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**THE MISSIONARY ZEAL
OF
SCOTTISH CONGREGATIONALISM**

GORDON A CAMPBELL

For PhD by Existing Published or Creative Works

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Sunderland
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Abstract

Congregationalism is a form of church government in which authority rests with local church meetings, comprising all church members. 21st century Christians of other traditions sometimes criticise their peers for being 'congregational' when what they are really objecting to is parochialism. In some ways, it would hardly be surprising were independent churches found to have a narrower outlook. Indeed, one of the features of some of the early Scottish Churches organised on a Congregational basis was that they were too inward-looking to attract new members and grow. In practice, though, the revival of Scottish Congregationalism from the 1790s onwards was underpinned by a zeal for missionary outreach across Scotland and also overseas.

In exploring that revival, this study will demonstrate that growth was not inspired by devotion to a particular way of organising the Church. Rather, Congregationalism was a means not an end. Independency became a convenient home for a movement which might, in other circumstances, have led to revival within another denomination. Many attracted to Congregationalism in this period were drawn by its personal and optimistic theology – something that continued with the formation of the Evangelical Union in 1843. This change in theological outlook was crucial to inspiring missionary endeavour both at home and overseas.

As other shades of dissent emerged, many adherents transferred their allegiance from Congregationalism. They had been attracted by what they found in Congregationalism – rather than being committed to Congregationalism as a principle of church government.

This study summarises growth and proposes explanations for decline – as well as exploring (in the published papers), as examples, the witness in Angus, Bute, Perthshire, and Aberdeen. In addition, the founding role played by a Scot on the Isle of Man is examined. In order to make claims for Scottish Congregationalism as a whole, it has been important to evidence that what happened in the geographical areas examined in detail was, in fact, representative of the country as a whole.

Whereas historians of Scottish Congregationalism have tended to adopt a linear approach (tracing earlier native denominations organised in a Congregational manner),

this study does attempt a wider outlook, examining not just what was happening in other denominations at the time, but also wider societal changes. Though revival was not intrinsically linked to Congregationalism as a form of church order, Congregationalism's non-hierarchical structure did offer a competitive advantage in allowing a quicker and more flexible response to emerging needs in Scotland. One tenet of this study is that denominational boundaries, in practice, were more permeable than is often realised.

In conclusion, the study will attempt to present some evidence for Scottish Congregationalism acting as a catalyst for wider change, notably in the Presbyterian churches.

Dedication

This volume is dedicated with heart-felt appreciation to my parents who have been unceasing in their support of me through all my endeavours.

Acknowledgments

The Bibliography serves not just as a list of works consulted, but as an appreciation of the debt I owe to those whose work has laid firm foundations on which I could later build. None of us researches in a vacuum.

I am grateful for the wise counsel of my supervisors. I started this exercise under the guidance of Professor Peter Rushton. His wide-ranging interests helped broaden my vision, before his untimely death. Dr Delphine Doucet then took over as my supervisor, having to contend with a Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of the History department alongside getting to grips with my work on 18th and 19th century Scottish church history. Her insights and support really helped me to refine my research questions – and to allow more of my own voice to emerge through the narrative. I am also grateful to my examiners (Dr Kevin Yuill of the University of Sunderland, and Dr Alasdair Raffe of the University of Edinburgh) – and for the encouragement of all the staff at the University of Sunderland with whom I have had contact (including Dr John Fulton, Director of Postgraduate Research, and Professor Donna Chambers, Independent Chair of the Examiners).

I must put on record my appreciation to the members of Perth Congregational Church for their interest in my research, and support for the PhD process. With them rests the initiative for this project, for their Call to me (in 2006) to be their minister initially sparked my interest in the story of Scottish Congregationalism. I also wish to thank the wider Congregational family (and especially my friends in the Scottish Congregational Fellowship) for encouragements in many different ways with my forays into the past.

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Research Background

When a leaflet for visitors to Perth Congregational Church (Scotland) was being created, the wording of an early draft unfortunately suggested that a minister, on deciding to leave, would be hanged. The intention, of course, had been to indicate that a picture of each minister would be hung at the end of his or her tenure. Perth Congregational Church currently displays portraits of all the previous ministers who have served since the current building was opened in 1899, together with one portrait of a minister who served only in an earlier building. The congregation's roots actually stretch back to 1794, much earlier than the starting point for the portrait gallery. Perth had churches from both the Congregational and Evangelical Union traditions, but the history of Congregational expression in the city is fairly complicated. New causes had to rent premises before they could afford to buy or build – and changes in circumstance (opportunity, growth, or schism) meant that the early Congregational groupings frequently changed meeting-place (sometimes by choice, sometimes by necessity).

In the century from 1794, at least nine different locations in Perth were used as meeting places by Congregationalists. Some of these locations were used more than once – in other words the same building might later be used by a different grouping under a different appellation. By counting separately each change of location or church name, at least eighteen incarnations of a Congregational Church can be identified in the city. For a few years in the first decade of the 19th century, a Gaelic Congregational church operated in Perth (reflecting the number of highlanders relocating south in search of work). Between 1858 and 1872, there were two Congregational churches (meeting in English) in the city, together with a church of the Evangelical Union (McNaughton, 1993, pp.452-455). With the passage of time, not all of these locations are easy to pinpoint. In some cases, a hall was hired, or the 'upper part of a tenement' (MacNaughton, 1993, p.454). Sometimes a street may be known, but the exact location may now be unclear. Figure 1, however, illustrates some of these Congregational church meeting places on a map of Perth as it was in the 1860s.



Fig. 1 – Locations of some of the Congregational Churches in Perth in the 18th and 19th centuries¹

Curiosity prompted me to try to find out something of the story behind the faces on the wall, but also to see how much could be recovered of over a century of congregational histories before the current church building was opened. That was the starting point for my forays – but I was also intrigued to explore a tradition which was not my own. I was ordained into the Church of Scotland, and remain an auxiliary minister (i.e. non-stipendiary – a volunteer) in that Presbyterian fold, recognised by the Congregational Federation as a minister of another denomination serving a Congregational church.

Finding out what I could about a couple of my predecessors led directly to two publications (Campbell, 2011, 2016a). Being involved in the establishment of a new Congregational Church in Glen Clova, Angus prompted me to attempt to research the history of Congregationalism across the county (Campbell, 2012). Angus (or Forfarshire as it was

¹ The map of Perth is an 1823 city plan (Wood, J.) from the records of the National Library of Scotland. Church locations have been added using information drawn from McNaughton (1993) – but in some cases, although the existence of a Congregational Church is known, the exact location of its meeting place is unclear.

called until 1928) previously included Dundee within its bounds. As I focused on the territory of the modern local authority area, I did not trace the origins of Congregationalism in Dundee, but I did highlight where support from the city was pivotal to the establishment of new churches in the wider region. Holidaying again on the Isle of Man led me to explore the history of Congregationalism there, and in so doing to discover the foundational role played by a Scot (Campbell, 2013). While researching my first publication, I came across references to two Congregational churches, largely now forgotten, somewhere in the hills between Dundee (on the outskirts of which I live) and Perth (where my church is located). The fact that this minister shared my surname made me all the more keen to unearth his story. In so doing, I established that the published record had been wrong in recording two churches. In fact, one church had been known by two different names (Campbell, 2015). I next focused on the short-lived Congregational witness on the Island of Bute (Campbell, 2016 & 2017), and then on the Bible Women movement, which was initiated in Scotland by an Aberdeen Congregational church (Campbell, 2019).

One of the joys of independent scholarship is being able to choose which avenues to explore. It was exciting to unearth forgotten information about local churches – and to share these findings with others. It was a big surprise, for example, to discover direct links between Perth Congregational Church and two Presidents of the USA. One former minister ended up in a church in Washington DC with the 6th US President (John Quincy Adams) in membership, and another assistant minister was the maternal grandfather of the 28th US President (Woodrow Wilson). The drawback to this piecemeal and scattergun approach, however, was an initial focus on what information I could unearth. The fact that I was not evaluating clearly stated research aims meant that my earlier work was too descriptive.

Since Congregationalism is rooted in local decision-making, it is hardly surprising that the history of individual churches should reflect local circumstances. As my work progressed, however, it became clear that common themes were emerging. It became clear to me that Congregational churches appeared to establish for a variety of reasons. For many, the attraction was not to Congregationalism as a form of church organisation, but to the

kind of theology or worship they found therein. This loose attachment, in some cases, also helped make sense of the decline of Congregationalism as people were attracted to other emerging denominations. There were also cases, though, where the real trigger for a Congregational church emerging was dissatisfaction with the set-up in a church of another tradition from which worshippers broke away.

If I was to make claims for Scotland as a whole, however, it was important to demonstrate that features I identified at the local level in fact were more widely applicable. Were the same factors at play in rural and urban Scotland? As there had been no scientific basis for the initial selection of geographical areas, were the contributory factors identified in any way representative of trends across Scotland as a whole?

My published work has focused particularly on Aberdeen, Angus (which formerly included also Dundee), Buteshire and Perthshire – with a foray beyond Scotland into the Isle of Man. An article on Fife has been accepted for publication (2025) – and my unpublished research has mainly focused on Argyll, Dundee and Shetland. Though these were my starting points, I found myself ranging widely geographically (including in England, and the United States), as well as across denominational boundaries.

Scottish counties have not been fixed in time. Modern-day East Lothian was known as Haddingtonshire until 1921, and there was even an Edinburghshire (now Midlothian) until 1890. Clearly counties differ in size and population density. Without getting bogged down in detail at this stage, Figure 2 simply seeks to demonstrate the growth of Congregationalism in Scotland. Taking two snapshots in time, just five decades apart, it illustrates the increasing number of counties with a settled Congregational presence. (A settled presence has been interpreted as being more than visits from itinerant Congregational preachers. Rather evidence was sought for establishment of a Congregational Church as an entity, regardless of whether or not that community had its own building.)

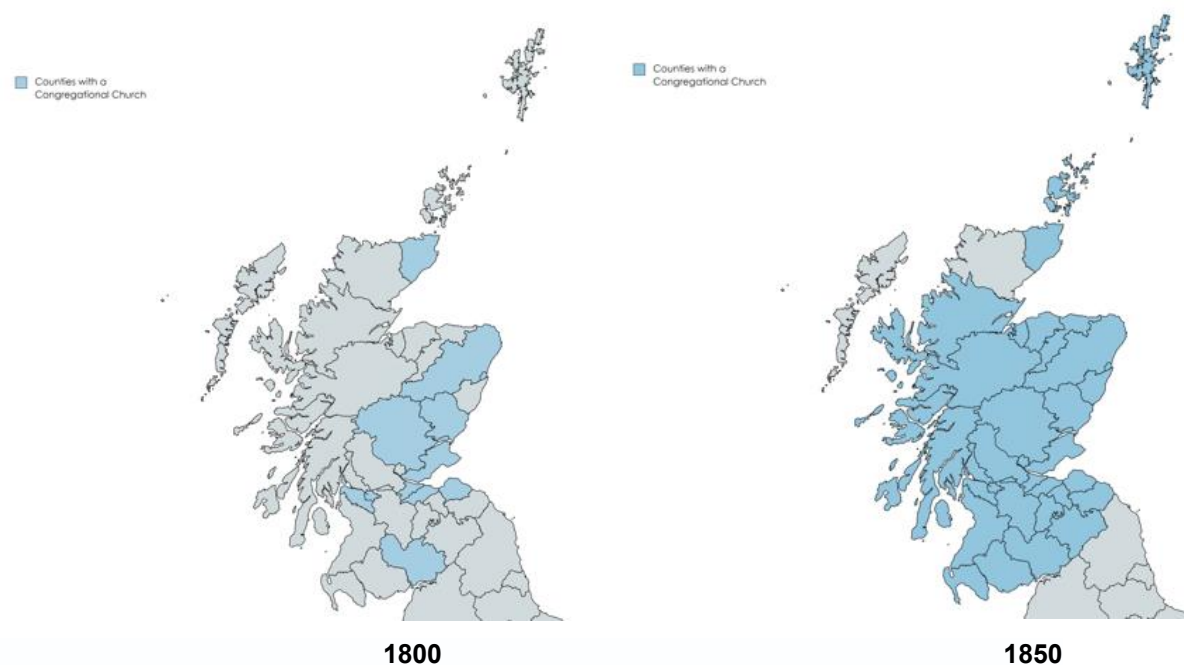


Fig. 2 – Scottish Counties with a Congregational Church in 1800 and 1850²

In my later work, I tried to do two further things. I tried to tie together the varied threads of my research by considering the wider “Legacy of Scottish Congregationalism”. An article with this title was accepted for publication in Issue 19.1 of the *International Congregational Journal* (2021). Although this journal moved from print to online, it then folded during the Covid-19 pandemic – and Issue 19.1 never appeared! I also tried to set my work on Congregationalism within a broader Scottish context for both mission and dissent. One of my key findings here was that, for many of its supporters, Congregationalism was a means not an end (Campbell, 2024). Recognising this helps make sense of rapid growth, as well as of later decline.

² Template blank map of Scottish counties from <https://mapchart.net/uk.html> [Accessed 18/11/21]. Information per county compiled from the history of individual Congregational Churches – McNaughton (1993, pp.287-485).

Chapter 2 is a literature review – placing the revival of Scottish Congregationalism in its historical context, and attempting to indicate how this study builds on earlier work. Chapter 3 outlines the sources and methods used for this research. Chapter 4 explores the development of Congregationalism in Scotland, with Chapter 5 focussing on Scottish Congregationalism’s missionary nature. Chapter 6 explores reasons for the decline of Scottish , as well as movements between denominations. Chapter 7 focuses on the legacy of Scottish Congregationalism – both in terms of theology and the nature of the church. Often overlooked is the fact that Congregationalism influenced thinking in other denominations – meaning that its impact is much wider than usually identified. Chapter 8 pulls together the published papers. Chapter 9 summarises the conclusions to the research questions – but also sets out what has been learned through this whole exercise, in terms of process as well as content.

1.2 Research Aims

In the Church of Scotland, with its Presbyterian structure, the worshipping community meeting in a particular locality is called a ‘congregation’.³ The word ‘congregational’ is, therefore, used to describe things that relate to a particular, local church (rather than to the wider denomination) – such as the congregational board, the congregational magazine, or the congregational outing. The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* (2018) outlines two different meanings for the adjective ‘congregational’. The primary definition offered is, ‘of or pertaining to a congregation’, with a secondary definition referring to the ‘lowest unit in the Presbyterian system’. When given a capital letter, however, the *OED* defines ‘Congregational’ as being ‘of or pertaining to the form of ecclesiastical polity called Congregationalism’. These subtle differences in meaning present plenty opportunities for misunderstanding. It is difficult enough in writing, but impossible in speech, to make the distinction between ‘congregational’ and ‘Congregational’!

Since the primary meaning of ‘congregational’ relates to an individual congregation, the word is sometimes, by implication, used to describe those with no interest in wider Christian expression, and an exclusive focus on the local church.⁴ To be ‘congregational’ in that sense is to have an, ‘I’m alright, Jack’ attitude. Parochial might be a better descriptor.

Since Congregationalism, as a tradition, is built on the primacy and independence of each church, it is understandable that ‘Congregational’ churches should often be assumed to be ‘congregational’! That this study focuses on missionary zeal highlights that Scottish Congregationalism had a concern far beyond the walls of the local churches – worked out in missionary endeavours both at home and overseas.

³ The term ‘charge’ is used to designate the sphere of service of a parish minister – which may be with one ‘congregation’ or with two or more ‘congregations’.

⁴ Many denominations operate a system whereby local churches which would struggle financially (because they operate either in areas which are sparsely populated or economically-challenged) are supported from central funds by contributions made by more affluent local churches. The Church of Scotland faces particular challenges, as its constitution states that it must maintain the ordinances of religion in every parish in Scotland (UK Government, 1921).

In this work, four aims have been set:

The first objective is to examine the reasons for the revival and development of Congregationalism, and in so doing to understand its place within Scottish society from the late 18th century onwards. This will necessitate exploring how Congregationalism connected with the complicated pattern of Presbyterian dissent in Scotland. The reasons why Congregationalism developed later in Scotland than in England will be outlined, together with some comments on the distinctiveness of Scottish Congregational expression.

Secondly, the study will explore whether there was anything unique about the missionary zeal of Scottish Congregationalism at home and abroad, compared to the approach to mission within other denominations.

The third aim is to explore how fixed or otherwise denominational boundaries were in 18th and 19th century Scotland. It is also worth stating, at this early point, that Congregationalism as a group of churches has rather fuzzy edges. If one studies a Church with a denominational structure, it is quite obvious which individual churches are in membership or not. Congregational churches existed in Scotland prior to the formation of a Congregational Union in 1812. When a Union was formed, it never had (or even aspired to have) all Congregational churches in membership. Until the Congregational and Evangelical Unions united in 1896, the churches of the Evangelical Union were not seen as Congregational. Not all Congregational churches had Congregational in their name. Some examples of Congregational churches which did not carry a Congregational appellation would be Annan Independent church in Dumfriesshire and Paul's Independent Chapel in Perth (both formed in 1794), North College Street Chapel in Edinburgh (formed in 1802), and Colinsburgh Independent church in Fife (formed in 1804).

Fourthly and finally, the study will assess the legacy of Scottish Congregationalism, and seek to discern what impact it may have had on other denominational traditions.

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.1 Congregationalism in Scotland

There is no question that, 'Just as there were "Reformers before the Reformation", so there were Independents long before ... the churches commonly known by that name came into existence' (Ross, 1900, p.1). Much debate takes place about the nature and form of the early Celtic church in Scotland – but the 16th century is the obvious place to begin to trace Protestant history in Scotland.

In 1560, the Scots parliament abolished Papal authority and 'the Masse' decreeing that, 'the bischope of Rome haif na jurisdiction nor autoritie within this realme in tyme cuming'⁵ (Records of the Parliament of Scotland, A1560/8/4). The legislation could not actually come into effect until it was passed again after the accession of James VI in 1567. This was because the 1560 parliament was of 'irregular' composition, and had been expressly 'forbidden to deal with religion' (Donaldson, 1960, p.54). Over a century ago, the grand claim was made that the new Church of Scotland was Congregational for the first two decades of its existence – right up until the publication of the 'Second Book of Discipline' in 1581 (Ross, 1900, p.1). Though there were some Congregational elements evident in the fledgling Presbyterian kirk, these were from necessity rather than principle (and only temporarily). Right from the start, local power in the Church of Scotland was vested in the Kirk Session comprising the teaching elder (or minister) and ruling elders – in stark contrast to the Congregational principle of a church meeting with every member having an equal voice. In addition, the very first General Assembly of the Church of Scotland made decisions which were to be applied across the whole denomination. Congregationalism is devoid of an external hierarchy, and no church grouping at regional or national level can make decisions on behalf of the local church.

There are a number of core texts for the history of Scottish Congregationalism – all penned by ministers. Kinniburgh (1851) published a book of biographies of some of the

⁵ That is, 'The Bishop of Rome has no jurisdiction nor authority within this realm in time coming'.

early Congregational ministers in Scotland. Ferguson (1876) was the historian for the Evangelical Union. Ross (1900) published an account of 'Congregational Independency in Scotland'. Published just four years after the union of the Congregational and Evangelical Unions, his book would undoubtedly have been helpful for members of a new united body to gain an understanding of the heritage of the tradition which was not their own.

Escott (1960) relied heavily on all these earlier works – to the extent that some of his wording on the origins of individual congregations seems but a paraphrase of what Ross (1900) had penned. His aim though was to help Scottish Congregationalists rediscover their past, bearing in mind that Ross's book (published some six decades earlier) would not then have been readily available. Escott was quite explicit in his hopes for his text, stating that, 'the aim of the historian is not to embalm the past but to enliven it, and through it to enlighten the present' (Escott, 1960, vii). He was at pains to stress that much of his work was new – not least in terms of his account of Scottish Congregationalism from 1900 (where Ross had left off) until 1958. Escott was also able to draw on work on John Glas (Hornsby, 1938 & 1941 and Thompson's 1932 PhD thesis on the origins of Scottish Congregationalism), unavailable to his predecessors – and felt that one of his contributions to the field was a focus on the 'Liberal Era in nineteenth-century Congregationalism' (Escott, 1960, v).⁶ Thompson's work suggested that the emerging urban population differed 'in many respects from the peasantry from which they were descended' (Thompson, G.L.S. 1932, pp. 120-138). While, at heart, people were essentially the same, undoubtedly urban living brought new freedoms. Social control was 'primarily maintained by communities', but the 'moral codes and disciplinary structures of the church' were the mechanisms by which this was achieved (Ritchie, E., 2019, p.42). Thompson's period of study predated the formation of the Evangelical Union in 1843. This later new expression of Scottish Congregationalism had very clear Presbyterian roots, emerging as it did from the expulsion of a minister from the Secession Church. Indeed the initial intention had been that the Union should be a 'federation of Churches of broader outlook ... within Presbyterianism, but the Churches themselves declared in

⁶ Thompson's period of study predated the formation of the Evangelical Union in 1843.

favour of a Congregational order' (Selbie, 1927, p.157). Ferguson (1876) was also constrained in identifying the wider influence of the Evangelical Union, partly because he was writing from within the tradition, but also because he was writing too early for the broader Morisonian legacy to be clear.

