
Covington	p1800		-	-	60	-	-	-	-
Bython?	1809		70	120	-	16	116	-	-
Great Gidding	p1800	SB	76	109	70	98	98	20	-
Oundle	p1800		66	85	70	-	-	-	150
Salem Chapel	1847	PB	34	42	-	-	-	-	50
Westgate St.	p1800	GB	40	-	43	60	60	-	-
Zion Chapel	1824	PB	250	-	300	-	-	-	300

C=circa p=pre Un=Union of different denominations SB=Strict Baptist

Table 65 1851 Census: Analysis of returns for Baptist Churches in Northamptonshire²⁷

County	No. Churches by Grouping		
	GB	NC	UD
Bedfordshire	1	-	7
Derbyshire	11	16	5
Hertfordshire	3	-	13
Leicestershire	10	45	5
Lincolnshire	3	31	6
Northamptonshire	1	-	23
Nottinghamshire	14	23	2
Rutlandshire	-	4	1
Staffordshire	-	4	5
Totals	43	133	67

Table 66 1851 Census: Other Baptist groupings in the NPBA counties²⁸

²⁷ See p. 124, 125 and 161

²⁸ See p. 124

Grouping	No. Churches	Attendance		
		AM	PM	Eve
GB	1	100	60	45
PB	63	8031	8219	7556
NC	-	-	-	-
UD	23	1235	1327	1305
Totals	87	9366	9606	8906

Table 67 1851 Census: Strength of Baptist groupings in Northamptonshire²⁹

Noble	Estate	Income	Acreage in Northamptonshire	Acreage Elsewhere
Lord Lilford	Lilford Hall	26,000	8,000	7,500
Marquess of Northampton	Castle Ashby		10,000	5,000
Earl Spencer		50,000	27,000	10,000
Marquess of Exeter	Burghley House	50,000	16,000	9,000
Duke of Buccleuch	Boughton Palace	217,000	18,000	460,000
Total			79,000 (12.5%)	
Total Acreage			630,358	

Table 68 Ownership of land in Northamptonshire by its five major landholders in the mid-Nineteenth Century³⁰

	Leicestershire	Northamptonshire
Number of Parishes	250	282
Parishes with no chapel	114	163
...with one chapel	74	68
...with two chapels	29	40
...with three plus	33	11

Table 69 Distribution of Chapels in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire by Parish³¹

²⁹ PP, 1851 Census, vol. 33, Table C, pp. cxcv-ccxxxiv. See p. 125

³⁰ See p. 118 and footnote 19 for the source of the information on this table

³¹ See p. 118 and 119 and footnote 23 for the source of the information on this table

	Leicestershire	Northamptonshire
Number of Parishes	250	282
Wholly owned Parishes	20	29
...owned by a few	109	160
...owned by a number	60	55
...freehold parishes ³²	61	38

Table 70 Distribution of Chapels in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire by Landholding³³

³² That is a parish where the ownership of land is so diversified that it is not a factor. e.g. in Towns

³³ See p. 118 and footnote 23 for the source of the information on this table

The Circular Letters of the NPBA 1766-1815

Date	Title	Author
1766	General Discourse	Moses Deacon
1767	Doctrine	John Browne
1768	Against Anti-nomianism	Robert Hall Snr.
1769	Applying the principles of the Association to promoting the life of God in Man	John Ryland Snr.
1770	Eternal and Personal Election	Robert Hall Snr.
1771	Original Sin	Isaac Woodman
1772	Redemption	John Martin
1773	Justification	John Gill ³⁴
1774	Regeneration	John Evans
1775	Perseverance	Isaac Woodman
1776	The Trinity	Robert Hall Snr.
1777	The Nature of the Gospel Church	John Ryland Snr.
1778	Duties of Church Membership	Richard Hopper
1779	Providence	John Sutcliff
1780	True Repentance	Robert Hall Snr.
1781	Gospel Faith	Robert Hall Snr.
1782	Hope (Glorious Immortality)	Andrew Fuller
1783	Christian Love	John Gill
1784	Humility	John Ryland Jr.
1785	Decline and Revival	Andrew Fuller ³⁵
1786	The Sabbath	John Sutcliff
1787	Family and Closet Religion	Richard Hopper
1788	Evil of Sin and the Dignity of Christ	Robert Hall Snr.
1789	Communion with God	Robert Hall Snr.
1790	Christian Patience	John Gill
1791	Peace	Brother Greenwood
1792	Godly Zeal	John Ryland Jr.
1793	Missionary Address	Andrew Fuller
1794	Joy in God	J.W. Morris
1795	Why Christians lack Joy in God	Andrew Fuller
1796	Spiritual Gifts	T. Blundell
1797	Divinity	John Sutcliff
1798	Experimental Religion	Brother Burton
1799	Church Discipline	Andrew Fuller

(Table 71 Circular Letters 1766-1815: Titles and Authors: continued on next page)

³⁴ John Gill is the nephew of the Dr. Gill, a son of Kettering and later London minister so responsible for the hyper-Calvinism of the PBs

³⁵ 1785 saw the fourth consecutive decline in the association's membership and Fuller's letter of this year is a direct response to this. See later table.

(Table 71 continued)

Date	Title	Author
1800	Qualifications for Church Fellowship	John Sutcliff
1801	Persuasion to Christian Fellowship	J.W. Morris
1802	Practical Uses of Christian Baptism	Andrew Fuller
1803	The Lord's Supper	John Sutcliff
1804	Civil Government	T. Blundell
1805	Divine Ordinances	J.W. Morris
1806	How people may aid the minister in the task of promoting Christ	Andrew Fuller
1807	Moral and Positive Obedience	Andrew Fuller ³⁶
1808	Obedience to Positive Institutions	John Sutcliff
1809	The influence and work of the Holy Spirit	Robert Hall Jnr.
1810	The Promise of the Spirit	Andrew Fuller
1811	Walking with God	Brother Jarman
1812	The meaning of Association	T. Blundell
1813	Reading the Scriptures	John Sutcliff
1814	Hearing the Word	Robert Hall Jnr.
1815	Widows and Orphans of the Ministry	Andrew Fuller ³⁷

Table 71 Circular Letters 1766-1815: Titles and Authors³⁸

³⁶ John Sutcliff was to have written this Letter but was unwell.

³⁷ This letter was published posthumously

³⁸ This table relates to V.D The Circular Letters of the NPBA, p. 125ff

Association Membership, and Attendance at annual Assembly

The Attendance Table charts that follow represent the attendance of churches at the assembly and the growth of the association by member churches; it records churches as they first appear in the records.

Church	YEAR	1767	1768	1769	1770	1771	1772	1773 ³⁹	1774	1775	1776	1777	1778	1779	1780	1781
Shesphed		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arnesby ⁴⁰		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foxton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kettering		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Walgrave		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Olney		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northampton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carlton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nottingham			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Road			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
St. Albans			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leicester				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sutton Ashfield						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sutton-in-the-Elms							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oakham								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spalding									✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Soham										✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clipstone											✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 72 NPBA Attendance at annual assembly by churches 1767-1781⁴¹

³⁹ From 1773-1786 The introduction to the list of churches notes that many other churches were represented at the assembly though not in membership with the association

⁴⁰ Each church name is spelt as it first appears in the records

⁴¹ See p. 123. The information in this Table is derived from the NPBA *CLs*

Church	YEAR	1782	1783	1784	1785	1786	1787	1788	1789	1790	1791	1792	1793	1794
Shesphed		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arnesby ⁴²		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foxton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kettering		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Walgrave		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Olney		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northampton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carlton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ⁴³	✓
Nottingham		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Road		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
St. Albans		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leicester		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sutton Ashfield		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sutton-in-the-Elms		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oakham		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spalding		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Soham		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clipstone		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codnor (later Loscoe)						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Guilborough						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gretton							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Moulton							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thorn (later Dunstable)							✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Braunstone									✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Burton-upon-Trent										✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 73 NPBA Attendance at annual assembly by churches 1781-1794⁴⁴

⁴² Each church name is spelt as it first appears in the records

⁴³ Although the minutes do not officially announce that the church at Carlton is disbanded or resigns it is not mentioned again after 1793

⁴⁴ See p. 123 and 132. The information in this Table is derived from the NPBA CLs

Church	YEAR	1795	1796	1797 ⁴⁵	1798	1799	1800	1801	1802	1803 ⁴⁶	1804 ⁴⁷	1805
Shesphed		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arnesby		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foxton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kettering		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Walgrave		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Olney		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northampton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carlton												
Nottingham		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Road		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
St. Albans		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leicester		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sutton Ashfield		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sutton-in-the-Elms		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oakham		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spalding		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Soham		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ⁴⁸
Clipstone		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Codnor (Loscoe)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Guilborough		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gretton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Moulton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thorn		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Braunstone		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Burton-upon-Trent ⁴⁹		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 74 NPBA Attendance at annual assembly by churches 1795-1805⁵⁰

⁴⁵ The Letters from Walgrave, Soham, and Moulton tough sent do not arrive on time.

⁴⁶ The churches at Soham and Thorne are listed although they sent no letter.

⁴⁷ The churches at Codnor (Loscoe), Guilborough, and Braunstone are listed but they sent no letter.

⁴⁸ *CL* (NPBA, 1805) p. 8 Breviates (Minutes) show that Soham's membership of the association is dissolved

⁴⁹ The Church at Burton was disbanded in 1800 but reformed with support from Kettering in 1802

⁵⁰ See p. 132. The information in this Table is derived from the NPBA *CLs*

Church	YEAR	1806	1807 ⁵¹	1808	1809 ⁵²	1810	1811	1812	1813	1814	1815	Date Formed ⁵³
Shesphed		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1695
Arnesby		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1667
Foxton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Kettering		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1696
Walgrave		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1700
Olney		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1669
Northampton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1697
Carlton												1825
Nottingham		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Road		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
St. Albans		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1640
Leicester		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1760
Sutton Ashfield		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1773
Sutton-in-the-Elms		✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1650
Oakham		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1772
Spalding		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	- ⁵⁴	1646
Soham												-
Clipstone		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1778
Codnor (Loscoe)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Guilborough		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Gretton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1786
Moulton		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1785
Thorn		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Braunstone		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	- ⁵⁵
Burton-upon-Trent ⁵⁶		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1792
Luton												

(Table 75 NPBA Attendance at annual assembly by churches
1806-1815: continued on next page)

⁵¹ The church at Sutton-in-the-Elms is listed although it does not send a letter

⁵² In 1809 the phrase 'from which they had received letters' is dropped from the introduction – presumably now only those churches represented are included.