More recently, McNaughton (1993) published a compendium allowing the reader to trace the various ministries in an individual church, or to check the biographical details of an individual minister. McNaughton (1994-2016) followed this with an extensive range of publications ranging widely across Scotland, and giving an account of Congregational witness in different parts of the country.

A number of Congregational biographies were also consulted – giving insights from different parts of Scotland, as well as of Scottish missionaries serving overseas. Examples include studies by Lindsay Alexander (1845 and 1856) of John Watson (of Musselburgh, but who served as secretary of the Congregational Union of Scotland for more than three decades) and Ralph Wardlaw (who ministered in Glasgow for more than half a century). Ecclesiastical biography can sometimes seem a bit incestuous – with Alexander (himself an Edinburgh minister) being the subject of a biography by E.T.McLaren (1911). John Duncan's long ministry in Aberdeen was covered by Allan (1909), his son-in-law. In terms of overseas missionaries, there is much to draw on including Deane (1880) writing about Robert Moffat, and Legge (1905) writing about James Legge. In the 1852 account of the lives of James and Robert Haldane, Alexander Haldane was writing about his own father and uncle. Such biographies are often rich in the kind of detail which would be difficult for a later writer outside the family circle to have access to. Against that, however, needs to be set aside the fact that such accounts (often written by relatives or close friends) inevitably lack the objectivity and even detachment of more conventional biography.

For characters with a national profile, *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, having no particular agenda to pursue, helps set denominational hagiography in a wider context. From a practical point of view, the *Dictionary* can also help identify sources for further

reading. David Livingstone (1813-1873) is, undoubtedly, Scottish Congregationalism's most famous son. The fact that he was an explorer as well as a preacher has contributed to him being a continuing source of study and interest, not least as contemporary scholars wrestle with the continuing implications of colonialism and Empire. There is also a wide range of secondary sources (including Davidson, 2012; Hughes, 1906; Huxley, 1974; Jeal, 1985; Johnstone, 1912; Mackenzie, 2013; Matthews, 1913; McConnell, 2013; Montefiore-Brice, 1894; Ransford, 1978; Roberts, 2008; Ross, 2002; and Shepperson, 1973), obviously with differing viewpoints and perspectives. The plethora of material available for Livingstone is in stark contrast to the limited secondary sources available for many other figures. For Livingstone there are a range of biographical viewpoints, including those which present him as a real human being with both attributes and flaws – and this rather underlines the potential pitfalls of trying to draw conclusions about other individuals for whom the record is much more scanty.

Alongside biographical material, a number of published histories of Congregational churches were studied. Sometimes these are privately published (such as with Taylor, 1934 for Dundee) – sometimes these histories are printed but not published (such as with Fielding, 2011 for Patrick, Glasgow). Bulloch (1898, pp.xi-xii), in writing the centenary history of the first Congregational Church in Aberdeen, neatly summed up the potential limitations of such sources when he stated that his book was 'not ... for recording the shortcomings of our forefathers'. Such texts can be immensely helpful, recording information available nowhere else – but they are not unbiased accounts. They never assumed to be.

Exaggerated claims can be made at the national level as well as the local. Speaking of Congregationalism in England, one writer stated that the governing aim of Independency was nothing less than to, 'reproduce ... Church life of the Apostolic age' (MacHardy, 1893, p.1). Ross (1900) and Escott (1960) both outlined the history of a number of movements they described as 'native', to give Congregationalism in Scotland an ancient Scottish pedigree. The aim here was to defend Congregationalism against accusations (directed at Methodism, for example) of being an import from England.

During the Cromwellian occupation of Scotland in the mid 17th century, Congregationalism did assume a much higher profile. General Monck's military operation lasted nine years, with garrisons quartered in eighteen towns in addition to citadels at Ayr, Inverness, Leith and Perth (Burleigh, 1988, p.231).⁷ Although it has been claimed that the 'English victories stimulated the sects, which having established themselves in England, set out to proselytize the Scots', there was a complicated relationship between military might and the new expressions of Christianity (Ashley, 1977, p.128). Chaplains included men of the calibre of John Owen (1616-1683) - and Joseph Caryl (1602-1673), who was dispatched by the House of Commons to Scotland in 1648 and 1651 (Greaves, 2013 & Seaver, 2004). In addition, a number of the army officers preached – though study of the Dundee court martial records, however, showed, 'no sign among the common soldiers of the religious enthusiasm ... so marked in some of the officers' (Davis, 1919, p.8). Local people certainly attended services, some Cromwellian ministers were installed as parish ministers, and the preaching of the occupiers was noted for its zeal. As Kirk ministers were now debarred from politics, it has been suggested that they may have 'devoted more time to their parishes ... stirred to emulate the earnest preaching of the sectaries' (Mackie, 1991, pp.228-229). The enthusiasm of the Cromwellian preachers, in other words, seemed to influence Presbyterianism.⁸ Despite all this, when the Commonwealth troops withdrew from Scotland on 1 January 1660, the Congregational churches were stripped of leadership. Though the movement had attracted support, it had not yet enough Scots

⁷ Cromwell's government 'tolerated Presbyterianism' and other denominations (but not 'Popery and prelacy'), recognising that it was 'the religion of the majority of Scots', but the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was not allowed to meet, although Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries and Synods were (Reid, 1960, p.84 & Burleigh 1988, p.232).

⁸ Alexander Jaffray, Provost of Aberdeen, was one of the highest profile converts to the principles of Congregationalism (though he never became a member, and would later join the Quakers). Taken prisoner at the Battle of Dunbar (in which his brother was killed) Jaffray wrote of being, 'most civilly and courteously used, beyond what was due to one of my capacity or rank' (Jaffray and Barclay, 1834, p.38). During his captivity of five or six months, he had frequent conversations with Cromwell, General Fleetwood and Dr. Owen. It sounds remarkably civilised – more like after dinner conversation in a University Senior Common Room than the expected discourse between captive and warder – but Owen would go on to become Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford. Jaffray had, 'fought for the king and the Covenant, but doubts now began to arise in his mind about both'. On his release, Jaffray consulted with friends and was surprised to find that a number of them had been forming similar views to his own. Together they drafted a letter, which is acknowledged as, 'probably ... the first manifesto of Congregationalism in Scotland promulgated by Scots' (Escott, 1960, pp.10-11).

whose preaching and organisational skills had been recognised and given the chance to develop. In addition, the wider landscape had also changed. Charles II wished for a unified church structure across Scotland and England – but there would be ongoing tussles with Episcopacy for supremacy, until Presbyterianism was finally restored in 1690.

Scottish Congregational historians were often too ready to assume a linear approach to church history. The simple fact is that although the Congregational Churches of the Commonwealth Period would have had some shared characteristics with the Glasites who broke away from the Kirk in the next century, there was no simple cause and effect relationship. Equally, there was no linear relationship from the Glasites to the Scots Independent and Berean churches, or to the revival from the 1790s onwards. That is not to say that examples cannot be found where a congregation of one of these earlier movements becoming a Congregational church. The Berean Church at Sauchieburn, Kincardineshire, for example, 'adopted Congregational principles in a decided way in 1809', and the Scots Independents at Earlsferry, Fife united with a Congregational church in 1813 (Ross, 1900, p.223 & Beaton, 1929, p.139). Such examples are isolated, however, and at a national level there is certainly no pattern from which a direct line could be traced from these traditions to the revival of Scottish Congregationalism in the late 18th Century.

McNaughton (2003a, 2005, 2007) set himself the monumental task of trying to provide information about Congregationalism across Scotland. His research was very wide - and can often provide an invaluable launch-pad for delving deeper into a locality. Whilst this study has highlighted common themes underlying the establishment of Congregational churches in Scotland, the work has also highlighted that local analysis can uncover subtleties overlooked at the national or regional level. In a tradition focused on local autonomy, it is important that the individual context is not overlooked. Through this study, for example, it was identified that the Lochton and Balfour churches identified by McNaughton in the Carse of Gowrie, Perthshire were, in fact, one and the same. This study also explored the local state of the Church of Scotland in the area, and the fact that Robert Haldane was the local laird. Both of these factors are fundamental to

understanding why a Congregational church was founded at Lochton/Balfour in the first place – yet were entirely missing from the published record as it previously stood.

Ross and Escott both acknowledged that Congregational churches started for a variety of reasons – whereas McNaughton traced revival, ‘to a desire to spread the gospel’ (McNaughton, 2003, 165). McNaughton was right that there was no grand and unifying point of principle on which Congregationalists separated from the Church of Scotland - but in a tradition which emphasises the primacy of the individual church, it should not be a surprise that local factors were sometimes the trigger for the formation of Congregational churches. Strangely, Ross’s first category was for a church started, ‘through the ministrations of one who had no connection with any of the religious bodies in Scotland’ (Ross, 1900, 41). He then explained that the church in Annan was started by a preacher from Ireland. Yet no mention was made of Congregationalism’s ability (by its non-hierarchical structure) to respond more quickly to emerging needs – such as when new towns were built.

The published record does record the importance of itinerant preaching in the revival of Scottish Congregationalism. Whilst there is pride in the published record at the number of Scots going overseas as missionaries, the underlying connections and motivations have not been explored by the earlier Congregational historians. Indeed it was a non-church historian who provided tantalising hints as to how missionary endeavours were directly linked to a changed theological outlook (Devine, 2011, p.195).

The permeability of denominational boundaries is also an under-explored area. Previous work has focussed on why people were drawn into Congregationalism. McNaughton did explore how Congregationalism declined as people were drawn to various shades of Presbyterian dissent (McNaughton, 2003) – but the published work understates how people moved in and out of Congregationalism – and ignores the fact that entire churches sometimes changed denominational affiliation.

The catalytic role of Scottish Congregationalism in bringing about wider change in the churches of Scotland has been largely ignored. Congregational historians have largely confined themselves to Congregationalism – and other historians have often dismissed Congregationalists as numerically insignificant compared to the dominance of Presbyterianism. One, for example, dismissed the wider impact of Glasites and the followers of the Haldanes as, ‘unimportant’ (Smout, 1969, 217). Back in 1843, the Principal Dewar of Marischal College (Aberdeen’s second University, formed in 1593), said that, ‘the future historian of the Church will say that the Congregationalists have done much to bring about the present crisis in the Church of Scotland’ (Ross, 1900, 121 citing *Congregational Magazine*, 1843, 245). Dewar was referring to the evangelical groundwork done by Congregationalists – laying the groundwork for the Disruption and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. For over a century, the broader impact made by Scottish Congregationalism has been rather overlooked – with historians tending to be constrained by denominational boundaries and reluctant to look beyond them.

2.2 Scotland in the 18th and 19th centuries

Hill and Pearce (1967, p.65) pointed out that the labels applied by later historians would often not be recognised by those living through religious change. Collinson (1975, pp.527-562) developed this idea much further by developing what he called a horizontal approach to religious history. To understand the Puritans and Separatists, he argued, one has to focus not on their place in a long history of dissent, but rather by examining their place within society in their time. This study follows that horizontal approach to history, taking the approach that understanding what was happening around at the time is even more important to understanding the revival (and later decline) of Scottish Congregationalism than an appreciation of the earlier movements in Scotland with Congregational characteristics to their organisation. To set Scottish Congregationalism in its wider context (and to provide evidence to support the claim that denominational boundaries were not as fixed as often imagined) it was important to gain a wider understanding of religious history in Scotland. The *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* provide a helpful repository of research on a wide range of topics published from 1926.

Burleigh (1988) gave an overview of the *Church History of Scotland*. With the Church of Scotland crest embossed on the cover, this might be seen as a history of the Church of Scotland, but it is certainly a church history seen through Presbyterian eyes. Although Burleigh might be seen to understate the contribution of Congregationalism to church history in Scotland, he was certainly not alone in doing so. The index of Drummond and Bulloch (1973) for the period 1688 to 1843, for example, gives just one page reference for Congregationalism (albeit with references to the Haldane brothers on a further three pages). Yet if impact is measured by membership alone, then it is understandable that Congregationalism in Scotland should be treated almost as a foot-note. In 1958 (just two years before the first edition of Burleigh's book) the Congregational Union of Scotland had 34,495 members. Although at that time there were considerably more Congregationalists than Baptists in Scotland, Congregationalism amounted to a mere 2.6% of the Church of Scotland membership (Highet, 1960, p.213).

Sources for the Presbyterian schisms include McKerrow (1839) and Scott (1886) for the Secession, JM (1876) for the Relief Church, Brown (1893) for the Free Church of Scotland, McKelvie (1873) for the United Presbyterians, and Beaton (1993) for the Free Presbyterians. Each of these writers addressed their own denominational tradition, in some cases for a significant anniversary. JM (1876) offered more personal reflections, but for the others, the focus is on the justification for their particular tradition and its strengths and distinctive offering. In many cases, indeed, the primary intended readership has been from within the denomination. The work of Bardgett (2002) is invaluable in trying to make sense of the different missionary societies at work in Scotland, particularly in the Highlands, from the 18th century onwards.

Though it often tends to be, denominational history should not be studied in isolation. For this study, what was even more important than understanding what came before, was discerning something of the spirit of the times in which Congregationalism in Scotland grew, flourished, and then declined. Many historical reviews of Scotland were studied – but Graham's (1906) text on 18th century life in Scotland was a helpful springboard. Devine (1995, 1999), Fry (2006, 2013) and Lynch (1992) also have helpful insights. Much has been written of the removal of Scottish tenants in the Highland Clearances – but Aitchison and Cassell (2019) explored what they called a silent revolution as agriculture in the Lowlands was also transformed.

2.3 Congregationalism beyond Scotland

There are a number of texts about Robert Browne (Browne and Crippen, 1903; Moody, 2004 and Smith, D.C. 1937), but various sources provide helpful background information on Congregationalism in England (Brownell, 1982; Dale and James, 1996; Fletcher, 1847, Murray, 1962 and Selbie, 1927). Despite Browne being the ‘first significant writer of the side of Separatism’, he was not the inventor of the tradition, and though he ‘has had more than his fair share of the attention of researchers’, he almost certainly played a less pivotal role than is generally attributed to him (White, 1971, pp.1-19 & 44). Governor Bradford of New Plymouth expounded clearly in 1648 that Separatism was ‘no Elizabethan or Reformation novelty, but was built upon the teaching of the Bible, and especially, the New Testament’. Bradford also appealed to ‘the record of the martyrs ... in an obvious reference to John Foxe’s book’, and made reference to a church in London ‘in the time of Queen Mary of which Mr. Rough was pastor or teacher and Cudbert Simson a deacon ... who professed and practised that cause before Mr. Browne wrote for it’ (White, 1971, p.2⁹).

Brownists is a name used by opponents of Independency, rather than a name Congregationalists took for themselves. Browne himself was eventually reconciled to the Church of England – but his contemporary nick-name of ‘Troublechurch Browne’ becomes more understandable when one remembers that he was imprisoned 32 times, excommunicated by the Bishop of Peterborough, and in custody again (aged 80) for ‘assaulting a constable who was pressing him for payment of rates’ (Horner, 1926, p.16). The constable was Browne’s own godson (Moody, 2004).

1662 is a pivotal date for English Congregationalism. On 24 August (St. Bartholomew’s Day) that year, it is estimated that 2,000 independent ministers were ‘ejected’ from the Church of England as a direct consequence of the Act of Uniformity. Congregationalism

⁹ Citing Bradford, W (1648) ‘Governor Bradford’s first dialogue’ in Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts (1920) *Plymouth Church Records 1620-1859*, 22 (Boston), pp.132-141.

then ceased to be a reform movement within the Church of England, and became a movement set apart. For the next 'twenty-six years ... save for brief periods of indulgence, Nonconformity was under the ban of the Law' (Selbie, 1926, p.95).

In addition, a range of regional studies have been carried out in England (including those by Evans, 1899; Hopkins, 2010; Matthew, 1924; Nightingale, 1906 and Steade, 1891). The Dales (father and son) claimed the most ancient pedigree for Congregationalism with the assertion that the church at Corinth was Independent (Dale & Dale, 1907, p.6). The Dales also sought to inspire contemporary followers with a stirring account of earlier persecutions against Congregationalists. Scots Congregationalists did die on overseas mission work – but there is no parallel in Scotland to the early martyrdoms in England (Peel, 1948).

In the outline of the history of the first hundred years of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, it was noted that effective work and witness often seemed to merit increased centralisation, and yet centralisation removed a 'distinctive principle' of Congregationalism (Peel, 1931, p.3). Cornick (1998) reviewed the traditions leading to the formation of the United Reformed Church, though as his publication predated the union with the Scottish Congregational Church (which emerged from the Congregational Union of Scotland in order to facilitate wider union), he was silent on Scottish Congregationalism. Tudor-Jones & Pope (2004) produced the core text of the history of Congregationalism in Wales. Originally published in Welsh in 1966, this scholarship was inaccessible to English speakers for nearly four decades.

Just as the Pilgrim Fathers (or Saints, as they called themselves) went to America in search of religious freedom, it is interesting to note Congregationalism appealing to such varied immigrant groups as Armenians fleeing persecution by the Turkish government (Tootikan, 2019), and German-speaking Russians (Chrystal, 2019). Freedom has become the perceived hallmark of Congregationalism, even among many

Congregationalists. It is true that the Puritans went to America to worship freely – but that is a very different thing from seeking to ‘establish religious freedom as an absolute value’. Historically, those who have sought ‘absolute and unchartered liberty’ did not turn to Congregationalism (Hartley, 2012, pp.62-64¹⁰). For a church to be regarded as Congregational, there needs to be ‘an understanding of the church as a covenanted body of believers’ – which means that Congregationalism is meant to represent ‘far more than democracy in religion’ (Hall, 2016, p.38 and Selbie, 1927, p.70). R. W. Dale complained in 19th century England that the ‘high doctrine of the Church’ as the body of Christ was being lost – and the Scottish experience has been no different. When the expectation in rural parishes was that people would attend church, one can understand John Glas drawing together as a subset those within his parish with a vital religious faith. When church attendance is no longer a social norm, it is harder to see the description of a Congregational church as covenanted believers in Christ being materially different from Christians gathering under the auspices of the Church of Scotland or Scottish Episcopal Church. Almost inevitably, then, the organisational differences become highlighted as the distinguishing feature of Congregationalism. Formerly, it was said (of the English experience) that Congregationalism drew in people who were Christians first and Congregationalists only by accident (Selbie, 1927, pp.12 & 129). A living-faith was the primary attraction – and organisational issues were secondary.

Denominational mergers and the dropping of the word ‘Congregational’ in many places has contributed to Congregational heritage being overlooked by outside observers. The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa is unusual. As ‘One Church in Five Countries’, it operates in Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe and traces its origins back to the work of the first London Missionary Society missionaries - who operated, of course, before current national boundaries were established (The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, 2019). Much more common has been the 20th century union of Congregational Churches with other denominations.

¹⁰ Citing Forsyth, P.T. (1912) *Faith, Freedom and the Future*, London: Independent Press, p.126 & Youngs, J.W.T. (1998) *The Congregationalists*, Westport, CT; Praeger, p.49.