⁵³ BUH (1996-1997). Where a '-' appears against the name of a church it means that the church is not in membership with any association or of the Baptist Union. In most cases the church will have closed, or united with another church. The Friar Lane church in Nottingham is one that no longer exists. Other churches may have for a variety of reasons left the Union over the course of time becoming independent, such as the church at Bugbrook, which in the 1970's and 1980's became infamous as the home of the Bugbrook Community and the Jesus Army. The church at Carlton, which was one of the original members of the association until it disappeared from the records in 1793, appears to have reformed in 1825. Some have changed their name and are difficult to trace though modern Sheepshead is perhaps easily identifiable as ancient Sheepshead.

⁵⁴ A footnote to the statistical returns of 1811 indicate that in 1810 and 1811 the church lost 31 members to its branch church at Bilborough of whom 19 were excluded in 1910. This clearly unhappy circumstance may well explain Spalding's absence from the assembly at this time.

⁵⁵ The Directory lists Braunstone as being amalgamated with the Friar Lane Church in Leicester which was originally founded as a GB church in 1651

⁵⁶ The Church at Burton was disbanded in 1800 but reformed with support from Kettering in 1802

(Table 75 continued)

Church	YEAR	1806	1807	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812	1813	1814	1815	Date Formed
Swanwick		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1796
Bugbrook		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Ivinghoe		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-
Collingham			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1670
Braybrook					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1797
Fenny Stratford					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Newark-upon-Trent						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1810
Southwell										✓	✓	1811
Blaby										✓	✓	1807

Table 75 NPBA Attendance at annual assembly by churches 1806-1815⁵⁷

Church and Year of founding			
Burton Latimer	1744	Drayton Parslow	1805
Earls Barton	1793	Newton Longville	1812
Hackleton	1781	Ringstead	1714
Klingsbury	1810	Rushden	1722
Long Buckby	1759	Thrapston ⁵⁸	1797
Bletchley	1800	Towcester	1784
Stony Stratford	1657		

Table 76 Unaffiliated Northamptonshire Baptist Churches c1815⁵⁹

Name of Association	Number of Churches Formed		
	Pre 1770	1770-1815	1816-1830
East Midlands	28	21	16
Hertfordshire	8	1	1
Bedfordshire	4	2	4
Buckinghamshire	5	5	3
Cambridgeshire	7	12	4
Total	52	41	28

Table 77 Baptist Churches not in membership of the NPBA⁶⁰

⁵⁷ See p. 94. The information in this Table is derived from the NPBA CLs

⁵⁸ In fact the NthCRO, Thrapston Church Book indicates the church was formed on 13 March 1797, not 1787. Additionally the CL first make mention of Thrapston in 1793 which is not inconsistent as it would be usual for a congregation to establish itself some years prior to independence or forming as a church. The NBM of May 1824, p. 214 reports the formation of the new work at Woodford near Thrapston on 22 May 1822, and the new church building opened on 16 October 1823 though a direct link to the Thrapston church is not specified. cf. also the BM, August 1824, p. 346

⁵⁹ See p. 94. The information in this Table is derived from the BU Handbook

⁶⁰ The information in this Table is derived from the BU Handbook

NPBA Membership Changes 1766-1851

YEAR	Increases			Decreases			Totals		
	New Members	Restored	Dismissed ⁶¹ to the association	Deaths	Dismissed from the association	Exclusions	Membership Change ⁶²	Listed Churches ⁶³	Number of Members
1766	19	-	-	5	-	2	13	8	
1767	50	-	-	27	-	2	21	8	
1768 ⁶⁴	60	2	-	19	-	6	37	11(3)	
1769	56	1	-	12	3	3	38	11	
1770	89	2	-	17	1	7	66	12(1)	
1771	61	8	-	15	3	10	41	14(2)	
1772	48	3	-	20	4	13	14	15(1)	
1773	73	2	1	19	6	10	41	12	
1774	42	-	-	23	7	4	8	14	
1775	160	2	-	16	3	6	137	17(2)	
1776	69	4	-	28	1	7	37	16	
1777	56	-	13	29	9	14	17	17	
1778	59	-	3	24	1	14	23	17	
1779 ⁶⁵	75	10	20	13	23	6	53	17(1)	
1780	75	1	5	32	3	13	33	17	
1781	59	-	6	25	5	18	17	16	
1782	39	1	7	25	13	17	(8)	16	

(Table 78 NPBA Membership Statistics and changes
1766-1851:continued on next four pages)

⁶¹ The term dismissed is not a negative one; its modern equivalent is transferred. These are members who have left one church to join another with the blessing of their original church.

⁶² The figures for most years do not give a total of the membership only the increase or decrease in total. The figures in brackets indicate an overall decrease in the association's membership.

⁶³ This figure is the total number of the churches listed in the introduction to the *Circular Letter* and corresponds to the Attendance Table. The figure in brackets is the number of new churches that appear in any yearly list.

⁶⁴ It is unclear from the statistics whether the increase in membership of the association included the members of new churches admitted to the association. It would appear unlikely, as the addition of three new churches in 768 does not result in an unusually large increase in the number of new members for that year. The large increases of 1775 might be explained if the total membership of the two new churches were included. However, neither Soham nor Spalding were likely to have been large churches. From 1813 onward the statistics appear in tabular form listing each church's statistics separately. In 1814 Blaby and Southwell join the association and there is no question that the total membership of these two churches of 100 is not added to the increases column, only their respective increase of six and two. This balance of probability is such that the practice of 1813 was a continuation of the practice established since 1767 but this cannot be established with certainty.

⁶⁵ In 1779 the association began a work at Clipstone to which eighteen members of the association were sent and they are included in the respected figure for members dismissed from and members dismissed to the association.

(Table 78 continued)

YEAR	Increases			Decreases			Totals		
	New Members	Restored	Dismissed ⁶⁶ to the association	Deaths	Dismissed from the association	Exclusions	Membership Change ⁶⁷	Listed Churches ⁶⁸	Number of Members
1783	24	1	1	19	6	7	(7)	16	
1784	31	0	2	34	5	2	(8) ⁶⁹	16	
1785	25	-	1	23	3	14	(14)	16	
1786	82	7	4	20	5	6	62	19(2)	
1787	79	2	18	31	19	5	44 ⁷⁰	22(3)	
1788	116	3	12	27	10	12	82	22	
1789	95	2	3	46	6	17	31	22	1527 ⁷¹
1790	75	3	7	25	2	7	51	23(1)	
1791	101	2	5	39	14	17	38	33	
1792	73	2	6	33	4	13	31	24	
1793	88	1	7	37	7	10	42	25(1)	1596 ⁷²
1794	83	4	9	39	14	22	21	23	
1795	128	1	5	39	6	14	75	24	1620 ⁷³
1796	139	3	5	20	5	25	97	24	
1797	122	3	5	36	2	16	76	21	1722 ⁷⁴
1798	64	4	2	33	7	22	8	24	

(Table 78 NPBA Membership Statistics and changes 1766-1851:continued on next three pages)

⁶⁶ The term dismissed is not a negative one; its modern equivalent is transferred. These are members who have left one church to join another with the blessing of their original church.

⁶⁷ The figures for most years do not give a total of the membership only the increase or decrease in total. The figures in brackets indicate an overall decrease in the association's membership.

⁶⁸ This figure is the total number of the churches listed in the introduction to the *Circular Letter* and corresponds to the Attendance Table. The figure in brackets is the number of new churches that appear in any yearly list.

⁶⁹ It is in the wake of three consecutive decreases that Sutcliff offered his 'Call to Prayer' to the association, and the agreed subject for the following *Circular Letter* was 'Decline and Revival.'

⁷⁰ The increase included the addition of 10 new members at Codnor and Guilsborough not included in the original statistics but noted below them.

⁷¹ A figure of 1,527 was given as the number of communicants for the twenty-two churches listed.

⁷² A figure of 1,596 was given as the number of communicants. This was an increase over 1789 of sixty-nine. However, the membership increase for the years 1790-1793 was 152. Possibly the figure for communicants was derived from a count taken on a set date of those in attendance at communion.

⁷³ A figure of 1,620 was given as the total number of communicants.

⁷⁴ A figure of 1,722 was given as the total number of communicants. An increase in communicants from 1795-1796 of 102 is clear as against an increase in membership of ninety-seven.

(Table 78 continued)

YEAR	Increases			Decreases			Totals		
	New Members	Restored	Dismissed ⁷⁵ to the association	Deaths	Dismissed from the association	Exclusions	Membership Change ⁷⁶	Listed Churches ⁷⁷	Number of Members
1799	188	2	8	33	4	50	11	24	1802 ⁷⁸
1800	76	2	5	40	7	17	19	22(-1)	
1801	101	2	-	33	10	21	39	22	
1802	85	1	9	55	10	22	8	24(1)	1845 ⁷⁹
1803	36	4	4	49	12	27	(44)	22	
1804	51	3	9	37	7	30	(6)	21(1)	
1805	116	3	11	14	13	50	27	24(1)	
1806	146	6	12	36	16	24	76	27(3)	
1807	119	7	9	45	11	23	51	27(1)	
1808	144	4	21	31	22	19	97	28	
1809	101	9	6	42	8	15	65	30(1)	
1810	122	4	10	44	11	24	79	31(1)	

(Table 78 NPBA Membership Statistics and changes 1766-1851:continued on next two pages)

⁷⁵ The term dismissed is not a negative one; its modern equivalent is transferred. These are members who have left one church to join another with the blessing of their original church.

⁷⁶ The figures for most years do not give a total of the membership only the increase or decrease in total. The figures in brackets indicate an overall decrease in the association's membership.

⁷⁷ This figure is the total number of the churches listed in the introduction to the *CL* and corresponds to the Attendance Table. The figure in brackets is the number of new churches that appear in any yearly list.

⁷⁸ For the first time a figure for the total membership of the association was given at 1,802. According to the statistics given the total increase between 1766 and 1799 are 1,228, which would mean that the original eight churches of 1766 had a membership of 574. However, in 1815 the seven remaining churches of the original eight have a total membership of 741, and the records of the AFBC, Kettering Church alone indicated that over this same period that their church membership grew by some 120 members. Additionally the more complete church by church returns from 1811-1815 showed that these seven churches increased their total membership by seventy members, at an average of ten per church. During the same period of time the other churches in the association grew at an average of fourteen to fifteen new members. A figure of around 250-300 members for the original eight members of the association in 1766 would statistically be more acceptable. One area of manoeuvre on these statistics is in the fact that in many of the years covered by them there are churches in membership with the association who for whatever reason do not return their statistics. However the number at only thirty or so over the entire fifty years period is quite small, and given the average annual increase in membership across the churches of 1.16 new members, this means that possibly thirty-five new members went unreported in this way. The churches that most frequently fail to report their figures such as Foxton, Ivinghoe, Soham and Carlton (the latter two no longer in the association in 1815) are amongst the smallest churches in the association reducing to nil the possibility of unreported large increases in yearly membership.

⁷⁹ A figure of 1845 is give as the total number of communicants.

(Table 78 continued)

YEAR	Increases			Decreases			Totals		
	New Members	Restored	Dismissed ⁸⁰ to the association	Deaths	Dismissed from the association	Exclusions	Membership Change ⁸¹	Listed Churches ⁸²	Number of Members
1811 ⁸³	183	8	13	38	18	32	116	31	
1812	101	4	17	40	17	28	37	31	
1813	159	5	16	39	18	14	109	31	
1814	112	4	15	51	20	25	35	31(2)	
1815	185	8	24	50	15	28	124	31	2505
1816	137	5	10	74	11	52	15	31	2611
1817	165	7	12	54	16	24	90	33	2751 ⁸⁴
1818	160	9	18	49	20	34	84	34	2717 ⁸⁵
1819	153	12	26	53	30	37	71	35	2735 ⁸⁶
1820	134	10	5	63	9	21	56	34	2738 ⁸⁷
1821	125	3	13	52	12	25	52	34	2754 ⁸⁸

(Table 78 NPBA Membership Statistics and changes 1766-1851:continued on next page)

⁸⁰ The term dismissed is not a negative one; its modern equivalent is transferred. These are members who by dint of circumstance have left one church to join another with the blessing of their original church.

⁸¹ The figures for most years do not give a total of the membership only the increase or decrease in total. The figures in brackets indicate an overall decrease in the association's membership.

⁸² This figure is the total number of the churches listed in the introduction to the *CL* and corresponds to the Attendance Table. The figure in brackets is the number of new churches that appear in any yearly list.

⁸³ From 1811 onward the association published in tabular form the returns for each of the churches. However the total membership for each church is only included from 1813 onward, and not all churches returned this statistic in 1813. There are some discrepancies, especially between 1814 and 1815. Leicester's membership increased from 176 to 195 but showed an increase of eleven; Arnesby went up from ninety-nine to 111 whilst showing twelve; Luton rose from 195 to 209 but showed eleven; and Nottingham 196 to 202 showed four. Conversely Northampton declined from 194 to 192 whilst showing an increase of one, and Olney declined from 101 to 90 but accounted for a decline of nine. The total membership in 1815 of the thirty-one churches who returned statistics was 2,505.

⁸⁴ All thirty-three listed churches returned full statistics including total membership

⁸⁵ The statistics for 1818 showed an apparent contradiction with an overall increase of eighty-four members against a decline in membership from 1817 of forty-four. This is explained by the fact that three churches (Blaby, Collingham, and Foxton) reported their statistics but not their total membership. However by comparison with their returns for 1817 these three churches in 1818 had a combined membership of 160, which should have yielded an increase for the association of 136 and not the eighty-four recorded

⁸⁶ No membership figure for Blaby and Leicester

⁸⁷ No membership figure for St. Albans

⁸⁸ No membership figure for St. Albans and Walgrave

(Table 78 continued)

YEAR	Increases			Decreases			Totals		
	New Members	Restored	Dismissed ⁸⁹ to the association	Deaths	Dismissed from the association	Exclusions	Membership Change ⁹⁰	Listed Churches ⁹¹	Number of Members
1822	115	13	9	44	12	31	50	34	2853 ⁹²
1823	101	4	4	37	33	21	18	34	2920
1824	146	10	11	53	35	35	44	34	2931
1825 ⁹³									
1826	113	7	22	64	50	41	-13	36	3004
1827	162	13	30	71	25	37	72	36	3015
1828	235	24	24	61	23	15	184	37	3209
1829	221	6	34	65	15	25	156	40	3423
1830	187	4	13	60	21	46	77	38	3237
1831 ⁹⁴	113	2	17	37	18	38	39	38	3197
1837	70	7	22	49	9	13	38	22	- ⁹⁵
1841	165	7	45	40	36	22	119	27	2224
1846	156	2	30	52	22	76	38	35	2821 ⁹⁶
1851	160	7	48	85	48	44	38	37	2896 ⁹⁷

Table 78 NPBA Membership Statistics and changes 1766-1851⁹⁸

⁸⁹ The term dismissed is not a negative one; its modern equivalent is transferred. These are members who by dint of circumstance have left one church to join another with the blessing of their original church.

⁹⁰ The figures for most years do not give a total of the membership only the increase or decrease in total. The figures in brackets indicate an overall decrease in the association's membership.

⁹¹ This figure is the total number of the churches listed in the introduction to the *CL* and corresponds to the Attendance Table. The figure in brackets is the number of new churches that appear in any yearly list.

⁹² In 1822 and 1823 statistics were available for all thirty-four churches. The difference between the membership in 1823 and 1817 the previous occasion complete statistics were available is 169 yet according to the reported annual increases the total membership should have increased by 331. During this period of time the NPBA has received three new churches (Derby, Lincoln, and Hackleton) with an initial 153 members, and the church at Leicester had not reported its figures since 1818 when it had 209 members, which meant total membership should have increased by around 600 and not the reported 169.

⁹³ No statistics are available for 1825

⁹⁴ In 1831 the association concluded it was too spread out to be viable and that modification was necessary. As a result in 1832 churches began to withdraw to form their own county associations. By 1837 the NPBA had only three counties providing member churches with nineteen of the twenty-two member churches from Northamptonshire

⁹⁵ As seven of the churches do not return their membership total no figure is given here

⁹⁶ No membership figure from three churches who when they reported last totalled 238 members

⁹⁷ No membership figure from six churches who when they last reported totalled 446 members

⁹⁸ See p. 129. The information in this Table is derived from the NPBA *CLs*

Church	Increases			Decreases			Membership	
	Baptised	Dismissed	Restored	Deaths	Dismissed	Excluded	Total	Change
Loscoe (Codnor)	-	-	-	1	2	-	62	-3
Sutton Ashfield	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	0
Nottingham	13	-	-	1	-	2	111	+10
Sheepshead	2	-	1	2	-	-	108	+1
Leicester	9	-	1	1	-	-	63	+9
Sutton-in-the-Elms	-	-	-	3	-	-	41	-3
Arnesby	-	-	1	1	2	-	83	-2
Clipstone	4	-	-	1	-	-	68	+3
Guilborough	3	1	-	1	-	3	78	0
Foxton	2	3	-	-	-	1	24	+4
Oakham	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	0
Gretton	2	-	-	-	-	-	37	+2
Kettering	12	1	-	3	-	-	111	+10
Walgrave	-	-	-	1	-	2	45	-3
Moulton	-	-	-	1	-	-	33	-1
Northampton Road	5	-	-	5	2	1	183	-3
Olney	-	1	-	-	-	-	24	+1
Olney	1	-	-	2	-	-	59	-1
Carlton	1	-	-	2	-	1	75	-2
Thorn	6	-	-	2	-	-	59	+4
St. Albans	-	-	-	2	-	-	25	-2
Spalding	12	-	-	2	-	-	142	+10
Soham	-	-	-	2	-	-	37	-2
Braunstone	-	-	-	-	-	1	24	-1
Totals	73	6	3	33	6	11	1551	+32

Table 79 NPBA Membership for 1792⁹⁹

⁹⁹ See p. 131 footnote 56

Church	Increases			Decreases			Membership	
	Baptised	Dismissed	Restored	Deaths	Dismissed	Excluded	Total	Change
Loscoe (Codnor)	3	-	-	-	-	1	60	+2
Sutton Ashfield	1	-	-	-	-	-	19	+1
Nottingham	11	-	-	2	6	-	116	+3
Sheepshead	18	-	-	1	-	-	140	+17
Sutton-in-the-Elms	6	1	-	2	-	-	43	+5
Arnesby	9	-	1	3	-	-	88	+6
Clipstone	3	1	-	-	-	-	76	+4
Foxtan	-	-	-	1	-	-	25	-1
Brauntsone	2	-	-	-	-	1	28	+1
Northampton	11	-	-	7	-	2	170	+2
Leicester	38	1	-	1	-	-	131	+38
Moulton	-	-	-	2	-	1	28	-3
Walgrave	-	-	-	3	-	2	39	-5
Kettering	3	1	-	6	-	1	111	-3
Gretton	-	-	-	-	-	-	35	0
Oakham	6	-	-	1	-	-	54	+5
Road	1	-	-	2	-	-	22	-1
Olney	-	1	-	1	-	-	61	0
Carlton								
St. Albans	11	-	-	1	-	-	34	+10
Soham	-	-	-	-	-	2	35	-2
Spalding	-	-	-	2	-	-	144	-2
Totals	126	5	1	38	6	12	1543	+76

Table 80 NPBA Membership for 1795¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰See p. 131 footnote 56

Individual Church Membership Records

Year	New	m	f	Year	New	M	f
1752	6	2	4	1788	7	3	4
1753	2	1	1	1789	3	2	1
1754				1790	6	4	2
1755	1	1	-	1791	2	1	1
1756				1792	13	4	9
1757				1793	7	3	4
1758				1794	3	3	-
1759	3	1	2	1795	13	9	4
1760				1796	7	5	2
1761				1797	19	8	11
1762				1798	2	1	1
1763	4	3	1	1799	8	4	4
1764				1800	8	4	4
1765	3	1	2	1801	7	2	5
1766	1	-	1	1802	5	4	1
1767				1803	12	2	10
1768	11	5	6	1804	8	4	4
1769	4	2	2	1805			
1770	1	1	-	1806	8	4	4
1771 ¹⁰¹	18	9	9	1807	10	3	7
1772	14	3	11	1808	4	3	1
1773	3	3	3	1809	9	5	4
1774	3	1	2	1810	13	4	9
1775	9	4	5	1811	6	3	3
1776	1	-	1	1812	4	3	1
1777	8	6	2	1813	13	6	7
1778	5	3	2	1814	5	1	4
1779	3	1	2	1815 ¹⁰²	1	-	1
1780	1	1	-	1816	2	-	2
1781	1	1	-	1817	6	4	2
1782				1818	8	2	6
1783 ¹⁰³	2	2	-	1819			
1784	5	3	2	1820	9	3	6
1785	7	3	4	1821	9	2	7
1786	5	3	2	1822	7	4	3
1787	13	6	7	Totals	379	178	201

Table 81 Fuller Baptist Church: New Members 1752-1822¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ George Moreton was ordained minister on the 20 November 1771

¹⁰² Andrew Fuller was ordained minister on the 7 October 1783, and the minutes note the church had eighty-eight living members.