Congregationalists joined with Methodists and Presbyterians to form the Uniting Church in Australia¹¹, with Methodists and 70% of Presbyterians to create the United Church of Canada (the largest Protestant church in the country)¹², and with Reformed and Lutheran churches to form the United Church of Christ in the USA.¹³ The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands emerged from a union of Congregationalists with Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians.¹⁴ The Church of South India united Congregationalists with Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians.¹⁵ The Church of North India included all these denominations together with Baptists, Brethren and the Disciples of Christ.¹⁶

Congregationalism is particularly strong in the nations of the Pacific. In New Zealand, the majority of the New Zealand Congregational (Pacific Island) Church joined with the Presbyterian Church in 1969. The Congregational Church had been formed by Pacific Islanders who had settled in New Zealand.¹⁷ The United Church of Christ – Congregational in the Marshall Islands has its origins in American missionary work in 1857, but ‘the main mission work was carried out by Pacific Islanders, which meant that the life of the Church was predominantly indigenous’. The Church has 38 congregations and 40,225 members (World Council of Churches, 2019). With a population of 68,480,

¹¹ The Uniting Church in Australia was formed in 1977, and has some 2,000 churches (not all English-speaking). It is Australia’s third largest denomination (after the Catholic and Anglican churches), and is the ‘first church to be created in and of Australia’ (Uniting Church of Australia, 2019).

¹² The United Church of Canada has 3,583 congregations and 608,243 members (World Council of Churches, United Church of Canada, 2019).

¹³ The United Church of Christ has 6,000 congregations and some 1,400,000 members (World Council of Churches, United Church of Christ, 2019).

¹⁴ The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands has 204 churches and 60,000 members (World Council of Churches, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, 2019).

¹⁵ The Church of South India was formed in 1947 by the union of the South India United Church (itself a union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians) with Anglicans and Methodists. It has 8,715 churches and 3,500,000 members (World Council of Churches, Church of South India, 2019 and Anglican Communion, 2019). All ministers were accepted into the united church, with the agreement that ‘all subsequent ordinations would be episcopal’ (Livingstone, 2013).

¹⁶ The Church of North India was not formed until 1970. It incorporated a union of the Church of Northern India (itself a union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians) with Anglicans and Methodists – but includes also Baptists, Brethren, and the Disciples of Christ. The Church has 4,500 churches and 1,500,000 members (World Council of Churches, Church of North India, 2019 and Anglican Communion, 2019).

¹⁷ The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand has 400 churches and 29,000 members (World Council of Churches, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2019).

this makes the Marshall Islands unique – with Congregationalists comprising nearly 60% of the population (Nitijela, The Parliament of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, 2019).

New, emerging structures have always required compromise on matters of church organisation. A by-product of such wider union has been the establishment of new groupings committed to preserving the independency of the local Church. The churches of the Congregational Christian Church in Canada separated ‘to reaffirm the infallibility of the Scriptures and the autonomy of the local church’ (Congregational Christian Churches of Canada, 2019). Those who formed the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches in the USA ‘feared that ... their church would lose the ability to self-govern’ (Mauro, 2019, p.1). In the UK, the Congregational Federation consists of Congregational churches which chose not to join the United Reformed Church (a union of Congregationalists and Presbyterians with the Churches of Christ). Its founding declaration of intent stated that:

‘many of our brethren who had until that time declared their own faith in the Congregational Way, deemed it right for them to forsake the Congregational Way for another pattern of Christ’s Church ... We pray God’s blessing upon them ... we here reiterate our faith’ (Congregational Federation, 2018, p.1).

Whilst these matters are too recent to fall within the research scope of this study, it is interesting, nevertheless, to see recurring themes across boundaries of space and time. Here too can be seen fluidity of denominational boundaries – and, in particular, the split between those welded to Congregationalism as a principle, and those (always the majority) for whom church order was open to negotiation, a means rather than an end.

Chapter Three Sources and Methods

3.1 Acknowledging shortcomings

Lewis Carroll imagined the White Rabbit asking where to begin. "Begin at the beginning," the King said gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop" (Lewis Carroll, 1865/1954, p.116). Beginning at the beginning may seem sensible advice – but historical research sometimes necessitates starting at the end and working backwards, or even starting in the middle and working outwards. Congregationalism is non-hierarchical – and there is no consistent way in which church records are kept, or retained for posterity (Congregational Federation, 2019). New beginnings are not always recognised as such at the time. Sometimes, it is only much later that the significance of events is realised.

One of the frustrations of church history is that so much of the historical record relates to accounts by or about ministers. That is particularly challenging when trying to research Congregationalism where every member should have an equal voice – and where decision-making is not minister-dominated. Yet if members are often under-represented in the historical record, adherents are even more so. 'Adherent' is the name given to those who attend church but are not in formal membership. Adherents may attend church regularly, and may outnumber those on the membership roll. The Congregational Church in North Richmond Court in Edinburgh serves as a good example. In the *First Report of the Commissioners of Religious Instruction, Scotland* it is recorded that this church had 444 people attending (and average attendances of being 250 and 300), yet only 79 people in actual membership (House of Commons, 1837, p.219). Adherents are largely invisible in the historical record since only members played a part in formal decision-making.

Gender imbalance also needs to be noted as a serious shortcoming since women's voices are extremely under-represented. This trend is not limited to Congregationalism. The 'recent standard works of Scottish church history' have been seen as representative of the 'historiographical neglect of women' (Macdonald, 1995, p.5). Few women find a place in the historical annals, and those few that do often, 'appear as exceptions or deviants, queens or witches' (Macdonald, 1995, p.2). Christian Watt (1833-1923) of

Broadsea (a fishing community at the northern end of Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire) is one woman who did leave extensive memoirs. It is known that she attended a 'Congregational' Sunday School, and was married later in a church 'under the aegis of the Evangelical Union' (Beveridge and Watson, 2016, p. 208). As a patient in Cornhill, 'the Aberdeen Infirmary for those suffering from mental disorders', her accounts were written in pencil, quill pens being banned in case they were used as weapons, or the ink drunk (Fraser, 1988, p.x & Beveridge and Watson, 2016, p.206). Watt's papers are a fascinating record – but it has to be noted that she was diagnosed with mania with 'religious delusions', and that 'surviving knowledge of her is almost entirely based on her own account' (Beveridge, 2004). In Congregational terms, it is certainly a shortcoming that so much of the historical record relates to ministers – for although Congregationalism was the first denomination in Scotland to appoint a woman as minister of a church, this did not happen until into the 20th century.

In Scotland, as in 'many countries since the eighteenth century, the religiosity of women is widely acknowledged to have been greater than that of men' (Brown, C.G., 1997, p.197). Wilson, L. (1999) did carry out a survey of the range of roles undertaken by women in 19th century Nonconformist churches, but that study did not extend to Scotland. What is known, however, is that in English Baptist and Congregational churches, women outnumbered men in membership 'by a factor of two to one' for most of the period 1650 to 1980. More surprising perhaps, is that the proportion of women in a church appeared to be directly related to the commitment expected – or, to put it another way, that, 'the less that is required by way of active involvement or personal sacrifice, the greater the number of men' (Field, 1993, p.78). This trend might be linked to the fact that when many opportunities in other spheres were closed to women, 'Christian zeal brought them into prominence' (Bebbington, 1989, p.26). This work has not been replicated for Scotland.

Somewhat surprisingly, an undated membership list for Campbeltown Congregational Church, Argyll from around 1839, shows equal numbers of men and women – though all male trustees in the same church in 1829, 1844 and 1865 (McNaughton, 2003, pp.459-460, 464). The oldest extant roll for Nairn Congregational Church, Inverness-shire does

show 34 women in membership (62.9%) compared with 20 men (McNaughton, 2003, pp.472-473). Recognising the over-representation of women in churches is important, since it makes the under-representation of women in the historical narrative an even more serious short-coming.

Although Kewley (2009) produced a richly illustrated guide of all churches on the Isle of Man, the story of Congregationalism (where a Scot played a founding role) seems otherwise to have been largely untapped. This is in stark contrast to Anglican and Methodist history on the island. Part of the reason for this must lie in the fact that the two Manx congregations of the United Reformed Church have their roots clearly in Presbyterianism rather than in Congregationalism (Davidson, J., 1925 & Cunningham, 1962).

3.2 Scottish Congregationalism

Parts of the history of Scottish Congregationalism are difficult to ascertain, for the reasons outlined in the previous section. Nevertheless, there are a range of useful resources that can help uncover details about Scottish Congregationalism.

The Surman Index¹⁸ is an online resource, maintained by the Queen Mary Centre for Religion and Literature in English at the University of London, which contains details of some 32,000 Congregational ministers with a UK connection. The amount of detail varies – but it offers biographical details (birth, study, pastorate, death) and allows searching by individual or locality. This is an invaluable starting point from which to begin more detailed work, and can also be extremely helpful in identifying primary sources. In an endeavour of this scale, essentially undertaken by one man, it is not surprising that there are some gaps and errors. One such puzzle emerged in this study in researching Bute when the Surman Index recorded a minister apparently in two different locations concurrently, and seemingly in a Free Church three years before that denomination was formed.

The shortfalls of ministerial biographies and congregational histories have already been highlighted. In some cases, however, such books may cross the line into being a primary source. Gardiner (1801), for example, quickly rushed into print to raise funds to support the Rev. James Garie's widow and children after the sudden death of that Perth Congregational minister. Mackenzie, J.M. (1845) was a 'memoir' published after that minister drowned – and affords a rare opportunity to read the subject's own words. The volume of primary source material for David Livingstone is actually increasing – as advanced computer techniques are allowing his faded writings with home-made ink on top of newsprint, to be deciphered.

¹⁸ Over a period of some twenty years up to 1958, Rev Charles Surman compiled a remarkable set of index cards, 'which have been scanned, processed using Prime Recognition OCR Software, and then sent to India where they were checked, corrected and marked up in XML by Tricom Infotech Solutions Limited' (Surman Index, 2018). The index was updated to 1972 by Rev John Taylor.

To help discern something of the spirit of the times in which Congregationalism in Scotland grew, flourished, and then declined, the *Statistical Accounts of Scotland* (Old and New) give a fascinating and unique review of the country parish by parish. The First Statistical Account was championed by Sir John Sinclair, MP for Caithness – his plan being for parish ministers to answer set questions (160 initially, and then, in two stages, a further 11) to elucidate the ‘Natural History and Political State of Scotland’. The range and detail of the contributions varies – and Sinclair had to despatch ‘Statistical Missionaries’ to chivvy along some dilatory respondents. As contributions were recorded (and published) at different stages between 1791 and 1799, the Accounts are not technically a ‘snapshot’ – though they are a valuable insight, locally compiled, of the entire country (Withers, 2020). The Second Statistical Account was published between 1834 and 1845. Sinclair’s ambitions were lofty – his intention was that the Statistical Account as ‘statistical philosophy’ would both contribute to knowledge and ‘benefit individuals’ (The Statistical Accounts of Scotland, 2020). When studying dissenting history, one always has to bear in mind that the Statistical Accounts were written by parish ministers who would not be naturally sympathetic to those turning their back on the Kirk!

The Reports of the Commissioners of Religious Instruction give some indication of numbers and finances – though in some cases, Congregational churches seemed to assert their independence by declining to answer all the questions. These reports also can also be helping in comparing the different denominations in a locality.

Gale (a Cengage company) operates a number of databases which are exceedingly helpful in accessing 19th Century British Newspapers. In addition to Digital Archives of The Times (1785-2012) and The Scotsman (1817-1950), two million text searchable pages are held from national and regional newspapers from the 19th Century. Newspapers can provide detailed information very precisely dated, which can be helpful in cross-checking whether contemporary accounts match a church’s own version of its history. There is an element of bias in the subjects covered, since disputes are likely to

have greater coverage in the press. Earlier newspapers do, however, often give quite extensive coverage to church news – but authorship often cannot be identified.

Chapter Four The Development of Congregationalism in Scotland

4.1 Churches in Scotland

The early Church was not uniform – indeed the early churches of the Celtic peoples ‘in the west differed in at least as many ways as they resembled each other’ (Marsden, 1995, p.15). For many centuries, though, the idea of different denominations in Scotland would have been quite alien. When the Church did eventually split into different denominations, traditions tried to claim legitimacy through ancient roots. Catholicism, Episcopalianism and Presbyterianism have all laid claim to the Celtic Church. It has been argued that the Celtic Church was ‘essentially Roman’, and that it is most closely matched by the modern Scottish Episcopal Church (Chisholm, 1886a, p.266 & Macandrew, 1886a & b). In addition, it has been claimed that the Church of Scotland (Presbyterian in structure) is the direct successor of the first Celtic missionaries to Scotland (Steele and Campbell, 1934, p.188).¹⁹ The very notion of a unified Celtic Church has been claimed as a, ‘product of the Protestant Reformation’ - ‘presenting Columba, David and Aidan as leaders of a church that was national, independent of Rome and Protestant in all but name’ (Clancy, 2002, p.6 & Bradley, 1999, p.79). With the 16th century Reformation, Protestantism replaced Catholicism as the religion of Scotland. It would, however, take more than a century to determine finally what form that Protestant expression would take. Episcopalians recognised the authority and oversight of bishops, whereas, through Presbyterian eyes, all ministers were equal.

Initially, the post-Reformation Church had a mixed structure initially, with superintendents co-existing alongside the former Catholic bishops who had agreed to join the Reformers. Episcopacy was restored in a sort of fashion in 1572, but the clergy then designated as bishops were not consecrated in accordance with Episcopal succession. From 1592 until

¹⁹ Writing about the field of palaeontology, Switek (2011, p.21) asserted that, ‘With a sufficiently complete fossil record it is possible to trace the evolution of particular forms according to direct lines of descent, but doing so requires that neighbouring branches containing close relatives be lopped off. And the further back in time we go, the more relatives we have to ignore.’ When that logic is applied to church history, it is clear that claiming an unbroken line to the early church does not necessarily negate similar claims made by other denominational traditions.

1610, the Church of Scotland was Presbyterian (Records of the Scottish Parliament 1592/4/26). Episcopacy was then restored again - this time with three Scottish clergy receiving episcopal consecration from bishops of the Church of England. Presbyterianism prevailed from 1638, with the Church of England again facilitating Episcopal succession from 1661. This oscillation in the prevailing structure of the Church of Scotland finally came to an end in 1690, since when the Church of Scotland has been Presbyterian.

The Scottish Episcopal Church was closely associated with Jacobitism. In 1689, the Scottish bishops had refused to denounce their allegiance to the Roman Catholic James VII when he was succeeded by William III (of Orange) and Mary II. Sir Walter Scott dramatically described its decline as reduction to a mere 'shadow of a shade", though a later Primus would comment that the Church was never so weak that the location of each member could be marked on the Ordnance map of Scotland (Scott, 1815, p.256 & Luscombe, 1996, pp.1-2). Nevertheless, the anti-establishment trait would long hang over the Episcopal Church.

The Catholic Church was also reduced to a small presence - baptised Catholics accounted for just 2½% of the total population of Scotland in 1681 (which was over a century since the mass had been declared abolished in Scotland). The distribution of Catholics across the country was also far from even. In the south (where fines and restrictions against holding land or public office made life increasingly difficult for Catholics) there were fewer than 2,000 adherents scattered - with only five identified 'in the whole of Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Ayrshire' (Ferguson, 1968, pp.127-128 & Smout and Wood, 1990, p.121). It was in the north of the country that 90% of the country's Catholics (predominantly Gaelic-speaking) were to be found (Watts, 1999, p.4). Even in the Highlands, though, Catholics were not evenly spread across the land. Rather they were to be found in concentrated pockets, often clustered round noble families who had adhered to Catholicism.

In 1693, James Johnston (at the time the joint Secretary of State with John Dalrymple, Master of Stair) wrote of 'hot Presbyterians and bigoted Episcopalians, and those of a moderate temper betwixt the two' (quoted by Frace, 2008, p.360).²⁰ Although a cursory overview of 16th and 17th century Scottish church history might suggest a simple oscillation between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism, in fact there were, 'many phases of compromise, and the two parties were comprehended within one church' (Donaldson, 1972, p.187). Despite desperate struggles (often bitter and sometimes deadly) over what form the Church should take, no-one in mid-16th century Scotland thought it credible that, 'there could be two churches in one nation' (McMillan, 1930, p.13). That view for long persisted – for far longer than in England. Though there were, 'parties and divisions within the Kirk ... no sects ... were expected to remain outside it' (Reid, 1960, p.116). The dominant party varied over time (and in specific geographical locations, Catholics might be numerically stronger), but the quest was for supremacy not co-existence. The Church was firmly viewed as a divine institution not a human one. The Westminster Confession stated that, 'there shall always be a church on earth to worship God according to his will' (Church of Scotland 1647, p.39). For long it was, 'assumed ... that there was no *private* right to practice a religion different from that prescribed by the state' (Cranmer, 2011, p.111).

Few disagreed, of course, with the principle of but one Church – always providing that the one Church matched their understanding of it. One commentator drily noted, for example, that the Covenanters agreed with the king on the principle of religious uniformity, but maintained that the king had sided with the wrong Church (Barr, 1947, p.34). This is not a uniquely Scottish phenomenon. Over the past three decades, revisionist historians have, 'stressed the extent to which the majority conceded toleration grudgingly and reluctantly' in post-Reformation Europe (Walsham, 2017, p.183). The commitment to the notion of a cohesive Christian community was not confined to Scotland.

²⁰ Citing *Memoir of some things to be considered by Secretary Johnston* (c1693), National Archives of Scotland, SP3/1, fo.12v.

It has to be admitted that Scotland in the 16th and 17th centuries displayed more religious tolerance than was evident in many other countries in the same period. It is noteworthy, for example, that there is no Scottish equivalent to Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* for England (Wormald, 1981, p.92). There were religious martyrs – but in far fewer numbers, per head of population, than in England. 'Calvinists who had few qualms about condemning witches, had apparently greater scruples about burning heretics', and religious minorities presenting no real challenge to the state were subjected to restrictions only intermittently (Cowan, 2008, pp.5-6).

In the mid 17th century, during nine years of Cromwellian occupation, 'toleration' was extended not just to Presbyterianism as 'the religion of the majority of Scots', but also to other denominations, though not 'Popery and prelacy' (Reid, 1960, p.84 & Burleigh, 1988, p.232). Charles II would later issue indulgences (of 1669, 1672, and 1679) but unravelling the motivations and implications of these is complicated. The king, undoubtedly, was keen to have a common religious framework across Scotland, England and Ireland. The restoration of bishops to Scotland was not a decision made freely by the Church, but an imposition by 'royal fist ... in part because (the king) ... loathed the Scottish presbyterians', resented being forced to sign the Covenant in 1650, and held them in part to blame for his father's deposition and execution (Harris, 2013, p. 117). Indulgences had the effect of dividing moderate and radical Presbyterians (Love, 2009, pp.120-121). When Daniel Defoe visited Scotland, for example, he noted various objections to the 1669 Indulgence (including to the Oath of Supremacy) from those who 'could not in conscience allow any king or head of the Church but Jesus Christ' (Barr, 1947, p.58²¹). This was a time of simmering tensions when, 'Royalist advisers and officials ... made no secret of their scepticism that Scottish Presbyterians could be counted as loyal subjects – but on the other hand, there were presbyterians equally adamant that obedience to the monarch could never be absolute' (Greenspan, 2001, 79, 93 & 95). Indulgences were always conditional – and punishments became increasingly severe for those who refused to accept them.

²¹ Citing Defoe, 1717, *Memoirs of the Church of Scotland*, London, pp.182-183.

England's Toleration Act of 1689 granted freedom of worship to dissenting groups only where assent was given to the 39 Anglican articles of faith. In Scotland, in contrast, James VII's indulgences had much wider range. Almost all Christian worship was permitted. Radical Presbyterians continued to be excluded, but the United Societies of Covenanters had effectively 'declared war on the king' by raising the Cameronian regiment (Raffe, 2015, p.357 & Cannon, 2015a).²² The Covenanters found themselves 'targeted with increasingly brutal legislation' (Harris, 2013, p.117). Their allegiance was always conditional on the king complying with their demands.

In England, James' actions (as James II) have often been regarded as duplicitous – an attempt to, 'divide and conquer his enemies' by pitting Protestant dissenters against the Anglican establishment, 'after which the dissenters themselves would be destroyed' (Sowerby, 2013, p.24). In Scotland, in contrast, the actions of James VII have been viewed more favourably as a, 'multiconfessional experiment' (Raffe, 2015, p.357). Admittedly, the Scottish and English contexts were very different. Opposition to the Church of Scotland in episcopal form meant dissent in Scotland was a real and pressing issue, with 'large numbers of actual and potential dissenters' (Raffe, 2015, p.357). In part, James VII was motivated by a desire to rescind 'all penal statutes and disabilities affecting Roman Catholics' (Barr, 1947, p.59). He was, after all, Scotland's first Catholic monarch since the forced deposition of Mary Stuart (Queen of Scots) in 1567.