¹⁰³ Following Fuller's death his assistant John Hall is ordained minister on the 23 November 1815

¹⁰⁴ See p. 131 . The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Date or Year	Total	Date or Year	Total
1769 ¹⁰⁵	33	1795	111
20.11.1771	56	1796	129
1.3.1775	76(75)	1797	127
1778	85	1798	145
1779	89	1799	148
1780	88	1801	150
1781	88	1803	155
1782	86	1804	149
23.8.1783	88(85)	1806	145
1784	89	1808	155
1787	87	1810	170
1789	104	1811	171
1790	101	1813	167
1792	111	1.6.1814	174(177)
1793	114		

Table 82 Fuller Baptist Church: Membership Growth 1752-1822¹⁰⁶

Date	Rate of Growth per year
1769-1771	7.66
1771-1775	6.66
1775-1783	1.5
1783-1814	2.86
1775-1814	2.5
1769-1814	3.13

Table 83 Fuller Baptist Church: Rate of membership growth 1769-1814¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ The figures in italics are taken from the *LA* of the relevant year, the remainder from the Church Book. Total membership was not always given in the *LA*, and the sequence of letters is not complete. The figures in brackets indicate that the *LA* gave a different figure to the Church book. This discrepancy can usually be explained by the fact that the two figures calculated at different times, the figure for the *LA* being determined in time for the mid-June assembly, possibly in mid-May.

¹⁰⁶ See p. 131 . The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

¹⁰⁷ See p. 132 . The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Year	Men	Women	Members ¹⁰⁸
5 Oct 1759	13	29	42
6 Nov 1760	23	33	56
6 Nov 1762	30	63	93
6 Oct 1765	37	54	91
21 July 1766	42	55	97
24 Sept 1767	48	60	108
5 Aug 1768	49	65	114
19 May 1769	52	71	123
23 May 1770	56	78	134
7 Aug 1772	68	91	159
10 May 1776	84	137	221
1780	96	149	245 ¹⁰⁹ (205)

Table 84 College Lane membership Statistics - during Pastorate of J.C. Ryland¹¹⁰

Year	Members
1783	203
1784	205
1785	202
1786	201
1787	193
1788	189
1789	184
1790	185
1791	186
1792	183
1793	166

Table 85 College Lane membership Statistics - during Pastorate of John Ryland¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ In Table 84 to Table 87 the figures in brackets are derived from the *LA* for the relevant year

¹⁰⁹ The summary of J. C. Ryland's ministry from 1759-1781 when his son became joint Pastor with him indicates only 202 members in 1780 not 245 and the *LA* for 1780 indicates 205 members. The former figure would appear more likely given the statistics in the Church Book which records fortunes during John Ryland's Pastorate shown in Table 85

¹¹⁰ See p. 134 . The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

¹¹¹ See p. 134. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Year	Members	Year	Members
1794	-	1802	-
1795	168	1803	199
1796	167	1804	198
1797	176	1805	201
1798	168	1805	192
1799	(177)	1806	(192)
1800	205	1807	197
1801	197(206)	1808	198

Table 86 College Lane membership Statistics - during the interregnum 1793-1799 and during George Keeley's Pastorate 1799-1809¹¹²

Year	Members	Year	Members
1810	(184)	1818	
1811	180	1819	(208)
1812	189	1820	
1813	196	1821	
1814	(194)	1822	
1815	192	1823	
1816	190	1824	
1817	199		

Table 87 College Lane membership Statistics - during Pastorate of Thomas Blundell¹¹³

¹¹² See p. 134. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

¹¹³ See p. 134 . The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Year	Increase	Date	Baptisms	Year	Increase	Date	Baptisms
1784	8	30.8.84	8	1802	1	30.5.02	1
1785	13	26.6.85	6	1803	0		
1786	8	21.8.85	4	1804	0		
1787	2	2.10.85	2	1805	0		
1788	0	2.4.86	3	1806	1	7.12.06	1
1789	0	10.9.86	2	1807	4	29.3.07	1
1790	2	3.10.90	2	1808	0	26.7.07	3
1791	0			1809	0		
1792	0			1810	9	12.8.10	3
1793	0			1811	0	7.10.10	6
1794	3	7.9.94	3	1812	6	14.6.12	4
1795	2	4.10.95	2	1813	0		
1796	0			1814	0		
1797	3	4.6.97	3	1815	8	3.4.15	8
1798	3	31.5.98	2	1816	6	2.6.16	6
1799	2	8.9.99	2	1817	0		
1800	0			1818	0		
1801	1	6.9.01	1	1819	2	1.8.19	2

Table 88 Walgrave Baptist Church: New Members 1784-1819 and Baptisms¹¹⁴

Date or Year ¹¹⁵	Membership	Date or Year	Membership
14.10.1754	40	1796	96
5.6.1771	91	1797	<i>100</i>
19.5.1772	88	1798	<i>104</i>
7.6.1774	84	1799	<i>115</i>
1775	85	1803	96
1780	89	1804	97
1782	88	1806	100
1785	85	1808	<i>103</i>
1791	83	1810	<i>94</i>
1792	84	1813	99
1793	88	1814	97
1795	88	1819	99

Table 89 Arnesby Baptist Church: Membership Growth 1754-1806¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ See p. 140. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

¹¹⁵ The figures in italics are taken from the *LA* for the relevant year

¹¹⁶ See p. 140. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Place	Members
Arnesby	22
Countess Thorpe	19
Bruntings Thorpe	14
Fleckney	7
Kilby	6
Shearsby	5
Peatlings	7
Walton	3
Mowsley	6
Saddington	3
Other Villages	2
Distant Members	6
Total	100

Table 90 Arnesby Baptist Church: Membership by Residency¹¹⁷

Date or Year	New Members	Membership ¹¹⁸
15 November 1738	13	13
1738-1741	4	
4 November 1741	16	
11 November 1741	1	33
14 January 1742	5	
1 April 1742	1	
29 May 1742	3	
4 July 1742	2	46
19 March 1745 or 6	3	
20 July 1746	3	51
24 February 1748	1	
18 March 1749	1	54

Table 91 Olney Baptist Church: Membership Growth 1738-1749¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ See p. 142. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

¹¹⁸ It is possible because of the records from 1738-1749 for membership, exclusions and deaths to accurately calculate the total membership as indicated. After 1749 the records become unusable for this purpose until 1776.

¹¹⁹ See p. 142. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Date or Year	Membership Change	Membership
31 May 1778	2	58
20 May 1779	3	61
21 May 1780	-2	59
3 June 1781	-6	53
2 June 1782	1	54
1 June 1783	-2	52
23 May 1784	-4	48
8 May 1785	1	49
4 June 1786	2	51
20 May 1787	2	54
25 May 1788	0	54
24 May 1789	-1	53
30 May 1790	4	57
12 June 1791	3	60
27 May 1792	-1	59
2 June 1793	1	60
25 May 1794	1	61
17 May 1795	0	61
29 May 1796	9	70
4 June 1797	2	72
27 May 1798	-1	71
19 May 1799	9	80
29 May 1800	-2	78
31 May 1801	3	81
13 June 1802	3	84
29 May 1803	-5	79
20 May 1804	1	80
9 June 1805	-1	79
25 May 1806	14	93
5 June 1807	3	96
10 May 1808	5	101
21 May 1809	-1	100
10 June 1810	1	101
26 May 1811	4	105
17 May 1812	-2	103
6 June 1813	-4	99
29 May 1814	1	100
14 May 1815	-10	90
2 June 1816	-8	82

Table 92 Olney Baptist Church: Membership during Sutcliff's Ministry 1776-1814¹²⁰

¹²⁰ See p. 145 and 147. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Year	Location	Involvement
28-29 May 1776	Olney	None
20-21 May 1777	Oakham	Led in prayer
2-3 June 1778	Leicester	Preached on Revelation 2:1
25-26 May 1779	Northampton	Moderator and wrote <i>CL</i> on 'Providence'
23-24 May 1780	Carlton	Conducted or Chaired the assembly
5-7 June 1881	Kettering	Explained the purpose of the association to attendees
4-6 June 1782	Olney	Organised assembly
10-12 June 1783	St. Alban's	Led in prayer
2-3 June 1784	Nottingham	Preached on I Corinthians 6:19-20 issuing the Prayer Call
17-18 May 1785	Oakham	Preached on I John 3:3
6-8 June 1786	Northampton	Moderator and wrote <i>CL</i> on the 'Authority and Sanctification of the Lord's Day'
29-31 May 1787	Leicester	Led in prayer
27-29 May 1788	Kettering	Preached on Psalm 51:3
2-4 June 1789	Spalding	Chaired or conducted assembly and explained the purpose of the Association to attendees
1-3 June 1790	Olney	Organised assembly
14-16 June 1791	Oakham	Preached on II Corinthians 6:18
29-31 May 1792	Nottingham	Conducted or Chaired the assembly
4-6 June 1793	Northampton	Led in prayer
17-19 June 1794	Sheepshead	Conducted or Chaired assembly, explained the purpose of the association to attendees and led in prayer
9-11 June 1995	Kettering	Preached on Matthew 12:30
31 May-2 June 1796	St. Alban's	Preached on Philippians 1:21
13-15 June 1797	Leicester	Moderator and wrote <i>CL</i> on the 'Divinity of the Christian Religion'
29-31 May 1798	Spalding	Preached on Matthew 13:40-47
21-23 May 1799	Olney	Moderator
3-5 June 1800	Nottingham	Preached on I Corinthians 15:58 and wrote <i>CL</i> on the 'Qualifications for Church Fellowship'
2-4 June 1801	Oakham	Moderator
15-16 June 1802	Northampton	Preached on I Corinthians 10:24
2-4 June 1803	Sheepshead	Moderator and wrote <i>CL</i> on the 'Ordinance of the Lord's Supper Considered'
22-24 May 1804	Kettering	Preached on Matthew 5:13
11-13 June 1805	Dunstable	Preached on Matthew 10:32
27-29 May 1806	Leicester	Led in prayer
20-21 May 1807	Spalding	Led in prayer (was due to write <i>CL</i> but was ill)
7-9 June 1808	Olney	Organised assembly and wrote <i>CL</i> on 'Obedience to Positive Institutions'
23-25 May 1809	Nottingham	Preached on Acts 11:26
12-14 June 1810		Preached on Romans 13:11
4-6 June 1811	Oakham	Led in prayer
19-21 June 1812	Northampton	Moderator
8-10 June 1813	Kettering	Wrote <i>CL</i> on 'Reading the Word of God'
31 May-2 June 1814	Leicester	Sutcliff was absent from this assembly due to illness dying on 22 June 1814

Table 93 John Sutcliff's Involvement with the NPBA Assembly 1776-1814¹²¹

¹²¹ See p. 146. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Year	New Members	Died	Excluded	Dismissed	Total
1769	-	-	-	-	21
1770	33	1	-	-	53
1771	3	1	-	-	55
1772	5	1	-	-	59
1773	6	2	-	1	62
1774	14	1	-	-	75
1775	16	3	-	-	88
1776	8	2	-	-	94
1777	5	3	-	1	95
1778	4	2	-	-	97
1779	3	1	-	-	99
1780	3	2	-	-	100
1781	5	1	-	1	103
1782	5	5	-	2	101
1783	8	5	-	-	104
1784	3	3	-	-	104
1785	5	4	-	-	105
1786	7	2	-	-	110
1787	6	4	-	-	112
1788	6	8	-	-	110
1789	16	1	-	-	125
1790	1	2	-	11 ¹²²	113
1791	18	1	-	-	130
1792	7	1	-	1	135
1793	-	2	-	-	133
1794	13	1	-	6 ¹²³	139
1795	15	-	-	-	154
1796	5	1	-	-	158
1797	2	1	-	-	159
1798	8	6	-	-	161
1799	4	2	-	-	163
1800	2	-	-	-	165
1801	11	4	-	2	170
1802	11	5	-	-	176
1803 ¹²⁴	-	3	-	-	173
1804	16	3	-	-	186
1805	31	6	-	1	210
1806	8	8	-	2	208

(Table 94 Friar Lane Nottingham: Membership statistics 1769-1815 continued on next page)

¹²² Eleven members were dismissed to form the new church at Bottesford planted by Friar Lane

¹²³ Six members were dismissed to form the new church at Derby planted by Friar Lane

¹²⁴ During Hopper's ministry which ended in 1803 there were 258 new members, eighty-one died and twenty-five were dismissed

(Table 94 continued)

Year	New Members	Died	Excluded	Dismissed	Total
1807	10	5	1	2	210
1808	16	3	-	-	223
1809	9	4	-	-	228
1810	10	3	-	-	235
1811	33	4	-	-	264
1812	6	-	-	-	270
1813	12	3	-	1	278
1814	7	1	-	-	284
1815	14	3	-	1	294
Totals	430	124	1	32	N/A

Table 94 Friar Lane Nottingham: Membership statistics 1769-1815¹²⁵

Year	Increase	Year	Increase
Martin's Ministry		Guy's Ministry	
1765	5	1774	58
1766	1	1775	10
1767	16	1776	0
1768	4	1777	6
1769	18	1778	4
1770	6	1780	8
1771	3	1781	1
1772	3	1782	3

Table 95 Sheephead Baptist Church: Membership Growth 1765-1785¹²⁶

¹²⁵ See p. 149. The information in this table is derived from the Church Roll as found in Godfrey and James (1903), p. 248-259

¹²⁶ See p. 154. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Year	Increase	Year	Increase
1785	9	1800	5
1786	9	1801	2
1787	5	1802	3
1788	3	1803	1
1789	0	1804	1
1790	0	1805	3
1791	0	1806	1
1792	4	1807	0
1793	2	1808	5
1794	21	1809	0
1795	9	1810	2
1796	6	1811	4
1797	0	1812	15
1798	0	1813	8
1799	9		

Table 96 Sheepshead Baptist Church: Membership Growth 1785-1813¹²⁷

¹²⁷ See p. 155. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Year	New Members	Died	Excluded	Dismissed	Total
1805	18	-	-	-	18
1806	2	-	-	-	20
1807	11	-	-	-	31
1808	7	1	-	-	37
1809	14	1	-	-	50
1810	8	1	-	-	57
1811	13	3	-	-	67
1812	8	4	1	-	70
1813	3	2	-	2	69
1814	-	-	-	-	75
1815	6	6	1	-	74
1816	11	-	2	1	82
1817	6	2	-	-	86
1818	5	2	2	1	86
1819	7	2	2	1	88
1820	-	1	2	-	85
1821	10	2	-	-	93
1822	4	2	-	16 ¹²⁸	79
1823	3	2	3	-	77
1824	4	1	2	-	78
1825	3	1	-	1	79
1826	3	1	-	1	80
1827	6	4	-	1	81
1828	6	4	1	1	82
1829	4	-	-	-	86
1830	5	1	-	1	90
1831	-	2	-	1	87
1832	4	-	1	1	89
1833	5	-	-	-	94
Less seven who went to America undated and four others ¹²⁹					83
Totals	74	45	17	28	N/A

Table 97 Collingham Baptist Church: Membership Statistics 1805-1833¹³⁰

¹²⁸ This includes fourteen members dismissed to form a new church at Sutton-on-Trent

¹²⁹ The membership list in the church book is well maintained except for these eleven losses for which an accurate date is not available.

¹³⁰ See p. 152. The information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Year	Total	Year	Total
1810	3	1822	-
1811	5	1823	-
1812	-	1824	-
1813	-	1825	-
1814	-	1826	20
1815	-	1827	22
1816	9	1828	25
1817	-	1829	31
1818	-	1830	33
1819	11		
1820	-		
1821	16	1854	45

Table 98 Sutton-on-Trent Baptist Church: Membership Statistics 1810-1830¹³¹

Year	New Members	Year	New Members	Year	New Members
1797	8	1810	5	1823	10
1798	9	1811	12	1824	4
1799	11	1812	11	1825	4
1800	7	18113	5	1826	17
1801	-	1814	6	1287	2
1802	-	1815	2	1828	10
1803	2	1816	4	1829	6
1804	1	1817	-	1830	9
1805	1	1818	3	1831	1
1806	3	1819	-	1832	7
1807	4	1820	-	1833	6
1808	-	1821	2	1834	14
1809	-	1822	2		

Table 99 Thrapston Baptist Church: New Members 1797-1809¹³²

¹³¹ See p. 153. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

¹³² See p. 156. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Date	Members	Years	New Members
29.7.1781	27	1781-1793	16
1793	25	1793-1801	42
1801	46	1801-1816	72
1816	80 ¹³³	1816-1827	54
1826	72	1827-1828	9
1828	67	1828-1830	12

Table 100 Roade Baptist Church: Membership Lists¹³⁴

Year	Increase
1825-28	15
1829	4
1830	2
1831	2
1832	-
1833	1
1834	0
1835	5

Table 101 Blisworth Baptist Church: New Members 1825-1835¹³⁵

Year	Members	Year	Members	Year	Members
1813	43	1820	55	1826	65
1815	48	1821	60	1827	67
1816	49	1822	62	1828	65
1817	51	1823	63	1829	67
1818	50	1824	64	1830	68
1819	55	1825	61		

Table 102 Hackleton Baptist Church: Membership Growth 1813-1830¹³⁶

¹³³ This is a calculation based on the figures as the exact numbers in 1816 are not clear

¹³⁴ See p. 158. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

¹³⁵ See p. 159. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

¹³⁶ See p. 159. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Year	Increase	Year	Increase
1810	22	1823	2
1811	2	1824	0
1812	3	1825	2
1813	0	1826	0
1814	4	1827	5
1815	0	1828	5
1816	3	1829	3
1817	5	1830	6
1818	0	1831-1835	20
1819	0	1836-1840	22
1820	0	1841-1845	26
1821	1	1846-1850	13
1822	0		

Table 103 Kislingbury Baptist Church: New Members 1810-1850¹³⁷

Year	Members	Year	Members
1810	22	1814	30
1811	24	1815	30
1812	26	1825	39
1813	26	1830	55

Table 104 Kislingbury Baptist Church: Membership growth 1810-1830¹³⁸

Year	Members
1813	<i>60</i> ¹³⁹
1814	<i>69</i>
25 May 1817	55
26 May 1822	41
23 May 1824	37

Table 105 Blaby Baptist Church: Membership 1817-1824¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ See p. 160 and 161. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

¹³⁸ See p. 161. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

¹³⁹ The figures in italics are taken from the *LA* for the relevant year

¹⁴⁰ See p. 162. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Year	Members	Year	Members
1800	83	1815	84
1801	94	1816	79
1802	104	1817	97
1803	112	1818	94
1804	116	1819	96
1805	118	1820	106
1806	128	1821	104
1807	123	1822	106
1808	128	1823	100
1809	125	1824	99
1810	122	1825	106
1811	-	1826	121
1812	-	1827	128
1813	-	1828	132
1814	95	1829	102

Table 106 Kegworth Baptist Church: Membership 1800-1829¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ See p. 163. The Information in this table is taken from the Church Book

Appendix III – Association Statistics

The Tables that follow are first the series of statistics for those Particular Baptist associations I have been able to trace to date, and then a final table compiled from all the sources used of the number of Baptist churches in England by county. The tables are not complete, nor do they necessarily represent every association in existence during the period 1770-1830. In most cases the information is taken from the Annual *CL* of the association. The other principal source of information is John Ripon's *BAR*. Table 107 to Table 112 relate to IV A Statistical survey of the growth in English Baptists Churches 1715-1851, section IV.B The Circular Letters of the Particular Baptists Associations and the Baptist Annual Register, p. 99.

Norfolk and Suffolk Association Records

Formed in 1769

Year	Baptised	Dismissed by letter	Restored	Died	Dismissed by letter	Excluded	Difference	Membership	No. Churches
1771									6
1795	56	-	-	21	5	2	+28	-	5
1796	91	1	2	12	1	8	+74	-	5
1797	108	4	1	8	-	8	+97	653	-
1798 ¹	177	-	2	10	68 ²	7	+94	806	-
1799	117	-	1	15	47 ³	8	+38	843	-
1800	69	2	1	12	15	10	+35	732	-
1801	88	2	-	7	9	6	+68	800	-
1802	138	6	1	12	10	15	+108	902	7
1821	142	26	6	39	20	29	+86	2536	19
1840	22	14	4	24	8	20	-12	1388	19

Table 107 Norfolk and Suffolk Association Statistics

¹ Rippon notes that there are discrepancies in the figures from Diss and Dereham

² This includes sixty-seven dismissed to start the church at Stowmarket, Suffolk

³ This includes forty-three dismissed to start the church at Grundisburgh, Suffolk

Midlands Association Records

Year	Baptised	Dismissed by letter	Restored	Died	Dismissed by letter	Excluded	Difference	Membership	No. Churches
1770 ⁴									
1771	28	-	-	15	1	-	+12	-	17
1772	38	6	-	17	1	-	+26	-	15
1773									
1774									
1775	90	15	-	15	12	2	+76	-	15
1776									
1777	35	5	-	21	3	-	+16	-	17
1778	55	-	-	21	1	6	+27	-	17
1779	38	5	-	27	1	2	+13	-	15
1789	85	9	-	18	1	12	+73	-	15
1790	98	5	-	29	15	5	+54	-	17
1791	75	10	2	19	8	16	+65	-	13
1792	75	12	13	15	22	18	+45	-	15
1793	87	11	-	19	16	8	+55	-	18
1794	98	12	2	20	13	23	+56	-	-
1795	61	7	1	20	7	20	+22	-	-
1796									
1797	104	15	2	38	10	19	+54	-	-
1798	131	5	1	17	7	28	+85	-	16
1799	224	19 ⁵	1	16	24	26	+17	-	19
							8		
1800									
1801									22
1802	102	3	4	21	8	14	+66	-	-
1809	89	11	1	27	7	28	+39	-	23

Table 108 Midland Association Statistics

⁴ Records for this association exists prior to 1771

⁵ Includes eight admitted by 'experience,' which could have the same sense as by profession of faith.