James' reign was short (1685-1688), however, and later legislation made clear not only that Presbyterianism should be the only national Church of Scotland, but that, 'ecclesiastical processes and censures' should be used to 'purge out all insufficient, negligent, scandalous and erroneous ministers' (UK Government, 1690). In practice, the patterns of religious adherence varied dramatically across Scotland. North of the Tay, Episcopalians outnumbered Presbyterians. Between the Tay and the Forth,

²² A number of followers of Rev. Richard Cameron, the 'Lion of the Covenant', joined the 26th Regiment of Light Infantry when it was raised by the Earl of Angus at Douglas, Lanarkshire in 1689. Disbanded in 1969, the Cameronians were (by virtue of their history of defending religious services) the only regiment of the British army to be allowed to take rifles into church (Love, 2009, p.20). The Earl of Angus, though Colonel, was only 18 – so the Lieutenant Colonel was 'really in command'. There was a sort of Presbyterian structure to the regiment with each company having an elder, and each man a Bible (The Cameronians, 2019).

Episcopalians and Presbyterians were roughly equal in numbers. South of the Forth (and especially in the south-west), there were more Presbyterians than Episcopalians (Luscombe, 1996, p.2). In view of this regional variation in respective strength, it is hardly surprising that Episcopalian priests in the north often stayed in position, whilst their colleagues in the south were evicted (or rabbled).

In Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, for example, the Rev. James Moore commenced his ministry in 1666 - continuing there as an Episcopalian until his death in 1703. Alexander, his son and assistant, then 'intruded', taking over as parish minister (actions which were not just irregular but illegal). Only in 1707 did the induction of the first Presbyterian minister take place in the burgh, even then amidst 'great opposition' (Scott, 1925, p.222).²³ In the county town of Forfar, communion was still being administered according to Episcopalian rites as late as 1721 (Marshall, 1875, p.171).

The introduction of Gideon Guthrie, a non-jurant²⁴ Episcopalian, as parish minister of Fetteresso, Kincardineshire in 1703 is, 'striking testimony to the extreme difficulty which Presbyterianism, though established by law, experienced in forcing itself upon the unwilling people of the north-east of Scotland' (Guthrie, Wright & Dowden, 1800, p.xiv). Guthrie moved from Kincardineshire to become minister of an Episcopalian congregation in Brechin, Angus. He recorded over 1,200 communicants at his first Easter service in 1711 (and no fewer the following year), all of whom communicated 'after the manner of the Church' (in other words kneeling to take the sacrament) (Guthrie, Wright & Dowden, 1800, pp.71-72 & 74).²⁵ When Guthrie started in Brechin, there were also two Presbyterian ministers in post. The Rev. John Willison of the First Charge of Brechin (Brechin Cathedral) was one of them. A later town clerk would record that Willison's 'Presbyterian principles were not in accordance with the feelings of the people in Brechin;

²³ In 1746, the Episcopalian Church in Fraserburgh was burned down, and Episcopalians were restricted to meetings with no more than four people gathered in a room. This was sometimes circumvented by having a cleric in a central hall with the congregation assembled in the doorways of the surrounding rooms – with 'some local farm houses ... constructed on these principles and for that reason (Fraser, 1988, pp.21-22).

²⁴ That is someone refusing to take an oath of abjuration (in favour of Queen Anne in Guthrie's case).

²⁵ This must have represented more than a third of the population, for in 1755 the population of the parish was estimated to be 3,181 (Bruce, 1793, p.459).

and ... he was persecuted in every way by the inhabitants, especially by those of the higher ranks, most of who were violent Jacobites and Episcopalians' (Black, 1867, p.119). In 1716, Willison was called to be minister of a church in Dundee. Yet, 'so bitter was the feeling against him that he found it almost impossible to get a cart to remove his furniture' (Scott, 1925, pp.376 & 465). Jacobite supporters seem to have been unwilling even to help him move away from the parish!

Commissions were appointed by the Privy Council to purge the Scottish universities of academics who would not 'subscribe the Westminster Confession, take the oaths of allegiance and subscribe to Presbyterian government'. This task was carried out with 'thoroughness' at St. Andrews, Glasgow and Edinburgh, but the University of Aberdeen was left untouched (Goldie, 1976, p.30 & Burleigh, 1988, p.263). Aberdeen, in fact, 'graduated hundreds of ministers who were either sympathetic to Episcopacy or indifferent to modes of church government altogether, well into the eighteenth century' (Frace, p.361²⁶). Here again is evidence of differing religious traditions having primacy in different parts of the country – whatever decrees might be made centrally.

Part of Willison's problem in Brechin must have been the presence of his Episcopalian predecessor (his predecessor having previously worked alongside his father in ministering to the parish). In practice, though, many ministers simply adapted to whatever was the prevailing system, conforming either to Episcopacy or Presbyterianism. The parish of Arrochar, Argyll offers such an example. Archibald McLachlan was inducted there in 1658 as a Presbyterian, served as an Episcopalian from 1662, and then as a Presbyterian again from 1690. He stood down on grounds of ill-health in 1701, but died 'as senior minister of his parish in 1731' (Scott, 1920, p.325 & Drummond and Bulloch, 1973, p.8).

²⁶ Citing Emerson, R. [1992] *Professors, Patronage and Politics: The Aberdeen Universities in the Eighteenth Century.*)

In March 1712, Royal Assent was given to the Scottish Episcopalians Act.²⁷ This legislation was hugely significant, since for the first time it granted, 'legal recognition that the Episcopalians were a religious group separate from the Presbyterians, holding different views with respect to ordination and worshipping in a different way' (Raffe, 2010, p.570). Arguably, this legislation breached the terms of the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland. Certainly, however, with this Act the Government of Great Britain ended the Church of Scotland's official monopoly on religion in Scotland. Accordingly, the Kirk's General Assembly protested annually, from 1712 until 1784, that the legislation was 'grievous and prejudicial' (Cameron, 1994, p.147). The catalyst for change had been the return of James Greenshields to his native Scotland from Ireland with his petitioning for the same rights in Scotland for Episcopalians as Scots Presbyterians enjoyed in Ireland (Goldie, 1976, p.40).

1712 was also the year in which the British government, through the Patronage Act, gave hereditary landowners the right to appoint parish ministers. In Scotland, 'landowners were as a class increasingly looking to England for their cultural models, and therefore wanting to see someone in the manse as polite and friendly to the laird as the average Anglican parson was to the squire' (Smout, 1969, p.216). Whether landowners or congregations should have the right to call ministers was a hugely emotive and controversial issue. Where a minister was appointed by a landowner, he 'was bound to see himself as the laird's creature' (Smout, 1969, p.216). The Free Church of Scotland undoubtedly received a boost in parts of Highland Scotland where Church of Scotland ministers were seen to side with landowners in their attempts to clear lands of tenant farmers in favour of more profitable sheep and deer.

²⁷ In full, 'An Act to prevent the disturbing of those of the Episcopal Communion, in that part of Great Britain called Scotland, in the exercise of their religious worship, and in the use of the liturgy of the Church of England, and for repealing the Act passed in the Parliament of Scotland, intituled "An Act against irregular Baptism and Marriage"'.

4.2 Social change

Churches do not operate in a vacuum, at either the local or national level, so it is unsurprisingly that wider social changes should impact upon religion profession. Scotland, as a whole, underwent dramatic changes in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The country's population grew rapidly from 1,265,380 in 1755 to 2,888,742 in 1851 – an increase of 128.3% (Kyd, 1952, pp.82-83). The dramatic extent of this growth in population in just under a century is perhaps demonstrated even more clearly when presented pictorially as in Figure 3 below.

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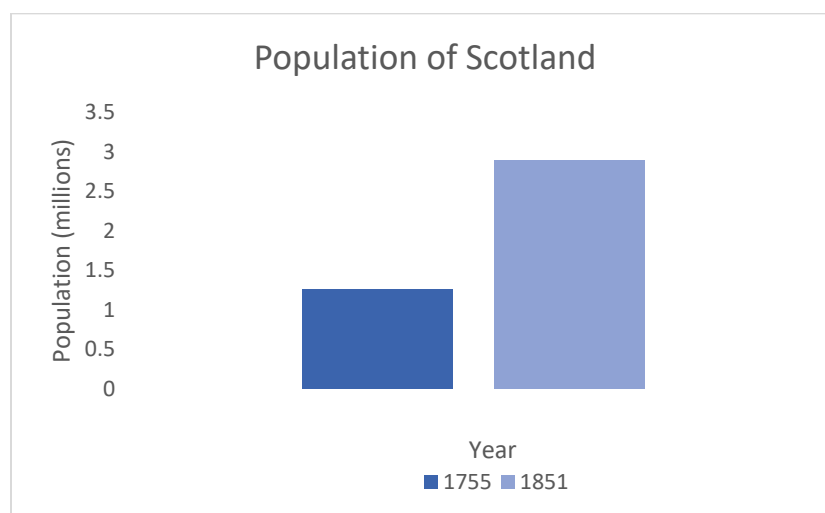


Fig. 3 – Population of Scotland in 1755 and 1851

There were places where population growth alone could trigger religious dissent, in places where the Church of Scotland network of parish churches became overwhelmed. Not until the 1840s did the building of new churches keep pace with the rate of population growth (Brown, C.G. 1987b, p.352). In 1851, for example, there were 474 seats (i.e. places in churches) per 1,000 population for Scotland as a whole. In rural Berwickshire there were seats for 70.1% of the population. In Lanarkshire, on the other hand (which had witnessed massive population growth with industrialisation) churches had room to accommodate just 30.2% of the people (Knox, 2019, p.2).

Historically, most Scots had lived in small tight-knit communities, between which travel was difficult and time-consuming. The county of Argyll, for example, had no towns at all until the 18th century (Withall, 2004, p.xiii). In 1700, only a tenth of Scots lived in towns – but by 1821 that proportion had grown to a third (Aitchison and Cassel, 2019, p.4). When Daniel Defoe visited Glasgow (then in the county of Lanark) in 1726, he called it the ‘cleanest and beautifullest, and best built’ city in Britain, with the exception of London (Defoe and Rogers, 1971, p.605). That sounds rather grand, but just under 40 years later, Glasgow’s population still numbered only 28,000, with the city being described as, ‘rather like St. Andrews ... but with ... a Highland air’ (Taylor, 2016, p.20). On the other side of the country, mid 18th century Edinburgh had a population of just 40,000 (Buchan, 2007, p.1). Despite the two cities being just 51 miles apart, the ‘first regular conveyance’ linking them was not introduced until 1749, and even then the journey took 12 hours (Oakley, 1946, p.64). Change, when it came, happened quickly. At the end of the 18th century, Glasgow was home to 5% of Scots, but by the middle of the 19th century 12% Scots called the city home (Tivy, 1958, pp.82-83). Scotland’s population was not just growing in overall terms. People were gravitating from the countryside into towns and cities.

This drift into urban living occurred for a variety of reasons. Industrialisation was a pull. In textiles, for example, mechanisation changed what had been a dispersed, home-based activity into a centralised endeavour - powered initially by water, and then by steam. In 1784, the Glasgow yarn importer (and Independent churchman) David Dale (1739-1806) went with Richard Arkwright to view the Falls of Clyde. Within just two years, Dale had, ‘built four cotton mills in the gulch formed by the river, using Arkwright’s patent water frame, and within ten he was employing nearly 1,500 workers’ (Harvie, 2002, pp.125-126). A new settlement emerged, established and developed thanks to the ‘erection and prosperity of the cotton manufactory’ (Menziess, 1845, p.19). At its peak, the complex employed 2,000 people. To put that into context, that was, for the time, a larger enterprise than any other factory in Europe or America. New Lanark is now a World Heritage Site, so ‘idyllic’, that , ‘perhaps hard to discern here one of the seedbeds of modern capitalism’ (Fry, 2013a, p.27). Establishment of mills also rapid population growth elsewhere – such

as Blantyre, also in Lanarkshire (with a growth in population of 253% between 1755 and 1801) and Stanley in Perthshire (with a growth in population of 91% between 1795 and 1831) (Anderson, 1845, p.321 & Nelson, 1845, p.435).

Industrialisation, of course, took many different forms in terms – and this study is not the place to detail the range of industries across Scotland engaged in extracting mineral resources or manufacturing. Suffice to say that a settlement's prospects were more stable when employment was not based solely on one industry. The fortunes of Blantyre, for example, would have been very different from the 1860s with the weaving industry in decline had coal not been discovered (Veverka, 2020). The development of mining offered new employment opportunities in the area.

Industrialisation was not the only catalyst. Changes in the countryside were also triggers for change. One historical geographer has suggested that if a resident of 21st century Scotland were able to revisit the Scotland of 1707, the landscape encountered would be barely recognisable (Withers, 2007, p.144). Figure 4 is not a design for a new tartan – but a map illustrating the different kinds of soil in Scotland, which in turn reflects the underlying geology.

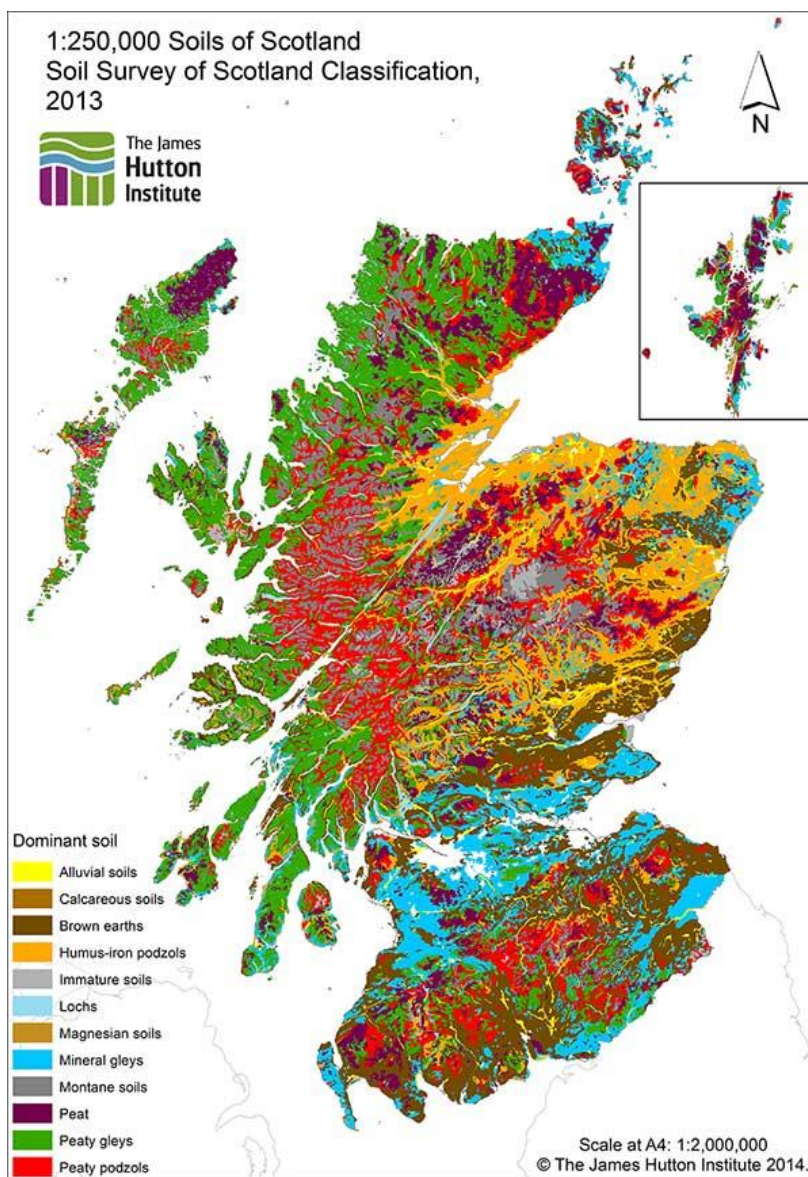


Fig. 4 – Soil Map of Scotland (James Hutton Institute, 2014)

In the early 18th century, in recognition of these widely differing soil types and quality, there were regional variations in the types of crops grown. What did not vary greatly, however, was the method of farming. Not yet was there a ‘lowland-highland divide’ in Scottish agriculture (Aitchison and Cassel, 2019, p.3). Crop failure was a regular occurrence across Scotland - indeed it was such a ‘hand-to-mouth existence that the prospect of famine was never very far removed’ (Handley, 1953, p.12). As the 18th century progressed, all sorts of practical changes took place within Scottish farming. The field

cultivation of the potato has been hailed as one of the ‘most beneficial’ innovations, since potatoes thrive in ground too acidic for other crops – but there were many wider changes in land management (Oakley, 1946, pp.9 & 176). By the late 18th century, fields of grain had replaced purple heather and yellow gorse, drained marshland became useable for grazing, and ‘bleak moors were being covered with wide forests of pine or woods of larch, ash, and elms’ (Graham, 1906, p.218). At the start of the 18th century, Scottish agriculture was characterised by sub-tenants eking out livings from subsistence plots. By the end of the century, sub-tenantry was largely a feature of agriculture in the Highlands, with Lowland Scotland transformed by consolidated farms run by single tenants who hired workers.²⁸

When Scots lived in small, close-knit rural parishes, the parish church exercised a dominant role in the lives of Scots, and not simply in the shaping of religious thinking. Before the establishment of local government:

‘Kirk Sessions were prepared to tackle virtually any problem that came their way, officially or otherwise – administration of discipline, dealing with drunkenness, caring for the aged, the infirm and the mentally ill, coping with orphans and foundlings, dealing with education, famine relief, marriage problems, handling national charitable collections at local level and very much more’ (Gordon, 1992, p.3²⁹).

In summary, ‘poor relief, education and social control all flowed from the pulpit to the pews’ (Aitchison and Cassell, 2019, p.90). Leitch (1879, p.187) wrote stirringly of the ‘Communism of the country church’ in Scotland, suggesting that it was a place for the

²⁸ The Clearances of the early 19th century saw large swathes of the Scottish countryside forcibly depopulated, for inhabitation instead by deer or sheep. In Sutherland, for example, in just seven or eight years the interior of the county was cleared. Thousands of people were turned out of the homes which were then destroyed (Hunter, 2015, p.1). Yet there were Lowland clearances too - ‘Few outside academia have ever considered why it was that Scotland south of the Highland line was *improved* whilst those who lived to the north and west of that imaginary divide were *cleared* (Aitchison and Cassell, 2019, p.1).

²⁹ Citing Edgar, A. , 1885, *Old Church Life in Scotland: Lectures on Kirk Session and Presbytery Records*, Vol. 1, pp.190-191 & Acts of the Parliament of Scotland, 1592, III, 542a.

'blending of social molecules' as the whole community ('peer to ... ploughboy') gathered for worship. Such a dramatic interpretation is hardly rooted in fact. Later Kailyard (literally cabbage patch) would be the name coined for, 'the sentimental and nostalgic treatment of parochial Scottish scenes, often centred on a church community' (Nash, A., 2007, p.13³⁰). What Leitch failed to acknowledge, of course, is that gathering under one roof does not inevitably symbolise equality. Fixed pews were not a feature of Scottish church life from the beginning (worshippers who wished to sit formerly brought their own stool), but when they were introduced, they came with an associated charge. 'Certain areas were reserved for the better-off', and indeed the structure of society was 'given almost physical representation on the floor of some Presbyterian churches' with Lairds' Lofts - galleries for the exclusive use of landowners and their households (Aitchison and Cassell, 2019, pp.104-105).³¹

One consequence, then, of the urbanisation and industrialisation of Scotland was a loosening of the 'bonds of paternalism and deference between social ranks', and 'with the dismemberment of old communal sources of identities ... different social groups and even occupations sought new identities in specific churches or none' (Brown, C.G., 1997, p.134 & p.6). Whilst it may seem whimsical, some observers pointed to these wider societal changes when noting that, 'Not many years ago ... every bonnet and hat was lifted to the gentry whom the common people met ... No such thing now takes place' (Ramsay and Allardyce, 1888, p.557). Behind that observation lies the fact that authority was no longer automatically accepted. In Scotland (in contrast with England, Wales and Ireland), the monarch was not head of the national church – and so, even the 'nature and extent of the church-state relationship ... imperfectly defined, remained an issue for

³⁰ Citing Knowles, T.D., 1983, *Ideology, Art and Commerce: Aspects of Literary Sociology in Late Victorian Scottish Kailyard*, Goteburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, p.13). Paisley and London: Alexander Gardner, pp.190-191.

³¹ Jura Parish Church, Argyll (Wright, 1997, p.16) and Yester Parish Church, Gifford, East Lothian (Scott, A., 1978) are but two examples of many around the country (in each of these cases, the gallery also having a private ante-room to retire or partake of refreshments). Some parishes had more than one major landowner. In Nigg Parish Church, Easter Ross there was (prior to renovations in 1853) a North Loft belonging to the lairds of Cadboll and Inverclassey, and an East Loft belonging to the lairds of Pitcainie and Kindeace [Nigg Old Trust, 2020]. When a new church was built in New Kilpatrick, Dunbartonshire in 1807, 'The gallery was shaped like a horse-shoe with a broad front perw divided into five equal portions among the lairds of Garscadden, Killermont, Gasrcube, Mains and Douglaston' (McCardel, 1949, p.68).

disputation' (Brown, C.G., 1997, pp.16-17). Ideas which had for long been accepted without question were now up for debate. A number of commentators and observers of 18th century Scotland comment on the 'predominance of secular ... interests' (Graham, 1906, p.348 & Brown, P.H., 1919, p.106). Lord Henry Cockburn (1779-1854), a Scottish judge and literary figure, commented that:

'Grown up people talked at this time of nothing but the French Revolution, and its supposed consequences; younger ones of good education were immersed in chemistry and political economy; the lower orders seemed to take no particular concern in anything' (Cockburn, 1856, p.44).

Religious life and outlook were not immune to these wider societal changes – but there was no single way in which these changes were manifested. Religious expression in 18th century Scotland was characterised by contrast. On the one hand, the country witnessed unbelief at levels 'which may have been unprecedented', but on the other, record numbers were touched by intense 'spiritual vitality' (Donaldson, 1990, pp.96, 115-116).

Understanding the proliferation of denominations from the 18th century onwards in Scotland can be puzzling, since the triggers for schisms often appear more trivial than the differences between Protestants and Catholics in the 16th century, or between Presbyterians and Episcopalians in the 17th. Sentimental it may have been, but Scots seemed welded for longer to the, 'concept of a "recoverable" Established Church' (Brown, C.G., 1997, p.16). Accordingly, throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, zealous Scots were:

'far less likely than their English counterparts to give up on the Established Kirk and set up separatist churches ... Scottish "Puritans" looked back proudly to the day when their Kirk had been a pure Reformed Church, and they were determined to hang in there until it was restored' (Coffey, 2006, pp.87-88).

Part of the problem was that 'toleration' of other religious expressions required endurance of, 'things of which one strongly disapproved' (Walsham, 2013, p. 115). In time, though,

perspectives changed. There were still tussles for dominance in the Kirk between different groupings – but from the 18th century onwards, those in Scotland whose religious practice differed from the establishment, ‘came to consider themselves as distinct religious communions’ (Ferguson, 1968, p.120).

Scots town dwellers of the 18th century were, of course, less subject to the, ‘lynx eyes of elders and deacons alert (to) ... Every rumour, every suspicion of ill doing’ (Graham, 1906, p.321). We get a glimpse of the religious implications of wider social change in some contemporary commentaries. Take, for example, the minister of the South Church (Second Charge) in Dundee. Before leaving in 1781 for a new position in Paisley, he warned his Dundee congregation of the ‘difficulties of maintaining a vital religious faith in a populous town where relationships were fast becoming marked by anonymity’ – so different from the close-knit communities which had characterised Scotland for generations (Harris, McKean and Whatley, 2009, p.132³²). Just under forty years later, in the early 19th century, the minister of St. John’s, Glasgow described his parish as a ‘frightful wilderness’ and declared that a hundred truly Christian homes, ‘would be like the clearing out of a piece of cultivated ground’ in its midst’ (Chalmers, 1820, p.209). Even in the smaller burghs, town dwellers experienced new freedoms over how to worship – or indeed whether to worship at all. Urban living and improved communication links between settlements brought a mixing of people and ideas, but also made it easier for groups of like-minded people to gather.

Each branch of Scottish Presbyterianism had its own characteristics and distinguishing features – and there are different ways of grouping denominations. One classification sees division into those favouring a national Church and those who do not. When the Free Church of Scotland was formed in 1843, it was made clear that although by breaking from the Church of Scotland, it had rejected a ‘vitiating Establishment’, yet it would ‘rejoice in returning to a pure one’ (Burleigh, 1988, p.354). In contrast with the Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland stood the denominations classified as Voluntaries.

³² Citing Snodgrass, J. (1781) *The Means of Preserving the Life and Power of Religion in a Time of General Corruption. A Valedictory Sermon to the Inhabitants of Dundee.* Dundee: T. Colvill. Esp. pp.10-11.

These all agreed that there should be no connection between Church and State, though admittedly that was often the only thing that united them (Phillips, 1986, p.37). Voluntaryism was not the exclusive preserve of Presbyterianism – Congregationalists agreed on the principle, but never aspiring to be a national church, it never became a source of division! Here, though, is a major ideological shift. In the 17th century and before, ‘dissenters were not opposed to the principle of a state church, only to the prevailing party which governed it’. From the end of the 18th century came a, ‘gradual and inexorable shift to ... belief in the separation of church and state’ (Brown, C.G.,1997, pp.16-17). Approaching that in a different way, the options open to an individual opposed to any connection between church and state multiplied as time progressed.

Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754) of Stirling, and the ministers who joined him in the First Secession of 1733, objected to the Patronage Act preventing people from calling a minister of their own choice. Yet though they withdrew from what they viewed as a corrupt Church of Scotland, still they retained church buildings, manses and stipends until finally deposed in 1740. Schisms in Scottish Presbyterianism often have supplementary causes, in this case, adherence to both conservative theology and the Covenants. Only 14 years would pass before the churches of the First Secession split again - over oaths taken by secular magistrates. It is rather strange that this should have triggered division, since the duty of the state to enforce ecclesiastical discipline, was a ‘purely academic question in an unestablishment church’ (Donaldson, 1990, pp.115-116). An 1820 union of New Light parts (favouring the continuation of Voluntary principles) resulted in the formation of the United Secession Church.

The Second Secession of 1761 resulted in the Presbytery of Relief, or Relief Church (Burleigh, 1988, p.284). Thomas Gillespie (1778-1844), one of the founding ministers, initially trained in Perth with the Secession Church, withdrawing after just ten days to train instead in Northampton under Philip Doddridge (1702-1751) (Thomson, T., 1875, p.110

& Roxburgh, 2004).³³ Ordained by English Congregationalists, Gillespie has been described as, 'another channel by which the more mellow air of the south came, to temper the chill of Scotland' (Donaldson, 1990, p.116). Unusually for the time, the Relief Church issued a formal declaration authorising occasional communion with Episcopalians or Congregationalists. The Relief Church was also committed to Voluntaryism - that the Church should be entirely free from the State. From 1847, the United Secession and Relief Churches came together to become United Presbyterians.

While roots of dissent can be found in the Covenanters of the late 17th century who kept 'their faith alive by meeting in hillside conventicles and praying societies', the, 'rise of factory labour and the urban middle classes created two further groups who shared little in common with each other or with the peasantry ... and turned to evangelicalism for their religious identity' (Brown, C.G., 1997, pp. 15 & 19). In some cases, the trigger for dissent for people was 'tampering with traditions their forefathers had died to protect' (Aitchison and Cassell, 2019, p.105). Even setting aside the question of whether paraphrases and hymns could be sung in addition to psalms, the practice of singing could be bitterly contested. The intention of the Reformers had been that each Psalm should have its own tune – but mastering 'so large a number of tunes was beyond the capacity of the people, especially as there was a great variety of metres in the words and modes in the music' (Patrick, 1935, pp.7-8). Indeed, when the 1650 Psalter was published, there was no accompanying book of tunes. The old Scottish practice was for a leader, the precentor, to sing a psalm line by line, with the congregation repeating back what had already been sung.

'Many people indeed left the Church of Scotland and joined the Seceders solely on account of the abolition of "lining out" ... Lining out has long ceased in all but the most remote districts of the country, and indeed the continuance of the practice

³³ Gillespie then returned to the Church of Scotland at Carnock, Fife. This option would later be closed. In the 1790s the General Assembly declared James Garie incapable of accepting a call to Brechin Cathedral because he had not been educated in a Scottish University (Gardiner, 1801).

when every one could afford to purchase a psalm book and could read it, would have been absurd' (Hadden, 1890a, p.17).

Though patronage was a major issue conspiring against the unity of the Kirk for over a century, the reasons for division were many and varied – and could be social as well as theological. It also needs to be recognised that religious dissent was one of very few options at the time open to most people to assert their independence and express discontent.

'Parliament was distant ... Fewer than two-and-a-half thousand men had the vote in any case. Real power resided in the shires with the landowner and a minister who was often his placeman. The sea change in a society which now allowed for vocal or physical opposition to a minister and the snubbing of the laid should not be dismissed lightly' (Aitchison and Cassell, 2019, pp.105-106).

After the Disruption of 1843, many congregations of the new Free Church of Scotland struggled to secure land on which to build a church, precisely because landowners considered the Free Church a, 'challenge to the status quo and, specifically, to their proprietorial interests' (MacColl, 2006, p.22).

Smout (1969, p.217) claimed that, 'Most native groups who rebelled from Presbyterianism ... failed to gain any large measure of popular support', dismissing the 'non-Presbyterian churches' (which he defined as the Glasites and the followers of the Haldanes) as 'unimportant'. Church history often adopts a linear approach – focusing on the ordering of events in time. Ecclesiastical history often makes more sense when one tries to understand not so much what happened before, as what was happening round about, at the same time. It certainly becomes more meaningful when one tries to identify common threads – even when these appear in different denominations with dissimilar organisational structures. In the late 18th century, the Glasites were actually the second largest denomination in Dundee (after the Church of Scotland) – although with only 205 Dundonian Glasites in 1782, this appellation says as much about the lack of religious

diversity in Scotland then as it does about the strength of the Glasites (Brown, C.G., 1997, p.29 & Barnard, 1877). John Glas, parish minister at Tealing, Angus was a fifth generation minister of the Kirk (Raffe, 2019, p.528). Since he considered himself an 'orthodox Presbyterian and upholder of the National Church ... against Episcopacy on the one hand and Independency on the other', it is somewhat ironic that his words and actions should see him expelled from the Church of Scotland (Hornsby, 1938, p.16). Glas came to reject the notion of the Covenants, as well as the idea that state officials should have any role in supporting the Church. Indeed, his studies led him to conclude that the whole idea of a national Church was distinctly unbiblical (Glas, 1729, p.34). He also adopted the Congregational view of the church as a gathered community of true believers, and established a Congregational church alongside the parish church of which he was minister.

Glas is referenced both in discussions about early Congregational movements native to Scotland, as well as in the context of the schisms which beset Scottish Presbyterianism from the 18th century onwards. It has been claimed that history has failed to acknowledge the impact of Glas on 'more positive attitudes towards religious diversity' (Raffe, 2019, p.531). Post 1690, when the Church of Scotland expelled a minister, it deposed them from exercising ministry in any context. That was what happened to Glas, but the General Assembly of 1739 reinstated him 'to the character of a Minister of the Gospel' – just not a minister in the Church of Scotland. When one of Glas's allies, Francis Archibald (minister of Guthrie, Angus) was deposed in 1729, it was from the Kirk not ministry *per se* (Raffe, 2019, pp.534, 537-538).

The Scots Independents would later be termed the Old Scots Independents – to distinguish them from later forms of Congregational revival in Scotland. This group came into existence when the ministers of two neighbouring Church of Scotland parishes in Fife resigned and started a new church at Balchristie in 1760 (Muirhead, 2015, p.107). By tradition, Balchristie was the site of the first Christian church in Scotland (Escott, 1960, p.26). The two ministers (James Smith from Newburn and James Ferrier from Largo) had studied church polity, and in so doing were influenced by the writings of Glas (Beaton,

1929, p.135). Their Church of Scotland Presbytery tried hard to persuade them not to resign, but failed. In Glasgow, quite separately, a church started as a breakaway from the Relief Church (Ross, 1900, p.35). The origins of the Glasgow church are, in fact, quite complicated. Although the principle of patronage has been restored by the UK parliament in 1712, the General Session in Glasgow (comprising the ministers and elders of the eight parishes in the city) appointed ministers. In 1764, this right was challenged by the town council and magistrates – and upheld by the Court of Session in 1766. When the council appointed a minister to the College Wynd Church, a number of people broke away and formed a congregation of the Relief Church (McLaren, 2015, p. 203). When the Relief Synod agreed in 1773 to occasional communion with Episcopalians and Independents, the minister urged his people to return to the Church of Scotland, but he himself moved to London. In fact, the congregation split three ways – the majority returned to the Kirk (taking the building with them), some remained with the Relief Church, and the smallest group formed what became the Scots Independent church after, ‘a more thorough searching of the Scriptures for light and guidance, which ended in their gradually embracing Congregational principles in church government’ (McLaren, 2015, p.203³⁴). John Barclay (1758-1826) is said to have helped the group come to that conclusion though he himself later formed a different grouping called the Bereans (McLaren, 2015, p.203). Initially, the Scots Independent services in Glasgow were held in a private house. When a chapel was opened, it was known locally as the Candle Kirk, since its construction owed much to the generosity of a wealthy candle-maker (Beaton, 1929, p.138). The most prominent Scots Independent was businessman David Dale – founder of the New Lanark mills already mentioned. It was said of Dale that:

‘In his religious principles, he was warmly attached to a particular sect, but his zeal never betrayed him into enthusiasm, nor caused bigotry to take control of his mind. His charity extended to those of other persuasions³⁵, nor did he suffer friendship to be interrupted by a variation in theological creeds’ (Drew, 1822, p.1072).

³⁴ Citing Liddell, A., 1845, ‘Memoir of David Dale’ in Chambers, R. (Ed), *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*. Glasgow: Blackie, p. 169.

³⁵ Dale headed a group of manufacturers who guaranteed rent on temporary premises (as well as an annual contribution to support a priest) directly leading to the establishment in 1792 of the first Catholic church in Glasgow

Scots Independent Churches were established in a variety of places across Scotland, and (unlike the exclusive Glasites) the group 'supported Bible Societies and co-operated with other evangelical Christians' (Murray, 1984, p.47). It was hoped that a union in 1814 with Inghamite Churches in England would produce a new impetus, but this never materialised.

The Bereans emerged not from a quest for a more authentic form of church, but in 'one man's falling out with his local presbytery' (Muirhead, 2015, p.108).³⁶ When the parish minister of Fettercairn, Aberdeenshire died in 1722, the parishioners assumed that John Barclay (assistant in the parish for 9 years) would be his natural successor. George III, as patron of the parish, 'exercised his prerogative in favour of Robert Foote, minister at Eskdalemuir, whose Induction ... was carried through in the face of much opposition and personal abuse'. The Presbytery not only denied Barclay permission to exercise his ministry within their bounds, but refused him a certificate of character which would have allowed him to apply for another position in the Church of Scotland. Neighbouring Angus Presbytery, to the south, was more accommodating, 'and in their churches he preached to crowded congregations for some months' (Campbell, J., 1938, p.138). Appeals to the higher courts of Synod and General Assembly (where Barclay's advocate was James Boswell, the biographer of Dr. Samuel Johnson) upheld the Presbytery position, and Barclay left the Church of Scotland, taking many of the Fettercairn congregation with him. Barclay established a church at Sauchieburn, just outside the Fettercairn parish, but ministered there for a short time only, moving to a new church in Edinburgh at the end of 1773. There were just four ordained ministers in 1843, and the denomination died out soon after (Escott, 1960, p.39).

The Old Scotch Baptists were 'deeply indebted' to Glas and Sandeman for 'their rational Calvinist Biblicism' (Murray, 2016, p.188). In Scotland, there were congregations in

since the Reformation (Drummond and Bulloch, 1973, p.137). There was a business motive here – to encourage Catholic families to move from the Highlands for work in the city – but clearly this was not the action of a bigot.

³⁶ The Bible: Acts 17 v10-12 records of Berea that, 'The Jews here ... received the message with great eagerness'.

Dundee, Galashiels, Glasgow, Kirkcaldy, Largo, Montrose, Newburgh, Paisley and Perth – but in almost every case Glasites or Scots Independents preceded the Baptists. The first church was set up in 1765 by Robert Carmichael, a minister who had moved from the Anti-Burgher Secession to be Glasite minister in Glasgow. He was joined in 1767 by Archibald McLean, who had been a printer and Glasite elder in Glasgow. McLean became the driving force of the tradition, so much so that the Old Scotch Baptists were sometimes called McLeanites. Because of their Glasite heritage, the Scotch Baptists were also sometimes called Sandemanian Baptists – but regular visitation of churches, and circulation of writings and correspondence engendered a non-Congregational ‘complete unity of doctrine and practice’, even with English and Wales churches (Murray, 1984, p.48 & Murray, 2016, pp.188-190).³⁷

The influence of brothers Robert (1764-1842) and James Haldane (1768-1851) was pivotal to the revival of the late 18th century, which saw Congregational churches established around Scotland. For this reason, the Congregationalists of this period are sometimes referred to as Haldanites. Even though the Haldanes were not responsible for starting all the new Congregational churches of the revival period, their influence certainly coloured the environment in which these new churches took root. It has been claimed that:

‘Unlike other indigenous denominations, Scottish Congregationalism did not arise out of a protest regarding some facet of Church polity. It arose simply from a desire to spread the Gospel, not out of sectarianism’ (McNaughton, 2003b, p.165).

No doubt the founders of other denominations would have balked at the suggestion that they were motivated by sectarianism. The largest of the seceding groups, by far, was the Free Church of Scotland. In 1843, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was

³⁷ The maternal grandfather and uncle of Prime Minister David Lloyd George were ministers with the Scotch Baptists in Wales. Lloyd George’s uncle (Richard Lloyd, a shoe-maker) (Morgan, 2018) played a significant role in his upbringing (Lloyd George’s father having died when Lloyd George was just one) – but by that time the chapel at Cricieth had moved across to the Churches of Christ.

opened by the retiring Moderator. He protested about proceeding further, and then led a walk out. The denomination's historian would later record grandly that:

'It was a sight never to be forgotten, as man after man rose, without hurry or confusion, and bench after bench was left empty, and the vacant space grew wider as ministers and elders poured out in long procession' (Brown, 1893, p.92).

'Observers in London and elsewhere, who had thought that fifty or sixty ministers at most might leave the National Kirk, were suitably started', for the Free Church started with more than 450 ministers – and the Church of Scotland lost 'about one-third of its membership, in large part its more active membership' (Reid, 1960, p.138 & Burleigh, 1988, p.352). Whilst patronage and the right of a congregation to choose its own minister were key factors leading to the Disruption, the triggers for division were multi-faceted. In particular, it needs to be recognised that the ministers who established the Free Church were more evangelical than those who remained in the Church of Scotland. This reflected tensions in the General Assembly for a number of years prior to the Disruption between the Evangelical and Moderate groups in the Kirk.

It is quite correct to impute that Scottish Congregational revival started, if not exactly by mistake, then certainly not as a deliberate plan to create a new denomination. Nevertheless, the Kirk's reaction to the missionary activities of the Haldanes and their colleagues made it inevitable that these initiatives would not be accommodated comfortably for long within the Church of Scotland. In a similar vein, the developing theological convictions of James Morison and his colleagues later would also prove impossible to reconcile with the ethos of the Secession Church from which they were suspended. One of the strands overlooked in previous research has been how these Congregationalism and the Evangelical Union would, in time, have an impact on changing the theology of the Presbyterian traditions from which they broke away.