Buckinghamshire Association Records

Year	Baptised	Dismissed by letter	Restored	Died	Dismissed by letter	Excluded	Difference	Membership	No. Churches
1830	162	5	3	26	5	14	+125	1476	14
1838	62	29	8	46	36	38	-21	1948	19
1835	132	14	6	39	27	28	+58		
1840	109	12	2	41	13	16	+53	1827	18
1845	75	38	5	36	22	29	+41	1883	20
1850	none								

Table 109 Buckinghamshire Association Statistics

Western Association Records

Year	Baptised	Dismissed by letter	Restored	Died	Dismissed by letter	Excluded	Difference	Membership	No. Churches
1770									
1771	44	-	2	43	-	3	0	-	29
1772	110	10	-	60	2	6	+52	-	29
1773									
1774	122	9	1	37	8	2	+85		31
1775	97	9	-	51	4	7	+44	-	33
1776	131	8	-	64	10	5	+60	-	30
1777									
1778									
1779	85	5	2	59	6	7	+20	-	36
1780	55	8	-	61	4	3	-5	-	34
1781	61	8	-	53	4	5	+7	-	34
1782	61	9	-	54	1	7	+8	-	33
1783									
1784	114	13	-	56	14	2	+55	-	34
1785									
1786									
1787	186	9	5	42	12	11	+135	-	38
1788									
1789									
1790	166	10	3	46	4	10	+119	-	38
1791	176	10	4	58	11	8	+113	-	38
1792	131	10	2	55	15	9	+64	-	39
1793	100	13	3	65	12	13	+26	-	39
1794	132	12	2	58	12	12	+64	-	-
1795	88	16	-	75	19	11	-1	-	43
1796	161	10	1	81	19	22	+50	-	42
1797	190	19	2	76	20	13	+102	-	-
1798	197	21	2	56	22	21	+121	-	42
1799	158	10	-	69	16	25	+58	-	-
1800	203	19	1	69	9	8	+137	-	40
1801	225	23	5	77	18	22	+136	-	45
1802	268	38	5	101	29	31	+150	-	-
1814	448	39	5	115	83	41	+352	5994	63
1825	474	-	150	177	192	-	+253		

Table 110 Western Association statistics

Yorkshire and Lancashire Records

Year	Baptised	Dismissed by letter	Restored	Died	Dismissed by letter	Excluded	Difference	Membership	No. Churches
1787	none								17
1791	47	-	-	13	-	23	+11	-	17
1792	43	-	2	17	-	6	+22	-	18
1793	none							-	20
1794	36	16	4	20	15	4	+7	-	-
1795	none							-	-
1796	75 ⁶	2	-	22	3	11	+41	-	-
1797 ⁷	63	-	-	32	-	-	+31	-	-
1798	52	6	5	12	6	14	+31	-	20
1799	224	19	1	16	24	26	+178	-	-
1800									
1801	17 ⁸	-	-	8	-	19	-10	-	-
1802	52 ⁹	-	4	23	4	9	+20	-	-
1803	34 ¹⁰	5	-	20	-	17	+2	-	21
1804	none								20
1805									
1806	92	6	1	15	3	5	+76	-	22
1807	134	16	12	23	9	12	+118	-	26
1808									
1809	137	4	4	32	4	21	+88	-	29
1813	92	9	1	35	5	8	+44	1514 ¹¹	29
1817	164	10	9	37	10	22	+114	2388	36

Table 111 Yorkshire and Lancashire Statistics

⁶ These seventy-five are said to be added not baptised and so may include some brought into membership on profession of faith, which at this time was not usual.

⁷ The figures are given as sixty-three added and thirty-two decreased.

⁸ Added

⁹ Added

¹⁰ Added

¹¹ The Membership total is only given by nineteen of the twenty-nine churches that send statistical returns.

Kent and Sussex Association Returns

Year	Baptised	Dismissed by letter	Restored	Died	Dismissed by letter	Excluded	Difference	Membership	No. Churches
1779 ¹²									7
1780									
1781	41	1	-	12	3	15	+12	-	7
1782	31	-	2	14	-	3	+16	-	8
1783	34	-	-	7	-	6	+21	-	9
1784	34	6	-	6	2	8	+24	-	10
1785	88	3	1	10	4	3	+75	-	10
1786	66	6	5	11	3	7	+56	-	10
1787									
1788	60	-	2	12	1	8	+41	-	11
1789									
1790	43	3	-	11	2	12	+21	-	10
1791	<i>none</i>								
1792	99	11	3	16	10	5	+82	-	12
1793	82	8	2	28	8	15	+41	-	14
1794	55	5	2	16	6	37	+3	-	-
1795	-	-	-	-	-	-	+13	-	-
1796	<i>none</i>								
1797									
1798	<i>none</i>								
1799									
1800	<i>none</i>								
1801 ¹³	28	-	-	36	-	-	-8	-	12
1830	149	19	3	34	17	3	+117	1661 ¹⁴	27

Table 112 Kent and Sussex Association Statistics

¹² The minutes note that the statistics were not properly sent by the churches and so are not reproduced. It was hoped they would be produced for the following year.

¹³ The figures are given only as an increase and decrease.

¹⁴ Only nineteen of the twenty-seven churches that send statistics include their membership total.

Number of English Baptist Churches by County

County	1715-1717 ¹⁵	1772- 1773 ¹⁶	1790 ¹⁷	1794	1798	1789 ¹⁸	1811	1812 ¹⁹	1823
Bedfordshire	18	17	16	18	18	15	18	16	21
Berkshire	9	5	6	7	8	5	9	8	9
Buckinghamshire	5	15	9	10	10	11	14	17	26
Cambridgeshire	4	8	8	7	9	8	7	20	20
Cheshire	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	5	6
Cornwall	2	3	2	2	2	2	7	7	10
Cumberland	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	5	2
Derbyshire	-	3	2	2	2	2	3	11	4
Devonshire	7	15	11	12	14	11	16	16	29
Dorsetshire	4	2	3	3	3	2	4	4	5
Durham	-	3	3	2	3	2	4	6	6
Essex	7	14	10	11	12	9	16	17	21
Gloucestershire	14	26	17	16	16	16	19	16	25
Hampshire	12 ²⁰	8	8	8	9	11	14	17	24
Herefordshire	1	4	2	2	2	2	3	4	6
Hertfordshire	12	8	9	8	8	9	8	10	14
Huntingdonshire	1	5	3	5	7	2	12	14	13
Kent	18	30	16	16	18	14	25	24	35
Lancashire	1	14	15	16	19	15	20	27	30
Leicestershire	9	21	7	6	8	6	7	17	9
Lincolnshire	-	17	4	3	4	4	-	22	11
London	-	46	15	20	21	24	28	20	32
Middlesex ²¹	23	13	3	3	8	3	12	33	17
Southwark			8						
Norfolk	3	19	11	11	14	10	19	16	31
Northamptonshire	23	16	19	20	19	17	26	5	28

(Table 113 Growth of numbers of Baptist Churches by County 1715-1798 derived from Evans, Thompson, the *BAR* and the *BM*. Continued on next page)

¹⁵ This column is taken from the Evans List, Table 8

¹⁶ This column is taken from the Josiah Thompson List, Table 15

¹⁷ The figures for 1790, 1794 and 1798 are taken from the *BAR*

¹⁸ The figures for 1789, 1811, 1823, and 1812 are from the *BM*

¹⁹ This list includes GB as well as PB churches

²⁰ Hampshire here corresponds to Southampton on the Evans List

²¹ Whereas I have given one figure on the Evan's List for London and environs under Middlesex in Ripon's List Middlesex, London, and Southwark are considered separately in 1790, but in 1794 and 1798 one figure is given for London and Southwark under London.

(Table 113 continued)

County	1715-1717 ²²	1772- 1773 ²³	1790 ²⁴	1794	1798	1789 ²⁵	1811	1812 ²⁶	1823
Northumberland	-	3	2	1	1	2	2	9	3
Nottinghamshire	1	9	3	3	3	3	5	6	6
Oxfordshire	6	3	5	7	5	5	6	2	9
Rutlandshire	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	11	1
Shropshire	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	15	15
Somersetshire	13	14	15	15	15	15	19	6	33
Staffordshire	1	0	2	4	6	-	5	16	13
Suffolk	-	3	2	2	6	2	19	15	32
Surrey	13	2	2	4	7	1	8	16	15
Sussex	8	12	8	8	9	9	11	8	14
Warwickshire	5	9	7	7	7	7	9	3	16
Wiltshire	7	19	13	15	16	13	20	17	27
Worcestershire	8	6	9	11	12	10	13	9	18
Yorkshire	-	21	28	30	29	28	35	42	46
TOTALS	249	414	312	32	361	307	451	532	681

Table 113 Growth of numbers of Baptist Churches by County 1715-1798 derived from Evans, Thompson, the *BAR* and the *BM*