By the 1820s, one third of Scots no longer belonged to the Established Church (Devine, 1999, p.199). In Glasgow and its suburbs in 1824, only 43% 'church sittings' (i.e. places)

were in Church of Scotland churches— and this predated both the major influx of Irish immigrants boosting the Catholic population of the city from the 1840s onwards, and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843 (Brown, C.G., 1996, p.172). Admittedly there were huge geographical variations. In 1845 (i.e. after the Disruption), the entire population of North Uist (then in Inverness-shire) was associated with the Church of Scotland, with the exception of two Episcopalian families and two individual Roman Catholics (McRae, 1845, p.179). Yet in 1834 (i.e. before the Disruption) in Jedburgh (then in Roxburghshire), only 19.5% of the communicant members in the parish were to be found within the Church of Scotland. The remaining 80.5% members belonged to a Relief church and two congregations of the United Secession (Purves, 1845, p.19). The Relief Church was always ‘lowland in nature’, but by 1891 the Free Church of Scotland was, ‘the best attended denomination’ in eighteen Scottish counties including the counties representing the four largest cities – Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee (Muirhead, 2015, pp.78 & 222).³⁸

As Congregational churches are independent, it is hardly remarkable that their theological outlooks should not be identical. When George Moir (the founding member of the first Congregational church in Aberdeen) described himself as a ‘moderate Calvinist’, James Haldane retorted that he failed to recognise the term. Haldane went on say that if, as he suspected, this was another name for Arminianism, then he considered it to be an ‘error’ (Bulloch, 1898, p.4). Over time, Scottish Congregationalism would move away from strict adherence to the Calvinist doctrine that only the elect would be saved. Instead, a more optimistic theology was expounded, offering the possibility of salvation to all who responded.

It has been suggested that more interest has been shown in human thought in the 18th century:

‘than in earlier periods ... partly ... to fill a vacuum (with) ... no focus of interest in international affairs, ecclesiastical revolutions or significant rebellions, while

³⁸ Citing Howie, R. (1893) *The Churches and the Churchless in Scotland*. Glasgow: Bryce.

economic expansion has not yet come to the front of the stage' (Donaldson, 1990, p.103).

The Scottish and English parliaments were united in 1707, and the abolition of the Scottish Privy Council in 1708 'demolished the formal administration of Scotland'. The royal court had already migrated to London in 1603 with the union of the crowns, and the 'nobility followed at the amalgamation of the ... Parliaments' (Buchan, 2003, pp.4-5). The Jacobite rising of 1745 (which broke out after Prince Charles Edward Stewart landed at Eriskay in the Western Isles in July) made it to within 127 miles of London, before retreating to defeat in April 1746 on Culloden Moor, five miles east of Inverness. The 1715 rising had been much less of a Highland affair. In its aftermath, huge numbers of Justices of the Peace were dismissed for suspected Jacobite tendencies – 77% in Kincardineshire, 54% in Forfarshire and 30% in Aberdeenshire (Carmichael, 1979, pp.60-61).

Some have claimed for the 18th century, less discussion of 'sacred things ... as ministerial supervision fell off' (Graham, 1906, p.348). Yet it is difficult to assess relative religiosity. In the 19th century, with its 'competition of sects', one contemporary observed that on the one hand it was claimed that more was said about religion than at any other time, yet 'if we are to believe one half of what some religious persons themselves assure us, religion is now almost extinct' (Cockburn, 1856, p.44). Around the same time, a senior Episcopalian cleric in Edinburgh made the pithy observation that, 'Kirks may be ... built out o' curstness', but added the intriguing observation that, 'The mair kirks the mair sin' (Ramsay, 1857/1949, p.xi). The logic underlying this statement was that it might be much easier for people to move to another denomination than to submit to the discipline of their own. The career of James Colquhoun (Chapter 8.5) who moved to Congregationalism (after refusing to acknowledge oversight and discipline from the Relief Church) is a perfect illustration of the point Ramsay was making, but is in no way unique.

Popular culture often portrays Scots Presbyterian ministers of yesteryear enforcing dourness on their flocks. While it would be wrong to claim a uniformity (which certainly did not exist) for the Church of Scotland, some congregations (or at least sections of

them) appear to have been more pious than their pastors – with the claim being made that the ‘general Highland population’ was more evangelical in the mid-19th century than the ministry (MacColl, 2006, p.21). In the last decade of the 18th century, complaints are recorded for the parish of Lhanbryd (near Elgin, Moray) about pleasure being found both in debating the most abstract points of Calvinism, and in lamenting the degeneracy of the age. Interestingly, these accusations are levelled not by parishioners against their minister, but by the minister against his flock (Leslie, 1793, p.177)! Enlightenment thinking did not leave the Church untouched. There were certainly Evangelical ministers in the Kirk, but for their Moderate colleagues, enthusiasm was seen as something to be guarded against at all costs:

‘ostensibly if tepidly orthodox ... theology did not figure among their interests ... in their sermons moderate preachers avoided all reference to ... Reformation doctrines ... They confined themselves to inculcating the moral virtues with illustrations drawn from literature even more than from Scripture’ (Burleigh, 1988, pp.296-297).

It was said that a typical Moderate sermon of the time was like a Scots winter day – cold, clear and brief (West High Church, Kilmarnock, 1943, p.3). Unsurprisingly, therefore, the exponents of this form of Christian expression had a somewhat ‘chilling influence’ in Scotland. ‘The piety of their devout men – and they had many – was apt to be without fervour, and so without popular appeal’ (Buchan and Kernohan, 1985, p.57).

Religious revival was not, of course, a uniquely Scottish phenomenon. In America, it has traditionally been recognised in two phases. The Great Awakening occurred in the 1740s – and the Second Great Awakening began in the 1790s and ‘faded by the 1830s’ – though the use of the definitive article does rather ignore the fact that revivals did not arrive according to orderly time frames (Bushman, 1989, Boyer, 2004 & Miller-Todd, 2018, pp.36-38). Although the term ‘Awakening’ has not been widely used in Scotland, the same general trends of religious revival were experienced. Aversion to the nomenclature may

well be related to Scotland's claim for 18th century Enlightenment ... 'could one awake after being "enlightened"?' (Donaldson, 1990, p.119).

Historians of Scottish Congregationalism have tended to look wistfully to the Glasites³⁹, Scots Independents, and Bereans as providing evidence of early expressions of Congregationalism in Scotland. Glas's son-in-law, Perth weaver Robert Sandeman, made the movement, 'a force to be reckoned with in the religious world of the Eighteenth Century' (Hornsby, 1941, p.98). One of the features which set the Glasites apart from the Church of Scotland was a passionate desire to conform as closely as possible to the form of the New Testament church. (Visible expressions of this included weekly celebration of Communion, and plurality of elders, rather than one minister.) Arguably, that quest can be associated with the same romanticism which draws people to Celtic Christianity.

The fact that these early dissenters were sometimes persecuted only adds to their status. When Glas and his companions arrived (by boat) in Perth in 1733, for example, they were pelted with mud and other missiles. Only through the 'intervention of the Town Clerk was a hostile crowd dissuaded from violence, or burning down the new church' (Hornsby, 1941, pp.96-97). (Glas did actually receive a Call to be minister of a Congregational church in Sunderland – but this was an invitation he felt unable to accept [Hornsby, 1941, pp.96-98].)

Cambuslang and Kilsyth in Lanarkshire both experienced dramatic religious revivals in 1742. William McCulloch, the Cambuslang parish minister, was asked to lecture once a week on a week-night – but following the third meeting, he started to preach daily (Drummond and Bulloch, 1981, p.54). Together with his Kilsyth colleague (James Robe), McCulloch kept very detailed records of the testimonies of those influenced (Fawcett, 1971, pp.4-5). When George Whitefield (1714-1770) visited in August 1742, a crowd of

³⁹ The Glasites themselves preferred the designation Church of Christ (Muirhead, 2015, p.106), though to avoid confusion with the Churches of Christ/Campbelites, that appellation is never ascribed to them now.

some 30,000 people gathered to hear him call them to repentance⁴⁰, and some 3,000 people received Communion in specially erected tents (McKerrow, 1839, p.164 & Schlenther, 2010).

‘There were those who, once the temporary excitement had passed, reverted to what they had been before, but long afterwards it was acknowledged that the majority of those who had been converted remained constant and were full of religious influence in their local communities’ (Drummond and Bulloch, 1981, p.55).

Only in November was the Cambuslang parish church able again to accommodate worshippers as the numbers attending each Sunday reduced.

In terms of the American experience of the Great Awakening, it has been suggested that religious revival, ‘didn’t bring warmth to a chilly old house ... (but) burnt it down’ since those who at first were ‘welcomed as messengers of God’ were later ‘denounced as agents of Satan’ (Erlendson, 2018, pp.22 & 28). That may sound a very dramatic reaction. In Scotland, though, the Secession Church condemned the ‘feverish atmosphere (at Cambuslang) ... as inspired by the devil’. This was the denomination which had believed that Whitefield should preach only to them, and turned against him when he refused so to limit himself (Lynch, 1992, p.399). Although some Church of Scotland ministers ‘had their reservations, ‘none showed the bitter hostility of the Secession’ (Drummond and Bulloch, 1981, p.55).

Revivalists saw ‘the Almighty stirring his people to fresh Gospel efforts’, whilst traditionalists ‘demanded punctilious conformity to church order and inherited doctrine’ (Bebbington, 2001). Paradoxically, the very quest for moderation actually drove some,

⁴⁰ When a Dunfermline crowd looked up the passages to be read, Whitfield commented that ‘the rustle of the multitude of Bibles (was) ... such as he had never witnessed before’ (Graham, 1909, p.375).

'devout members ... into non-conformity through the apparent lifelessness or open secularisation of their official organisation' (Cant, 1984, p.208).

4.3 Revival

18th century revival was not unique to Congregationalism, but it is pivotal to the story of Congregationalism in England. The London Missionary Society (LMS) was itself a product of that revival (Tudur, 2018, p.61) – and is more connected to the Scottish experience than its name might suggest.

Religious revival was not experienced uniformly across Scotland in either space or time. 1822 was called the ‘Year of Swooning’ on the Isle of Lewis, and in those events Congregationalism played no part (MacLeod, 2010, p.135). Yet in contrast, on the Isle of Arran, the ‘charismatic evangelism’ and ‘anti-patronage stance’ of Congregationalism at Sannox ‘spread to the whole of Kilmory Parish and beyond, creating the spiritual conditions leading to Arran’s Great Revival’ (Campbell, T., 2013, p.123).

The claim that Scottish Congregationalism ‘arose simply from a desire to spread the Gospel’ has already been noted (McNaughton, 2003b, p.165). Whilst it is true that there is no single issue at national level which triggered the revival of Congregationalism in Scotland, that should come as little surprise in a tradition in which the independency of each individual Church is paramount.

One can argue, for example, about the factors which made the formation of the Free Church of Scotland inevitable. Its roots can be traced back to the Patronage Act of 1712 – and it was immediately preceded by the ‘Ten Year’s Conflict’ when the ‘struggle between rival Moderate and Evangelical parties within the Church had come to a head’ (Lynch, 1992, p.399). Yet there is no ambiguity about timing. The Disruption took place on 18 May 1843. Emotions were mixed, for although:

‘people saw that principle had really triumphed over interest ... amidst this exultation there was much sadness and many a tear, many a grave face and fearful thought, for no-one could doubt that it was with sore hearts that these ministers left the Church, and no thinking man could look on the unexampled scene and

behold that the temple was rent without pain and sad forebodings' (Cockburn 1874, pp.21-22).

Undoubtedly, the Haldane brothers and their associates played a key part in the revival of Congregationalism in Scotland in the late 1790s – but to lay revival simply at their door is to ignore that local causes started at different times with varying triggers. This makes the quest for a starting date elusive.

In Annan, Dumfriesshire, for example, an Andrew Carnson (a native of Ballymoyle, Londonderry) ministered from 1794 until 1796, with a Congregational church being built in 1794 (Surman Index, 2018 & Scotland's Churches Trust, 2019). Whilst visiting Annan:

'the person in whose house he lodged found him in possession of a Bible, which led to conversation about religion , with the result that he was encouraged to hold meetings in the open air ... and after a time accepted the call of the people to be their pastor' (Ross, 1900, p.241).

Perth Congregational Church also traces its roots to 1794, interestingly not in a breakaway from the Church of Scotland, but with a group, "who do not reckon themselves dissenters, but wish their chapel should be received as a chapel of ease to the established church' (Scott, 1796, p.532). In Aberdeen, the first Congregational church was established in 1797. George Moir, a hosier in the city, did hear, converse with, and write to James Haldane – but it was his personal 'researches and reading' (including the writings of English Congregationalists Philip Doddridge and Isaac Watts, and the *Evangelical* and *Missionary Magazines*) which drew him (from Methodism) to Independency – and to found the church with Alexander Innes (an Anti-burgher), William Stephen (a Methodist) and six other friends (Bulloch, 1898, pp.21-30).

All that being said, however, the Haldane brothers and their associates did play a pivotal role in Congregationalism establishing in many locations across Scotland. Robert Haldane had a career in the Royal Navy, James Haldane in the merchant navy. After

dramatic conversion experiences, both committed themselves full-time to Christian work. Robert was the wealthier brother, having inherited the Airthey estate (on which the University of Stirling now stands). Both members of the Church of Scotland, their original intention had not been to found a new denomination.

In 1797, James Haldane, John Aikman and Joseph Rate, undertook a preaching tour of some 1,000 miles across Scotland (in their words), 'not to ... make converts to this or the other sect, but to endeavour to stir up their brethren to flee the worst to come, and not to rest in an empty profession of religion' (Haldane, 1853, p.156). In December 1797, the Haldanes and friends formed the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home (SPGH). Joseph Rate was the SPGH's first employee, and between May and July 1798 he preached in most of the towns and villages of Fife.

It became common practice for the itinerant preachers (some of whom came from England), to attend morning worship in the parish churches in communities across Scotland. Where there were perceived errors in the parish ministers' doctrine, these would then be set forth in open-air, afternoon meetings (Edgar, 1886, p.125)!

Understandably these antics were not welcomed by all in the Kirk. The parish minister at Aberdour, Fife, for example, confiscated the town crier's bell, in the hope that this would prevent the open-air services being effectively promoted. Quite how the preacher was able to obtain another bell is not recorded, but the town crier was presented with a replacement so that the open-air preaching could still be announced (MacNaughton, 2005, pp.4-9)!

It is entirely unsurprising that some parish ministers should have objected to their doctrine being questioned, and religious activity outside their control taking place within their parish. What is remarkable is that, 'The open invitation to attend, the use of lay preachers and the holding of meetings after dark were regarded as sure signs of ecclesiastical and civil sedition' (Brown, C.G., 1981, p.9). Separately, Tabernacles were built – envisioned not as churches with settled congregations, but as large preaching halls where crowds

could hear different evangelical preachers. The Edinburgh Tabernacle's capacity of 3,000 gives an indication of the grand aspirations here (Donaldson, 1990, p.121). Fairly soon though, it became clear that these missionary activities would not sit easily alongside the leaders' membership of the Kirk. This triggered the establishment of Congregational churches, with 85 churches formed on the congregational plan by 1807 and nearly 300 men trained for ministry.

The commitment of the Haldanes in promoting and funding this work cannot be over-estimated. Yet, much as Glas and Sandeman had done before them, Robert and James began to adopt, 'the minutiae of what they believed to be the practice of the early church' (Paterson, 2012). Tensions developed in the new movement. Whereas the Tabernacles were inclusive (focused on drawing in large numbers of hearers), the Churches, as gathered communities of believers, were pastoral and disciplinary (Lovegrove, 1999, p.28). The two did not sit easily together – and when attempts were made to merge them, Congregational churches ended up responsible for buildings which were far greater than their needs.

Around 1807/1808, the Haldanes moved to support the Baptist movement. This change in theological viewpoint had wide-ranging implications. Arguments over infant were repeated in many Churches up and down the country, with divisive effects. At a practical level, the Haldanes, still holding the title-deeds for many churches they had funded, took many buildings with them into the Baptist movement.

In attempting to explain why the Haldanes found only a 'temporary ecclesiastical refuge' in Congregationalism, it has been suggested that:

'even before they became Baptists ... they had moved away from Congregational polity. In ecclesiastical outlook, though not in doctrine, they were Sandemans, and were they living today they would find their spiritual home with the Plymouth Brethren' (Escott, 1960, p.85).

It is quite correct that the initial intention had never been to found a new denomination (McNaughton, 2003, p.165). Reform movements, though, usually begin as an attempt to change from within rather than start something new. The same thing could be said for early Methodism starting as a revival movement within the Church of England. John Wesley (1703-1791), indeed, remained in Church of England orders to the end of his life. Likewise, the Salvation Army of William Booth (1829-1912) emerged later out of Methodism.

The departure of the Haldanes and some of their associates to Baptist churches initially left many of the Scottish Congregational churches in a 'weak and shattered condition', with Greville Ewing generally hailed as the 'architect and builder of modern Scottish Congregationalism' (Escott, 1960, pp.86 & 90). The formation of a Congregational Union of Scotland in 1812⁴¹ was itself a missionary endeavour – emerging out of a desire to support poorer churches in their outreach to their communities. In time, though, Scottish Congregationalism regrouped and became even stronger. One Edinburgh Congregational minister (later to be the Principal of the Theological Hall of the Congregational Churches in Scotland) even went as far as to claim that the Haldane withdrawal:

'was about the best thing that could have happened to the denomination at large, as, by closing upon an artificial source of strength, it threw the churches upon their internal resources, and taught them to look for success more steadfastly and exclusively to the soundness of their principles, the activity of their efforts, the purity of their character, and the blessing of their Divine head' (Alexander, 1845, pp.101-102).

Another boost to Scottish Congregationalism came in the 1840s – though it would take some time for it to be recognised as such. James Morison trained for the ministry of the Secession Church. On being licensed (i.e. not yet ordained) he was initially engaged in itinerant preaching in the north of Scotland.

⁴¹ It would take a further 19 years for the Congregational Union of England and Wales to be founded (Orchard, 2018).

In 1840, Morison published a pamphlet in which he articulated the view that the atonement had been for all men, not just for the elect. In October that year, this prompted the Presbytery to grill him over his theology before his ordination service at Clerk's Lane Secession Church, Kilmarnock. Morison had been accused of teaching that everyone was already pardoned:

'but on this point he was able satisfactorily to explain that there was a great and manifest difference between the proposition that Christ had died for all men, so that they might be pardoned, and the proposition that all were already pardoned' (Ferguson, 1876, p.26).

The service did go ahead, albeit an hour late in starting. Only one minister stayed for the celebratory dinner, although it was suggested that:

'the reason of non-attendance lay, possibly, quite as much in the fact that the church had agreed to have no intoxicating beverages at the dinner, as in the unpopularity of Mr. Morison' (Ferguson, 1876, p.27).

Morison's ministry in the Secession Church, however, was to be short-lived. In January 1841, the publication of another pamphlet led to further charges over doctrine and conduct, followed by suspension. The majority of the Kilmarnock congregation decided to secede with their minister – and, unusually in cases like this, they were able to take their building with them.

Morison's Kilmarnock ministry was incredibly fruitful, with 578 new members in the first two years, and attendances at prayer meetings of up to 1,000 (Scott, 2002, p.122). Morison's father was also suspended from his ministry in 1842, as were ministers in Falkirk and Kendal.

The Evangelical Union was formed on 16 May 1843. This event was:

‘somewhat overshadowed by the Disruption in the Church of Scotland two days later ... It had not been intended to establish a new denomination, merely a society for the promotion of evangelical work, but the practical effect was to create a church which in its organization hovered between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, and whose most distinctive feature was its championing of total abstinence before it became a popular cause in other churches’ (Ritchie, 2004).

The Evangelical Union spread across Scotland (and to northern England and Belfast), though it made the ‘greatest impact in Lanarkshire, Ayrshire and Glasgow, while barely touching the Highlands and Islands ... and ... more likely to be found in an urban setting than on a remote mountainside’ (McNaughton, 2007, p.23). By 1898 there were ninety churches (Escott, 1960, p.127).

The Evangelical Union never had a presence in more than 23 of the 34 Scottish counties which existed prior to 1890 – whereas the Congregational Union had churches in 33 countries (MacNaughton, 2007, p.23). Initially the Congregational and Evangelical Union churches were very much divided – but over time their theological differences (between Calvinism and Arminianism) were minimised to such an extent that the two traditions united in January 1897 (Ross, 1900, p.190).

It is difficult to be precise about the exact number of Congregational churches in Scotland at any time. Starting and ending points are not always clear – and a feature of Independency is that there is no centralised record-keeping! By examining published information on the origins of Congregational churches in Scotland, some estimates can be made. Figure 5 attempts to do this by tallying the number of churches operating at the start of each decade. Causes which were very short-lived may not be captured at all – but the graph serves to illustrate the general trend.