²² This column is taken from the Evans List, Table 8

²³ This column is taken from the Josiah Thompson List, Table 15

²⁴ The figures for 1790, 1794 and 1798 are taken from the *BAR*

²⁵ The figures for 1789, 1811, 1823, and 1812 are from the *BM*

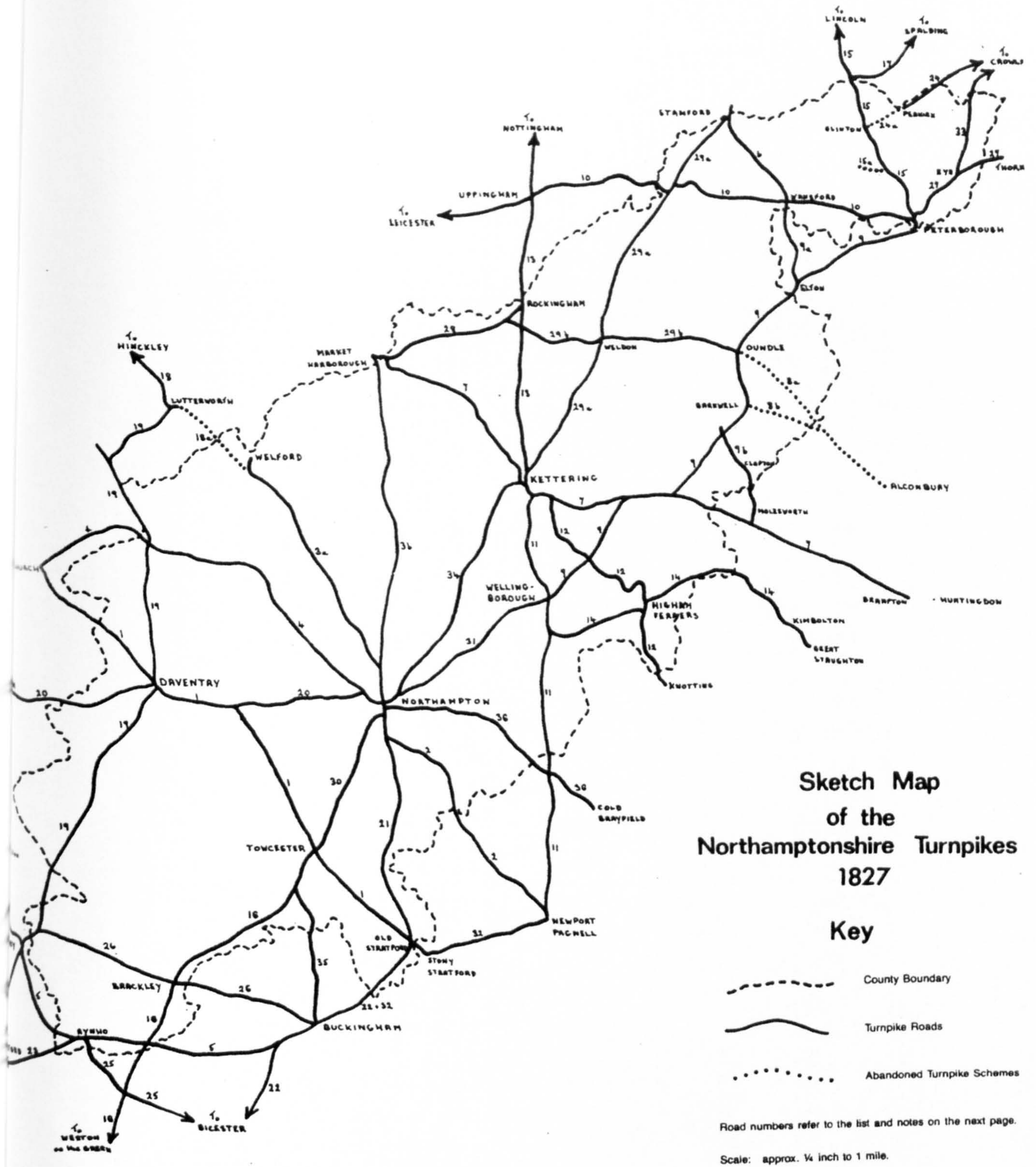
²⁶ This list includes GB as well as PB churches

Appendix IV Maps



Map 1 Northamptonshire and surrounding counties

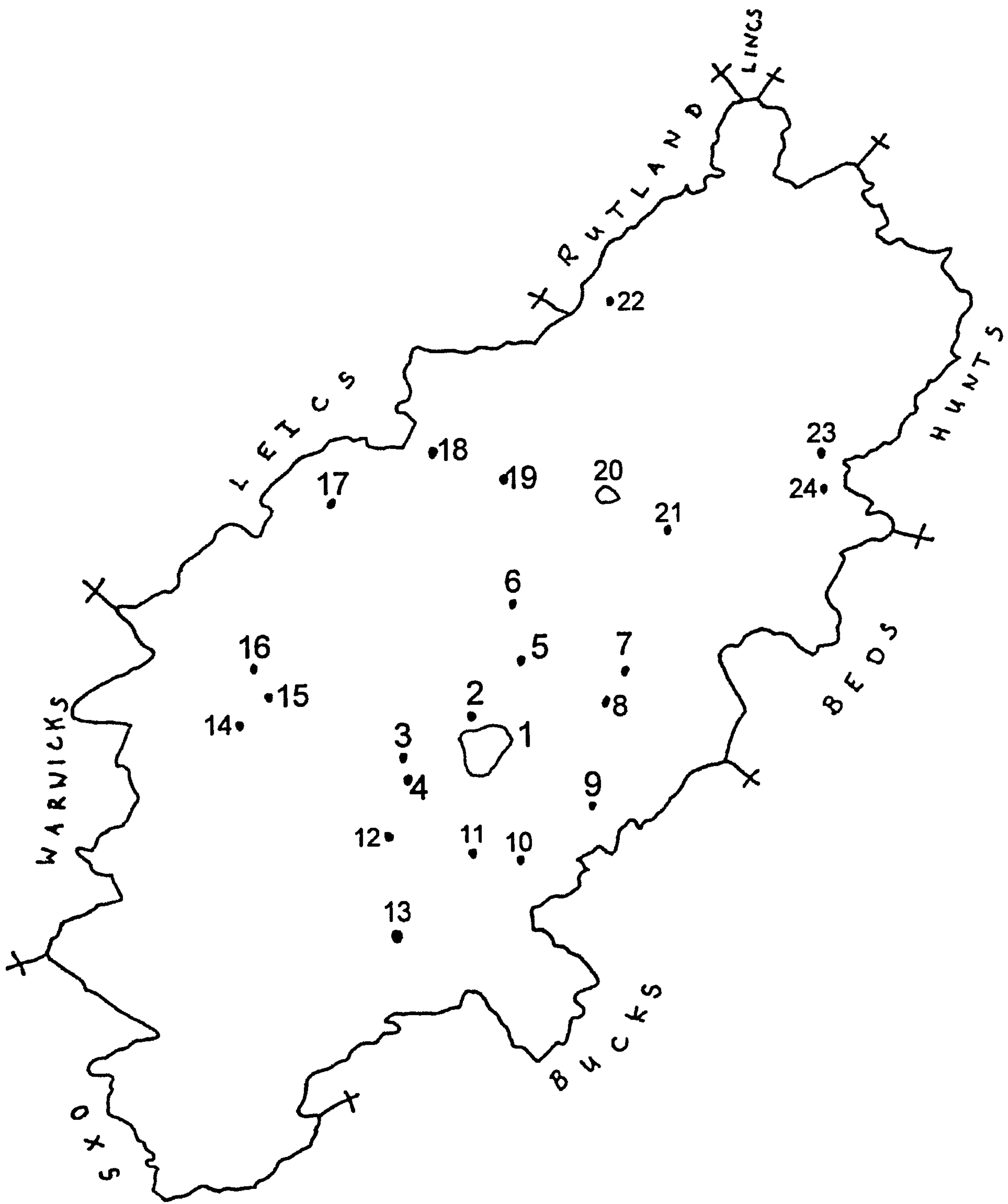
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Map 3 Northamptonshire Turnpikes 1827

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE TURNPIKES

Reference number	Road	Date of first act
1	Old Stratford to Dunchurch (Warwicks)	1706-7
2	Stoke Goldington (Bucks) to Northampton	1709
3a	Northampton to Welford	1721-2
3b	Northampton to Market Harborough (Leics)	1721-2
4	Dunchurch (Warwicks) to St James End, Northampton	1738-9
5	Buckingham via Aynho to Warmington (Warwicks)	1743-4
6	Wansford to Stamford (Lincs)	1748-9
7	Market Harborough (Leics) via Kettering to Brampton (Hunts)	1751-2
8a	Oundle to Alconbury (Hunts)	1753
8b	Barnwell to Alconbury (Hunts)	1753
9	Peterborough via Oundle and Thrapston to Wellingborough	1753-4
9a	Elton (Hunts) to Wansford (The Elton branch of road 9)	1772-3
9b	Lilford via Clapton to Molesworth (Hunts) (The Clapton branch of road 9)	1772-3
10	Leicester via Wansford to Peterborough	1753-4
11	Kettering via Wellingborough to Newport Pagnell (Bucks)	1753-4
12	Knotting (Beds) via Higham Ferrers to Barton Seagrave	1753-4
13	Nottingham via Oakham (Rutland) to Kettering	1753-4
14	Great Staughton (Hunts) to Wellingborough	1754-5
15	Lincoln to Peterborough	1755-6
15a	Marholm Lane to Walton	1755-6
16	Towcester via Brackley to Weston on the Green (Oxon)	1756-7
17	Spalding (Lincs) to Maxey	1756-7
18	Hinckley (Leics) to Lutterworth (Leics)	1761-2
18a	Walcot nr Lutterworth (Leics) to Welford	1761-2
19	Banbury (Oxon) via Daventry to Lutterworth (Leics)	1765
20	Warwick via Daventry to Northampton	1765
21	Hardingstone to Old Stratford	1767-8
22	Stony Stratford (Bucks) via Old Stratford and Bicester (Oxon) to Woodstock (Oxon)	1768-9
23	Burford (Oxon) to Banbury (Oxon) and Aynho	1770
24	Scheme for Preserving the Great Bank of the Welland river from Spalding (Lincs) to Peakirk and for making a road thereon	1772
24a	Extension of the road on the Welland Great Bank from Peakirk to Ginton	1772
25	Bicester (Oxon) to Aynho	1790-1
26	Buckingham via Brackley to meet road 19 near Banbury	1790-1
27	Peterborough to Thorney (Cambs)	1792
28	Little Bowden to Rockingham	1792-3
29a	Stamford Baron via Weldon to Kettering	1794
29b	Oundle via Weldon to Middleton Lane nr Rockingham	1794
30	Towcester to Cotton End, Northampton	1794-5
31	Wellingborough to Northampton	1796-7
32	Buckingham to Old Stratford, Stony Stratford (Bucks) to Newport Pagnell (Bucks)	1814-5
33	Crowland (Lincs) to Eye	1817
34	Kettering to Northampton	1819
35	Buckingham to meet road 16 near Towcester	1824
36	Northampton to Cold Brayfield (Bucks)	1826-7



Map 3 NPBA Churches c1770-1830

Key to NPBA Churches:

1. College Lane,
Northampton
2. Kingsthorpe
3. Harpole
4. Kislingbury
5. Moulton
6. Walgrave
7. Earls Barton
8. Ecton
9. Hackleton
10. Roade
11. Blisworth
12. Bugbrook
13. Towcester
14. Long Buckby
15. Ravensthorpe
16. Guilsborough
17. Clipston
18. Braybrook
19. Rothwell (Richard
David Independent
Church)
20. Fuller, Kettering
21. Burton Latimer
22. Gretton
23. Thrapston
24. Ringstead

Appendix V – General Baptist Statistics

The NCGB maintained good membership records from their origins. Currie, Gilbert and Horsley in provide the complete series of records from 1770 until 1891 when the NCGB and the Particular Baptists formed the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.¹ They illustrate that as vibrant as the NCGB was, it was minor story numerically. In 1770 the NCGB had a membership of 1,221, building slowly year on year until in 1891 it had 26,805 members. The General Baptist Historian J.H. Wood provides comprehensive information regarding the growth of General Baptist Churches from 1770-1846.² The following table provides a summary of the relevant information. Table 114 to Table 115 relate to I The English Baptist Church in 1770 section I.C The emergence of the New Connexion of General Baptists, p. 18.