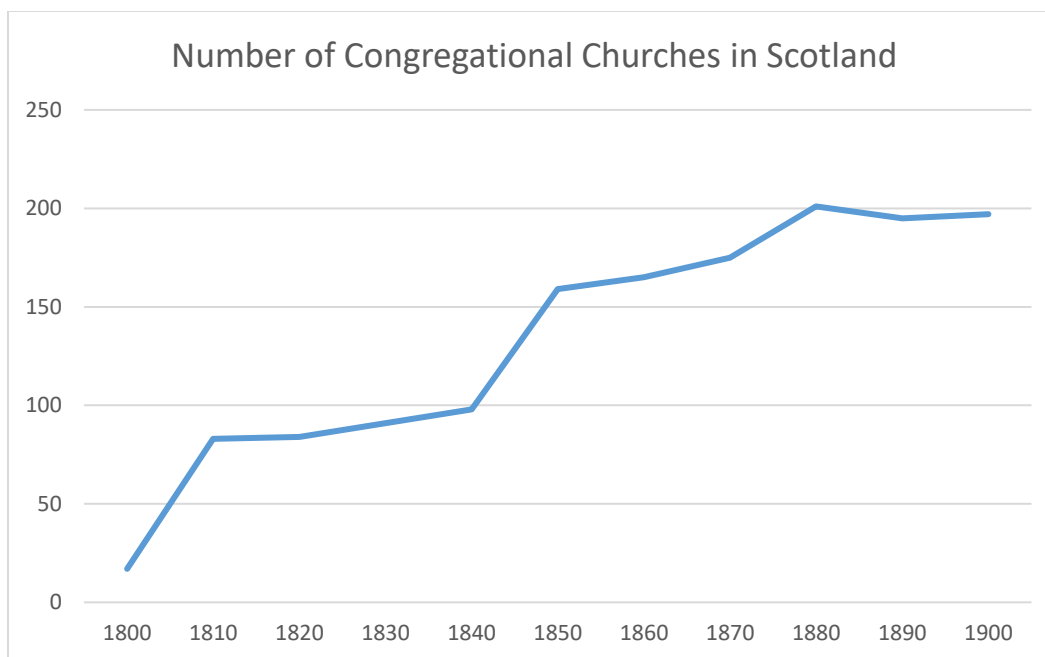


Fig. 5 – Number of Congregational Churches in Scotland by decade through the 19th century⁴²

Lest it be thought that Congregational revival was purely a phenomenon of burghs and small towns, Figure 6 summarises growth in the four then cities of Scotland. Counting the number of Congregational Churches at 50 year intervals will miss some causes which were short-lived. Nevertheless, this exercise indicates 5 Congregational Churches in the Scottish cities at the start of the 19th century, 27 mid-century, and 62 at the opening of the twentieth century.

⁴² Compiled from information on the history of individual Congregational Churches – McNaughton (1993, pp.287-485).

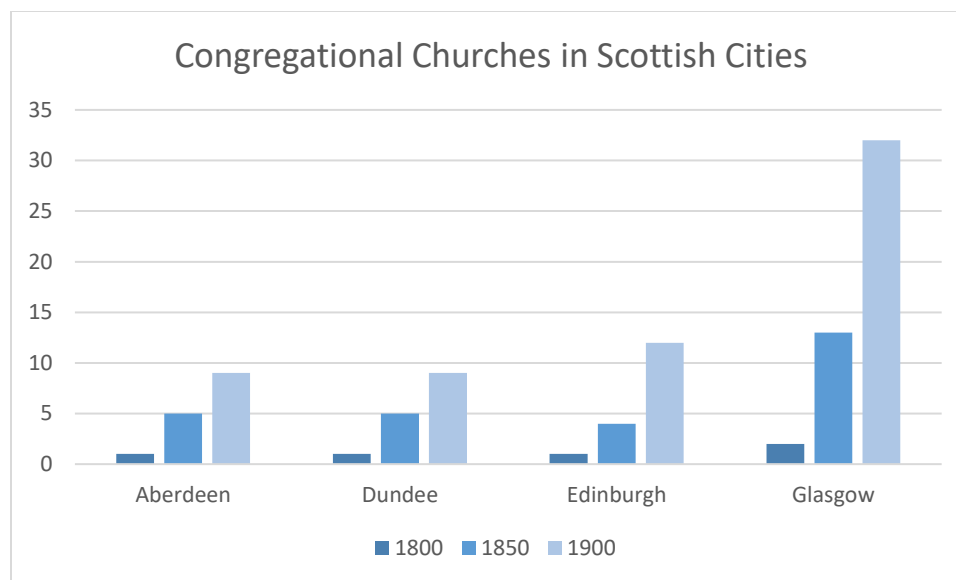


Fig. 6 – Congregational Churches in the cities of Scotland⁴³

From an English perspective, the ‘root principle’ of Congregationalism was defined not in terms of organisation, but in the ‘emphasis with which Congregationalism maintains that the members of the Christian Churches should be Christians’ (Dale, 1881, p.266). To 21st-century ears, it seems self-evident that a church should be composed of Christians. Yet a Scottish explanation (by a Congregationalist) set out the crucial difference between the Presbyterian and Congregational conception of the nature of the Church.

‘Whereas, according to Knox, the church was an institution providing the means by which men *might become* believers in Christ, according to the early independents it was this and something more; it was a holy fellowship of those who sincerely avowed that they *were* believers: that which Knox left out, they regarded as essential to the very nature of a church as a company of professing and confessing believers in Christ’ (Ross, 1900, p.8).

⁴³ Compiled from information on the history of individual Congregational Churches – McNaughton (1993, pp.287-485).

In an age when a much higher proportion of the population attended church, the significance of this difference in understanding as to the nature of the Church can be recognised.

Following schisms in Scottish Churches is confusing. What these divisions meant in practice, however, was that when an unpopular minister was 'presented' there another option. It needs to be noted, though, that the pattern of secession was not uniform across Scotland.

It has been claimed that, in 1766, there were as many as 120 dissenting (but still Presbyterian) churches, 'attended by 100,000 persons' (Burleigh, 1988, p.284). If complacency in the Church of Scotland was one trigger allowing revivalism to grow within Congregationalism, then disharmony within these Seceding communities has to be another. There were Seceders 'whose consciences wound themselves round a scruple like a hedgehog round a straw', and it has even been claimed that the break-aways benefitted the Kirk by removing, 'the ill-humours ... into congenial sects, and gave every one who was ... fanatical and stubborn, a communion where he could find rest for himself and give no trouble to others' (Graham, 1906, pp.377 & 380).

Glas had a clear vision of the church as a community of 'true believers', and the Voluntary principle (that Church and State are separate) originated with him (Escott, 1960, p.23). Yet in organisational terms, power in the Glasite tradition was too centralised to be too truly Congregational. Congregationalists look to Glas as an early proponent of their creed – yet one Presbyterian writer has asserted that, 'the Glasites were more presbyterian than independent and due to the dominant personalities of Glas and Sandeman, they were in practice Episcopalian, at least as long as these two men were alive' (Webster, 2004).

The Old Scots Independents had internal disputes of their own, though the causes seem trivial in hindsight. Issues debated included whether the Lord's Prayer should be recited during services, whether the congregation should say an audible 'Amen' at the end of prayers, and whether the congregation should stand to sing as well as to pray (Beaton,

1929, pp.138-139). Though David Dale served as an elder from 1769 until his death in 1806, his wife did not share his enthusiasm for the denomination. Just three years into their marriage she left the Scots Independents to become a Baptist (McLaren, 2015, p.205)!

In 1775, the Bereans in Edinburgh sent a letter to their colleagues in Fettercairn/Sauchieburn seeking subscriptions to allow a book of Barclay's to be published. The letter contains the statement that this is, 'a matter of importance to the Berean cause, which is the only Christian cause on the face of the earth' (Campbell, J., 1938, p.143). Here, in starkest form, is the reminder that the 'native' Congregational movements were often too inward-looking even for their own survival.

4.4 The distinctiveness of Scottish Congregationalism

'Its novelty, hazard and daring made it very attractive to multitudes. That a man would brave the changeable Scottish weather, use the vast spaces as a temple and a dull or shining sky as a sounding board and stand up almost at any hour of the day or night to preach was magnetic and appealing' (Wallace, 1955 , p.308).

In this way was the preaching of James Haldane described. Haldane first preached outside in July 1797. He did so less frequently after 1805, feeling that his earlier missionary endeavours had had the intended result. The fact that he did not preach outdoors for the last two decades of his life was in recognition of the strain on his voice (Blythe, 2015, p.29). Voice projection to crowds of thousands, without electrical amplification, came at a cost. Haldane's aims were bold – nothing less than the “transformation of the religious culture of Scotland (Blythe, 2015, p.30). When he preached, he had two audiences in mind. On the one hand he was presenting to individuals the call to personal salvation. Yet at the same time, he was appealing to the religious establishment, recalling its ministers to be, ‘faithful and laborious’ (Haldane, 1798, p.29). Elsewhere this study elaborates on this missionary zeal – one of the things which made Scottish Congregationalism distinctive (though admittedly not unique) as it revived from the late 18th century onwards. In this study of Scottish Congregationalism, however, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the ways in which Congregationalism in Scotland differed from Independency elsewhere.

In the early 18th century, a London newspaper carried a report of the establishment of a Congregational Church in Boston, America – recognising that many readers would be unfamiliar with the process. That report talked of individuals, from a variety of church backgrounds (and with the assistance of ordained ministers), compiling a, ‘Covenant of Incorporation, in which all could agree’ (Daily Journal, 1737, p.1). It is not dissimilar to the accounts of the formation of the first Congregational Church in Aberdeen (Bulloch, 1898).

In Congregationalism there is no higher authority external to the local Church – whereas the Church of Scotland (as the largest Presbyterian church in Scotland) has presbyteries as a regional ‘court’, and a national General Assembly. (Until the 1990s, the Church of Scotland had Synods as a level between Presbyteries and the General Assembly.)

Although ultimate decision-making in a Congregational church rests with the Congregational Meeting, comprising all church members, it is common for Congregational churches to delegate some decision-making to deacons or managers. In the 1830s, for example, the Albany Street Congregational Church in Edinburgh elected, ‘6 Deacons annually... (to) form a body of managers’ (Commissioners of Religious Instruction, 1837, p.143). Likewise the Congregational Church at South Leith reported that management of all ‘temporal’ affairs (i.e. finance and property) was vested in deacons, together with the ‘clergyman’ and treasurer (Commissioners of Religious Instruction, 1837, p.219).

The churches of the Evangelical Union advocated, ‘the appointment in each community of elders and deacons’ (Ferguson, 1876, p.266). In so doing, the Evangelical Union was following the Presbyterian origins of its founders – where separate roles were recognised for temporal management (deacons or managers), and spiritual leadership (elders and minister).

Each Congregational Church was free to decide on its own organisational structure, as on everything else. By the end of the 19th century Congregationalism was absorbing both Congregational and Evangelical Union traditions – sometimes through union at local church level (such as at Perth). Whilst there is no uniform pattern, some Scottish Congregational churches appear Presbyterian in structure at the local - contradictory though that statement might at first appear. There was, of course, no Congregational equivalent of the Presbyterian hierarchy of Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly. Individual Congregational churches in Scotland might have a Management Board (with delegated responsibility for matters relating to property and finance) and ordained Elders (forming, with a minister, a Kirk Session) sharing responsibilities (alongside a minister) for spiritual oversight and pastoral care. Organisationally, then, Scottish Congregational

Churches might differ markedly from English Congregational Churches (which might have deacons – but not the separation into temporal and spiritual leadership roles).

Clearly Congregational Churches worship in different ways – but it is also worth noting that the non-liturgical style of Congregational worship, quite alien to those from a Church of England background, was completely familiar to those brought up in the Church of Scotland, or the various Presbyterian dissenting breakaways. Undoubtedly this an impact in facilitating easy flow between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism (and vice versa) in Scotland.

Chapter Five Mission

5.1 Home

Congregational ministers are appointed by and accountable to their church members⁴⁴, and co-ordinating and caring for a congregation can bring so many demands that missionary efforts can easily be squeezed out. The criticism often made from outside is that Congregationalists are inward-looking, and interested only in their own patch. From the historical record, therefore, it is instructive to find references not only of early Scottish Congregational ministers wanting to engage in outreach work, but of congregations keen to support those endeavours.

James Haldane, for example, stated at his ordination his intention to devote part of each year to itinerant preaching (Lovegrove, 1999, p.28). In light of the financial contributions made by the Haldane brothers, James was probably in a better position than most to set conditions. Yet the first Congregational minister in Angus had set out his plea for itinerant missionaries in Scotland in 1797. Neil McKechnie, who ministered at Woodside, Aberdeen from 1821 until 1838, 'made it a condition of his accepting the call ... that he be allowed six or eight weeks free from his pastoral work every summer to preach the gospel to his countrymen in their native glens and mountains' (Escott, 1960, p.263).

There is nothing in Congregationalism as a form of church government which makes it necessarily outward-looking. One of the reasons that the Glasites, Scots Independents and Bereans died out was that they were too inward-looking to be sustainable. In late 18th century America, 'most Congregational ministers' showed 'remarkably little interest in evangelism beyond their own parishes' (Rohrer, 1995, p.15).

Certainly, however, the non-hierarchical structure of Congregationalism facilitates a quicker response to emerging needs. In Helensburgh, Argyll, the Congregational church was established 45 years before the Church of Scotland erected a building – and in

⁴⁴ Church of Scotland congregations, by contrast, have the right to 'call' their minister – but ministers are accountable to Presbyteries (the regional court) for the discharge of their duties.

Aberfeldy, Perthshire a Congregational church was built 26 years before there was a kirk in the town (Aberfeldy fell within the parish of Dull – with the parish church about three miles distant). The Church of Scotland has a requirement to provide the ordinances of religion to every parish – and other denominations have a certain freedom in being able to choose where to maintain a presence.

Helensburgh was formed by Sir James Colquhoun of Luss in 1776 in the parish of Row – with the parish church two miles away from the new town, which initially grew slowly for want of a satisfactory water supply and a decent harbour (Thatcher, 1976, p.98-99). The Society for the Proagation of the Gospel at Home preached in Helensburgh in 1799, and the following year a small group of people appealed (to the Rev Greville Ewing in Glasgow) for a student preacher. The resulting services led to the building of a church (Escott, 1960, p.322).



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Fig. 7 – Map of 1890s Helensburgh – showing the central location of the Congregational Church

Aberfeldy was also a new town. The Independent Chapel opened there in 1817, but by then Congregationalists had already been worshipping for eleven years in a 'small house ... the ground floor being used for public worship ... the upper floor ... the minister's

house' – and there had been a preaching-station for some six years even before that (Escott, 1960, pp.279-280).

On Bute, a Congregational Church was not formed until 1835 – and (unlike Helensburgh and Aberfeldy) it was not the first church built in a locality. The Bute congregation met initially outside or in a school house, until the Ardbeg Church was opened in 1836. Its foundation is testimony to the missionary nature of Scottish Congregationalism at the time. This was a project designed to serve poor Gaelic speakers – and whilst one might question the adequacy of the research suggesting that this was a real need, the missionary zeal is not in question. Bute was much more accessible than Africa or Asia – but donations to construct the church came largely from Glasgow, and none of the trustees lived on the island.



Fig. 8 – Map showing (right) location of the island of Bute, and (left) the location of the church at Ardbeg

Were these the only examples, however, they would point to Scottish Congregationalism having an effective programme for opening new churches or church-planting. In fact missionary endeavour went far beyond this.

Around the ruined Kilchatton Chapel on the slate island of Luing, Argyll can be found the gravestones of Alex Campbell who died in 1829 – gravestones in the plural because Campbell has no fewer than four, all of which he carved himself. On one, he warns against ‘Tabernacle folk, Haldians, Independents’ all designations ascribed to early Congregationalists (Haswell-Smith, 1996, p.61). Campbell had extreme views (warning also against ‘men that have whiskers’, Quakers and Anabaptists), but his rant is an indication of the geographical reach of Scottish Congregationalism in its revised form. Not until the establishment of the Free Church of Scotland in 1843, did Presbyterian dissent have Scotland-wide coverage.

Congregationalism did take root in the Northern Isles – in both Orkney and Shetland. Only in parts of the farthest north of mainland Scotland, and in the Western Isles, did it fail to make any impression. In 1845, the parish minister of Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis was able to record that there were no dissenters at all in his parish – ‘Many have attempted to establish meeting-houses but were not successful’ (Cameron, 1845, pp.138-139).

In the study of Bute to follow, it is noted that the first Congregational minister at Port Charlotte on Islay, Argyll had previously been employed by the Congregational Union as an itinerant preacher with a patch extending north south from Fort William to Inverary (68 miles by road) and west east from Craignish to Tyndrum (57 miles by road). John Campbell preached in the villages surrounding his Congregational church at Lochton in the Carse of Gowrie, Perthshire. In Arbroath, Angus the Congregational minister in the early 1800s was known locally as the Missionary Minister because of his regular week-day visits to neighbouring villages. The Angus, Mearns, and Perthshire Itinerant Society, formed in 1825, tried to support Congregational churches in its area by supporting ministers and agents to engage in preaching tours to remote areas. In 1830, one such

itinerant walked about 170 miles on a 4 week preaching tour. This Society also took responsibility for ministering to railway navvies between Perth and Forfar, distributing tracts, conversing at breaks, and preaching in the evenings (MacNaughton, 2003, p.219).

Congregationalists were not alone in doing such work. The Catholic Bishop of Edinburgh erected a wooden chapel on Crichton Moss, south of Edinburgh, for workers on the North British Railway – and ministers in Cupar, Fife ‘outflanked the navvies’ shyness in coming to church in the only suit of clothes they had’ by conducting open-air Sunday evening services (Handley, 1970, pp.324-325). There was even a Scottish Navy Mission Society, and in time ‘almost every large contract (had) ... its Mission Hall and Reading-room’, but it was not founded until the 1870s (Taylor, 2019 & Finkelstein, 2007, p.436). Trying to get ecclesiastical approval for such projects (the Mission worked with the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterians) could take a considerable amount of time. A missionary was sent from the English Navy Mission when Edinburgh Waterworks was constructed precisely because consensus had not yet been reached (Burdett-Coutts, 2013, p.104). What is distinctive is the pioneering role played by Congregationalists.

This commitment to itinerant preaching makes more sense when one remembers that many of the Congregational churches in Scotland were founded as a result of such preaching – Angus and Bute being but two examples Arguably the young men trained by the Haldane’s programmes were better prepared for itinerant evangelism than for the differing challenges of pastoring settled congregations. Congregational students from Dundee would later regularly make a round trip of some 36 miles to preach in Dunnichen parish – these endeavours leading to the constitution of a congregational church in 1803. This small church would go on to support weekly services in two other villages, and in a third during the summer months.

The example of Shetland is interesting, for despite its relative isolation⁴⁵ (to which has been attributed the fact that Shetland had no Churches of the First Secession nor of the Relief Church) the origins of Congregationalism here parallel what happened in many places across Scotland. In 1799, James Haldane and William Innes visited Shetland on a preaching tour, receiving a particularly warm welcome from the Church of Scotland minister at Dunrossness, Shetlander John Mills.⁴⁶ James Haldane had, admittedly, started his career in the merchant navy – but the logistics of visiting Shetland in 1799 should not be under-estimated. In a diary entry for 18th August 1799, it is recorded that the two men set off in the evening, ‘in a six oared boat, and missing Fair Isle, they landed next morning in the Orkneys’ (Mills, 1740-1802, p.119). The shortest distance from mainland Shetland to Fair Isle is 24 miles, and from Fair Isle to the most northerly part of Orkney is a further 27 miles – which amounts to a journey of at least 51 miles through the night in a rowing boat. This visit created a huge wave of interest, upon which others would later build in different ways.

In 1800, a ‘church within a church’ was formed when three elders resigned from the Kirk Session of Lerwick Parish Church, and formed a group within the congregation for private prayer and bible study. Later, these men wrote to the local newspaper to explain their actions to a wider audience. James Tulloch studied at the congregational seminary in Glasgow, and returned to his native Shetland where he exercised a 50 year ministry. In 1803 he had the unusual distinction as a minister of being press-ganged and ‘harried aboard a warship’ being released only thanks to the prompt actions of his friends (McWhirter, 1968, p.75). The SPGH agreed to send two evangelists in 1805, and two congregations were formed in 1808 (one of which still exists, though in a building of 1820).