Years	No. New Churches	Closed Churches	Number of Members						
			1785	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1845
1770-1785	20	2	1826	2123	2181	2602	2653	3557	4855
1785-1800	16	1		587	915	1166	1562	1950	2427
1800-1820	42	6				1234	2906	3981	5301
1820-1846	55	13					975	2352	4199
TOTALS	133	22	1826	2710	3096	4002	8096	11840	16822

Table 114 General Baptist Church Growth from 1770-1845

Years	Number of extant Churches	Average membership in 1845
Pre-1785	20	243
1785-1800	16	151
1800-1820	42	126
1820-1846	55	76

Table 115 NCGB – Average membership of churches by length of existence

Country	Total
England	197,403
Wales	92,394
Scotland	12,304
Ireland	1,847
Total	303,948

Table 116 Membership of the Baptist Union by country in 1891

¹ Currie et al (1977), pp. 147-151

² Wood (1847), pp. 181-233

Appendix VI – The BHMS

County	Station	Missionary	No. Villages	No. Sunday schools
Berkshire	Cholsey	S. Cooper	3	2
Bedfordshire				
Buckinghamshire				
Cambridgeshire	Landbeach	W. Harris	3	2
Cheshire	Chester			
Cornwall	Gwinear			
	Helston	J. Lane	4	2
	Marazion	J. Parsons	5	2
Cumberland				
Durham	South Shields	J. Dawson	3	1
	Stockton	W. Leng	3	2
Derbyshire	Chesterfield			
Dorsetshire	Dorchester	Mr. Sincox	2	1
	Chideock			
	Mr. Glanville	3	2	
Devonshire	Croyde	J. May	3	2
	St. Hill	C. Hawkins	3	2
	Great Torrington	T. Pulsford	4	2
	Sheepwash	R. Pyne	4	1
Essex	Langham	S. Saunders	3	1
Gloucestershire	Lechlade	R. Breeze	4	2
	Winstone	T. Davis	4	2
Huntingdonshire				
Hampshire	Isle of Wight	Various	4	1
	Niton		3	1
	Yarmouth	Mr. Watts	3	1
	Anmore	H. Corssman	4	2
Kent	Romney	J. Metters	5	2
Lancashire				
Lincolnshire	Gainsborough			
Leicestershire	Appleby	J. Barnett	3	2
Middlesex				
Monmouthshire	Penrose	M. Jones	6	1
	Penalt	J. Burroughs	3	1
	Ragland	J. Harris	4	2
Northumberland				
Northamptonshire	Aldwinkle	D. Parkins	4	2
Nottinghamshire				
Norfolk	Tittleshall			

Table 117 BHMS Preaching Stations and Sunday Schools 1829. Continued on next page)

(Table 117 continued)

County	Station	Missionary	No. Villages	No. Sunday schools
Oxfordshire	South Creek	J. Grimes	4	1
	Swaffham	J. Hewitt	4	2
	Shipdham	J. Rouse	2	1
	Chalgrove	J. Cork	3	1
	Bloxham	D. Nunnick	2	1
	Woodstock	C. Dunkin	2	1
	Cleavelly	J. Hiorns	2	1
	Wheatley		1	1
Rutlandshire				
Shropshire				
Staffordshire				
Suffolk	Sutton	S. Squirrel	3	1
	Otley	J. Cole	4	1
	Stoke Ash	J. Cooper	3	1
	Horam	M. Harvey	3	1
	Halesworth	J. Gowing	4	1
Surrey				
Sussex	Medhurst	W. Stokes	4	2
	Highbridge		3	2
	Perriton	J. Cocks	5	2
	Wedmore	J. Chandler	3	2
Westmoreland				
Warwickshire	Kenilworth	J. Cole	3	1
	Southam		3	2
	Kineton	J. Cook	3	2
	Semley	G. Shell	5	2
Wiltshire	Berwick	Mr. Chapman		
Worcestershire				
Yorkshire				
North Wales	Llanwryst	J. Thomas	7	2
	Llangollen	J. Pritchard	5	1
South Wales	Bridgend	J. James	5	3
		J. Richards		
Guernsey	St. Peter's Port	J. Naut	5	4
Scilly Isles	St. Mary's	C. Rogers	3	2
	Tresco	E. Webber	2	2
	St. Agnes	J. Nicholls	2	2
	Brehar	J. McFarlane	2	1
Totals	62	53	186	85

Table 117 BHMS Preaching Stations and Sunday Schools 1829¹¹ See p. 178

Appendix VII - The Prayer Call of 1784

The NPBA CL for 1784 reproduces in full the 'Prayer Call.' as a postscript as follows:

P.S. Upon a motion being made to the ministers and messengers of the associate Baptist churches assembled at Nottingham, respecting meetings for prayer, to bewail the low estate of religion, and earnestly implore a revival of our churches, and of the general cause of our Redeemer, and for that end to wrestle with God for the effusion of his Holy Spirit, which alone can produce the blessed effect, it was *unanimously* RESOLVED (*sic*), to recommend to all our churches and congregations, the spending of one hour in this important exercise, on the *first* Monday in every calendar month.

We hereby solemnly exhort all the *churches in our connection*, to engage heartily and perseveringly in the prosecution of this plan. And thus it may be well to endeavour to keep the same hour, as a token of our unity therein, it is supposed the following scheme may suit many congregations, viz. to meet on the first Monday evening in May, June, and July, from 8 to 9. In *Aug.* from 7 to 8. *Sept.* and *Oct.* from 6 to 7. *Nov. Dec., Jan.* and *Feb.* from 5 to 6. *March* from 6 to 7; and *April* from 7 to 8. - Nevertheless if this hour, or even the particular evening, should not suit in particular places, we wish our brethren to fix on one more convenient to themselves.

We hope also that as many of our brethren who live at a distance from our places of worship may not be able to attend there, that as many as are conveniently situated in a *village* or neighbourhood, will unite in *small societies* at the same time. And if any *single individual* should be so situated as not to be able to attend to this duty in society with others, let him retire at the appointed hour, to unite the breath of prayer in private with those who are thus engaged in a more public manner. - The grand object in prayer is to be, that the Holy Spirit may be poured down on our ministers and churches, that sinners may be converted, the saints edified, the interest of religion revived, and the name of God glorified. At the same time remember, we trust you will not confine your requests to your own societies, or to your own immediate connection; let the whole interest of the Redeemer be affectionately remembered, and the spread of the gospel to the most distant parts of the habitable globe be the object of your most fervent requests. -- We shall rejoice if *any other Christian societies* of our own and other denominations will unite with us, and do now invite them most cordially to join heart and hand in the attempt.

Who can tell what the consequence of such an united effort in prayer may be! Let us plead with God the many gracious promises of his word, which relate to the future success of his gospel. He has said, *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them, I will increase them with men like a flock, Ezek. xxxvi. 37.* Surely we have love enough to Zion to set apart *one hour* at a time, twelve times in a year, to seek her welfare.¹

¹ CL (NPBA, 1784), p. 12. All italics are part of the original.

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- Arnesby, Leicestershire, 1778-1819, 29
- Blaby, Leicestershire, 1813-1819, 3
- Brauntsone, Leicestershire, 1790-1814, 17
- Braybrook, Northamptonshire, 1808-1814, 5
- Bugbrook, Northamptonshire, 1806-1819, 7
- Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, 1795-1814, 11
- Carlton, Bedfordshire, 1765-1793, 11 (only church with letters prior to 1775 and then only the letter for 1765)
- Clipston, Northamptonshire, 1779-1814, 29
- Codnor, Derbyshire, 1781-1793, 7 - becomes Loscoe, Derbyshire, 1795-1814, 30
- College Lane, Northampton, Northamptonshire, 1778-1819, 29
- Collingham, Nottinghamshire, 1808-1814, 5
- Fenny Stratford, Buckinghamshire, 1808-1819, 6
- Foxton, Leicestershire, 1775-1814, 26
- Friar Lane, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, 1775-1819, 31
- Gretton, Northamptonshire, 1780-1819, 27 (the first letter prior to 1780 is undated)
- Guilsborough, Northamptonshire, 1788-1814, 17
- Ivinghoe, Buckinghamshire, 1806-1813, 5
- Kettering, Northamptonshire, 1775-1814, 30
- Leicester, Leicestershire, 1775-1814, 28
- Loughborough, Leicestershire, 1819, 1
- Luton, Bedfordshire, 1806-1814, 6
- Moulton, Northamptonshire, 1791-1814, 15
- Newark, Nottinghamshire, 1810-1814, 4
- Oakham, Rutland, 1775-1819, 29
- Olney, Buckinghamshire, 1779-1814, 28
- Roade, Northamptonshire, 1775-1819, 31
- St. Albans, Hertfordshire, 1775-1814, 30
- Sheepshead, Leicestershire, 1775-1814, 30
- Soham, Cambridgeshire, 1778-1799, 17
- Southwell, Nottinghamshire, 1813-1814, 2
- Spalding, Lincolnshire, 1775-1808, 22
- Sutton Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, 1775-1814, 25
- Sutton in the Elms, Leicestershire, 1775-1811, 30
- Swanwick, Derbyshire, 1806-1814, 6

- Thorn, Bedfordshire, 1788-1801, 10, becomes Dunstable, Bedfordshire, 1804-1814, 7
- Walgrave, Northamptonshire, 1785-1806, 4

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