⁴⁵ McWhirter (1968, p. 63) claimed that when the minister of the parish of Nesting, Shetland went to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in the early 18th Century, he had an incredibly complicated journey, ‘by boat to Lerwick: by smack to Hamburg: by smack to London and thence to Edinburgh by coach.’

⁴⁶ John Mills was ordained in Dunrossness in April 1743 – and served as minister there until his death in February 1805. In his diary, Mills (1740-1803, p.118-119) recorded that the two men, ‘preached in every parish ... distributing very edifying tracts among the people for religious instruction ... to suppose that such men would undertake such a vast circuit ... with an eye only to a shadow of glory, is ridiculous to suppose. ‘Tis much more reasonable to conclude that those who bely and slander their characters and conduct ... were moved with envy’.

‘So great was the response to these initiatives that within a short time there were few parts of Shetland without a Congregational meeting-house, most with ministers who supervised preaching stations in more remote areas ...’ (Cant, 1984, pp.211-212).

On Arran, the establishment of a Congregational church at Sannox on the east coast of the island was a direct result of the Haldane’s mission (Campbell, T., 2013, p.123). Formed in 1806, this church met in homes before a building was constructed in 1822. In this unlikely location, a theological academy was based in the 1860s and 1870s, training Gaelic Independent and then also Baptist ministers (Macnaughton, 2010, pp.85-86). The great-grandparents of former prime-minister, Harold Macmillan, were early members of this church, and R.W. Dale (a 19th century Birmingham Congregational minister described by Jones, 2013 as ‘one of the most prominent representatives of nonconformity in England’) sometimes lectured here in the summer (Escott, 1960, p.325).

In Glasgow in the 1830s, the Congregational churches served by Ralph Wardlaw and Greville Ewing each had attendances of about 1,000. The Albion Street Church had an attendance of about 700, five sixths of whom were drawn from the ‘poor and working classes’. The Independent Congregation in Brown Street in the city was founded in 1825 specifically for ‘poor Highlanders’. All the attendees, numbering between one and three hundred, were described as all being from the ‘poor and working classes’, and since most spoke no English, services were conducted in Gaelic (House of Commons, 1837, pp.44, 68, 72, 75 & 132). In Aberdeen in 1851 the Congregational churches accounted for 12.2% of the available seats in the city in 1851, but a more relevant figure is 11.2% as the proportion of church attendees (Withrington, 1996, p.17).

One of the criticisms made of Congregationalism from outside is that it is often perceived to be inward-looking. The Albion and Brown Street Churches stand testimony to Congregationalism’s wider concern, since neither congregation would have had the financial resource to establish without outside assistance.

The revival of Congregationalism in Scotland in 18th Century then was not just about a move to a different form of church order. There were those certainly who were drawn to a simpler way of organising the Church, which they felt was more attuned to the practice of the earliest Church. There were those, in business and the professions, who liked a model of Church less ministerially dominated (which was also be an attraction to the various forms of Presbyterian dissent). Neibuhr (1929) challenged the then conventional thinking that new denominations start simply because of theological differences. Instead, he demonstrated that, in the American experience, social factors (such as race and class) are pivotal to understanding why schisms occur. Similar things happened in Scotland.

‘Resentful of older elites linked to the aristocracy, like Edinburgh advocates, and convinced that the self-perpetuating oligarchies which dominated the Scottish burghs were not business-friendly, the newer middle classes used dissenting religion as a form of self-assertion’ (Lenman, 2001, p.299).

Yet Congregationalism also attracted large numbers from the poor and working classes. Exactly why that should be is a topic worthy of further exploration. From the last decade of the 16th century, responsibility for poor relief rested with the Church of Scotland – shared, after 1672, with the heritors of a parish. After 1780, some parishes started to use voluntary assessments or mandatory stents or rates – but no more than 15% of Scotland’s parishes had rates in 1820 (Patriquin, 2006, pp.224-225). Unlike in England, the able-bodied poor in Scotland historically had no automatic right to receive poor relief. The ideological position was that the poor were ‘responsible for their own poverty’, and this inevitably had the result of dissuading the Church from trying to reach them. Pew rents were claimed to be a disincentive to attending the Church of Scotland, but there was ‘no rush’ when they were abolished (Knox, 2019, p.3). It might be tempting to assume that in the democratic structures of Congregationalism, the poor found that all people were treated equally – and to a certain extent that it true. Such an assessment needs to be tempered, however, by recognising that only members had a formal voice in the decision-making structures of Congregationalism – and many of the poor were adherents, attending but not in formal membership.

Part of the reason for the appeal of Congregationalism rests in the fact that:

'Men of the background, education and personal faith that the Kirk employed as Catechists, the Haldanes and their successors released as preachers' (Bardgett, 2002, p.37).

That statement requires an explanation of the role of the Catechist. On his fictional adventure of 1751, David Balfour (the hero of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped*) met two - one ragged and drink-sodden, and the other the pious, old Mr Henderland (Stevenson, 1921, pp.139 & 148). The Catechist's was, 'a visiting and examining pastoral ministry ... formally examining young and old, family and servants, as to whether they could accurately repeat and, better, understand the set responses to the set questions of the Shorter Catechism' (Bardgett, 2002, p.20).

Clearly this was a missionary endeavour – but there was a political dimension to the work also. Britain is not homogenous in terms of population any more than in terms of landscape. Parker (2009, p.38) wrote of the imaginary boundary line linking the River Severn south of Gloucester with the Wash on the east coast - 'South of this diagonal lay the comparatively wealthy, conservative-voting, white-collar, Church of England part of the land; to the north, the poorer, labour-voting, manual-working, Nonconformist tribes'. Such an assessment is, of course, wildly simplistic. Never has it been possible simply to draw a line on a map and readily make assumptions about the religious and political allegiances of those living on either side. That is true for Scotland too. In 18th century Scotland, there were brothers who fought on opposite sides at Culloden⁴⁷, and the Presbytery of Tongue, Sutherland actually called for a Day of Thanksgiving for the Duke of Cumberland's victory (Bardgett, 2002, p.21). Nevertheless, in 18th century Scotland there were many Lowlanders who felt that the Highlands, with its Jacobite strongholds, needed its Reformation completed.

⁴⁷ Two Farquharson brothers from Allargue, Aberdeenshire, were officers with the Jacobite army, with a third fighting with the government troops (The Scotsman, 2008 & 2010a).

The Society in Scotland for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) was formed in Edinburgh in 1701, but in effect brought together a number of lowland societies that had existed since the 1690s (Loughlin, 2018, p.190). By 1795, the society was running 229 'ordinary' schools and 96 'working schools' teaching crafts (Macleod, 2010, p.94). Teachers acted as catechists in their districts, conducting Sunday worship if the parish church was too distant. SSPCK agents were forbidden to preach, but were expected to 'explain the Scriptures'. Initially they would read from an English text, translating simultaneously into Gaelic (Bardgett, 2002, p. 22). Some Irish Gaelic bibles were in circulation, but not until 1801 was the translation of the Old Testament into Scots Gaelic completed (Heal, 2005, p.282). In 1810, the Edinburgh Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools was founded to teach Highlanders 'to read the Bible in their native tongue' (MacLeod, 2010, p.121). King George I made his first annual grant to the Church of Scotland in 1725 to employ preachers in the Highlands. By 1728, seventy appointments had been made (Bardgett, p.21 & 24). Both the SSPCK and Royal Bounty preachers were early missionary endeavours which also highlighted the difficulties the Church of Scotland faced in trying to maintain an effective territorial ministry⁴⁸ (Loughlin, 2018, p.205). It is notable that as parish churches in some Lowland areas diminished in influence as dissenting bodies developed, in parts of the Highlands the Church of Scotland was actually strengthened as 'inaccessible areas were brought within the national church' (Brown, 2001, p.17⁴⁹).

It would be quite wrong to understate the missionary contribution of these projects. Yet it would also be wrong to ignore the political agenda at play. Both the catechists and bounty preachers were:

⁴⁸ 'As early as 1739 the Society (SSPCK) accepted responsibility for maintaining a Catechist on St Kilda, then Scotland's most remote inhabited island – a responsibility it was not always in a position to honour, as no manse or church buildings existed' (Bardgett, 2002, p.24).

⁴⁹ Citing Macinnes, J. (1951) *The Evangelical Mission in the Highlands of Scotland, 1688-1800*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.

'a creation of the period when the south feared the Gaelic-speaking and politically incorrect Highlander ... the establishment of the day sought to further a protestant culture in the north, and giving grants to low-paid Catechists was an efficient and economical way of achieving this goal' (Bardgett, 2002, p.25).

Although the reasons for forming individual churches varied, in general terms the development of Congregational churches across Scotland from the 1790s was very much part of a wider revival movement. The places where Congregationalism did not flourish in the late 18th century were the places where revival was already taking place. Congregationalism did not take root in Sutherland, for example, because evangelical churches already existed there (Miller, 1869, p.474).⁵⁰ In 1807, there were probably 19 Congregational churches in Scotland, but within seven years, the total had jumped to 97 (Macnaughton, 2007, p.9).

The difficulties of dating the origins of Scottish Congregationalism have already been highlighted. It can also be challenging trying to locate Scottish Congregationalism in a geographical sense. This might appear strange – but the example of David Bogue illustrates the challenges of definition. Scottish born and bred, Bogue was a Congregational minister, but never in a Congregational Church in Scotland. Born in 1750 in the parish of Coldingham, Berwickshire, Bogue studied for the Church of Scotland ministry and was licenced as a preacher. On principle, however, Bogue's father refused to ask the local patron to 'present' his son, advising David instead to seek work in London. From 1777, Bogue was minister of a Congregational chapel at Gosport, Hampshire – and from 1789 he ran an Academy there, to educating 'young men destined for the Independent ministry' (and LMS missionaries from 1800) (Laird, 2004). There were many Scots whose missionary endeavours took them beyond Scotland, but there were also Scots, like Bogue, who found a place in English Congregationalism. In Bogue's case, his move was before the Congregationalist cause had been rekindled in his home land. In

⁵⁰ Brown (1893) devoted separate chapters, in his history of the founding of the Free Church of Scotland, to the 'Reasons for going out' as expressed by 'ministers' and 'people'. The Disruption did not have a single cause, of course, but many people were strongly opposed to the 'preaching and polity' of the group of ministers known as 'the Moderates'.

Scotland of the 1770s the Independent churches of the Cromwellian Occupation were but a distant memory – but the revival from the 1790s still lay in the future.

Scottish-born ministers accounted for 8.2% of ministerial recruits to the Congregational churches of Lancashire between 1770 and 1829. (Westaway, 1996, p.213).⁵¹ The efforts of the Haldane brothers to train mission-minded ministers was very much focused on Scotland – but the Scotland/England boundary was far from impermeable. It is often forgotten that English and Welsh Free Churchmen could obtain degrees from Scottish Universities when that option was closed to them at Oxford and Cambridge (or later, when legally possible, ‘they still felt not quite at home’) (Hastings, 1991, p.103).

Bogue was ‘a moderate Calvinist’ - ‘As a preacher he was rational - even dry - rather than emotional. Energetic and industrious, firm without being domineering, he was an impressive, indeed patriarchal, figure: one of the most influential Congregationalists of his time’ (Laird, 2004). He regularly returned to his native land as an itinerant preacher, laying foundations upon which others would build, and appears to have been the first itinerant Congregational preacher at Dunkeld, Perthshire where a Congregational Church was established in 1800 (MacNaughton, 2003, pp.150-152).

Adam Duncan (1731-1804) was a member of the Gosport Chapel. He would go on to lead the Royal Navy to victory over the Dutch, earning him the title Viscount Duncan of Camperdown (Donaldson, 1990, p.21). For this study, however, it is his role as an uncle which is the significant feature. Robert and James Haldane were Bogue’s nephews – and Duncan introduced them to Bogue. To Bogue is given the credit for teaching the Haldane brothers ‘the Congregational way’ which they later found to be ‘the best method for promoting their mobile enterprise’– but the brothers ‘spirituality and missionary vision’ also owed much to their mentor (Drummond, 1956, pp.183-184 & Bardgett, 2002, p.26). The fact that it has been said that the Haldanes ‘did for Scotland what Wesley and

⁵¹ This is a rather crude measure, with Westaway himself acknowledging that some of the individuals (even though born in Scotland) would probably not have regarded themselves as Scots.

Whitefield had done for England' indicates the impact that they made (Larsen, 2017, p.41).

The story of Samuel Haining is a bit different – for by the time he was a student at the University of Edinburgh, Scottish Congregationalism had revived. Missionary zeal took him not to Africa or Asia – but as a 25 year old, in University vacation, to the Isle of Man where he spent a few weeks preaching around the Isle of Man in summer 1804. A native of Kirkcudbrightshire, Haining returned to Edinburgh to complete his studies, and then exercised a Manx ministry ended only by his death 1846 (p.146). Haining preached five times each week, excluding his Sunday services – and worked in twelve different settlements on the island, up to 20 miles from his home. His *modus operandi* matched closely what can be observed in Angus at the same period.

In America, an 1801 Plan of Union for Congregationalists and Presbyterians in America to 'evangelise the West' created so much friction that it was abandoned in 1837:

'revivalism begot not unity but schism ... many in the older churches ... still had a mind for theological precision and ... wanted an educated and a disciplined ministry: they looked askance as the libertarianism, the emotionalism, and the extravagances of the revivalists' (Vidler, 2009, p.239).

Congregational revival in Scotland was not universally welcomed – and yet it did have a catalyst effect in helping to bring about wider change. In 1882, the Member of Parliament for the Montrose Burghs made a speech in Forfar in which stated:

'You need not be told what important services the Independents have rendered to the cause of civil and religious liberty ... Scotland stands indebted to them ... for holding aloft the banner of spiritual life ... when the national church had gone to sleep' (p.152).

Admittedly Sir William Baxter was a Congregationalist and was addressing a Congregational church gathering at the time. Nevertheless, his observation is telling.

Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), a towering figure in the Kirk and then in the Free Church, has been called 'Scotland's greatest nineteenth century churchman' (McKim, 1992, p.61). When he was appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy at St Andrews University in 1823, he 'immediately experienced a feeling of isolation, the spirit of Moderatism being dominant in both University and town'. Chalmers regularly attended 'the week-night service in the little Congregational Church ... (which he found) spiritually refreshing' (McNaughton, 2003c, p.139).

Missionary endeavour was not restricted to the Congregationalists – but it was their very *raison d'être*. As will be explored, this missionary outlook was directly linked to a developing theology, as views about the nature of God changed.

5.2 Overseas

Although the published work has not focused on overseas missionary activity, those endeavours are closely linked to the story of Scottish Congregationalism. At the start of the 20th century, Britain had around 10,000 missionaries overseas, and contributed approximately 40% of total global expenditure on Protestant missionary endeavour (Porter, 1997, p.369). Scotland contributed greatly to this activity, with it being suggested that of any country it most deserved to be labelled ‘a land of missionary concern’ (Sundkler and Steed, 2000, p.118).

It was not always so. Protestantism, in general, came late to overseas missionary activity. At the end of the 16th century the Italian Jesuit, Robert Bellarmine, included missionary activity as a mark of ‘the true Church’ (he identified eighteen), and reproached Protestantism for having no activity comparable with the outreach of Catholicism (Neill, 1986, p.188). Admittedly, post-Reformation Protestant churches often had enough issues to face getting established at home without worrying about overseas activity. Yet there could be theological obstacles to missionary endeavour also. Strict interpretation of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination blunted outreach overseas as much as at home.

Britons and Scots, of course, established churches when they moved to other countries. In 1541, for example, a Scottish trade depot was established on the island of Walcheren in the Netherlands⁵². As James VII was fearful that Kirks abroad might become a haven for militant Presbyterians, it took a century for a chaplain to be appointed, and the Vere congregation on Walchereen island operated in a manner that ‘virtually amounted to Independency’. Supervision by a Scottish Presbytery was impractical due to the distance, but the congregation did have ‘the unique right of sending two commissioners to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland’ (Drummond, 1956, p.84). Partial independency here was on practical grounds not as a point of principle. A later example of the founding of a church for Britons living and working abroad can be found in the

⁵² This was administered by a Lord Conservator, nominated by the Convention of Royal Burghs, and, ‘Nothing could landed or sold by public auction without the conservator’s permission’ (The Thistle, 1836, p.452).

formation of a Congregational church in Hamburg, Germany by Yorkshire merchants (The Leeds Mercury, 1894, p.3).

French nobleman Jean Morély published, as early as 1562, a book ‘commending a form of Congregational polity to the Reformed Church’ – though the most obvious impact of this was probably the resulting anger of Calvin (White, 1971, p.xiii)

John Durie was ordained by a Dutch presbytery, and re-ordained in 1631 in Exeter Cathedral (though he claimed this was not a renunciation of his Presbyterian ordination, but a ‘commission for ampler service’). Durie’s father, Robert, had been banished to the Netherlands (where he ended up as minister of the English Reformed Church at Leyden) for being one of the Church of Scotland ministers who called an Assembly at Aberdeen in 1605, despite a royal veto. Interested in whether Anglicanism might help unite European Lutheran and Reformed Churches, John Durie was appointed by Cromwell to be his ‘Messenger’ to the Continent, and returned to London ‘loaded with promises, manuscripts and hopes’. Cromwell’s death and then the Stuart Restoration resulted in Durie leaving Britain for good in 1661 (Drummond, 1956, pp.65-75).

American missionary initiatives led to a number of Congregational churches being established in Bulgaria (the numbers involved were small – perhaps 0.14% of the population at a peak in 1934, with subsequent decline but no clear statistics) (Ramet, 1992, p.383). Outside Britain though, Congregationalism though has been a very minor player in European church life. It was said that a British Congregationalist relocating to Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century would, ‘most likely ... have sought the Free Church of Scotland as an alternative place of worship’ – since through the work of its Continental Committee, the Free Church had a presence in a number of European cities (White, 1971, p.xiii). Elizabeth Barrett Browning attended the Reformed Church in Paris (before a Scots Kirk was established there⁵³) which she referred to as the ‘French

⁵³ The Scots Kirk in Paris was established in 1858, meeting initially within the Oratoire du Louvre (a historic Protestant church building). In 1885 the congregation moved to its own building – the former American Episcopal Church in rue Bayard (Scots Kirk Paris, 2018).

Independents'. Robert Haldane did have a fascinating albeit unofficial role teaching European theological students, in what a Swiss protestant minister would call, 'one of the most beautiful episodes in the history of the Church' – but this work took place after Haldane had moved from Congregationalism to become a Baptist (Merle d'Aubigne cited by Chambers, 1857, p.276).

Persecution in England pushed Congregationalists to seek refuge in The Netherlands in the 17th century when Brownists were said to have undermined the 'regular ministry' in Middleburg, and 'printed polemical tracts for surreptitious export' (Drummond, 1956, p.85). Rotterdam had a Congregational church, probably from 1611, but it had become Presbyterian by 1651. In Amsterdam, John Robinson trained his congregation for 12 years before bidding farewell to the Pilgrim Fathers. Robinson stayed on, ministering to those who had decided not to emigrate to the New World (Sprunger, 2016).

Scottish Congregationalists did not suffer persecution as their English counterparts did. The search for freedom was certainly a motivating factor for some Congregationalists leaving Scotland. The Congregational Church in Newport, Fife, for example, was formed in 1801 with a Mr. Taylor appointed as the first minister in 1803. As the church was small, Mr. Taylor also opened a day-school to support his family. Summoned to appear before the Presbytery of St. Andrews (as a teacher within their bounds), he refused to sign the Westminster Confession of Faith. Not long after, a Sheriff Officer turned out teacher and scholars and 'affixed the Royal Seal' over the keyhole. Mr. Taylor ended up emigrating with his family to America (Neish, 1890, pp.111-112).

When new colonies were established, there were often plans to reach out to the surrounding populations. The Scottish ministers sent to Darien in the late 1690s, for example, were expected to 'extend their work to the natives' beyond the colony unsuccessfully planned for the Isthmus of Panama (Drummond, 1981, p.151).

A Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) was established in 1699, as a London-based Anglican organisation with objectives including 'missionary concern for

American plantations' (Stanley, 1990, p.55). A Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) was constituted in Edinburgh in 1701, receiving its royal charter in 1709 (Bardgett, 2002, p.22). From the beginning it carried the 'endorsement of the Church of Scotland and served as an agency of the General Assembly (Mills, 1994, p.16). A Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was also formed in Scotland in the early 18th century. Devine (2011, p.194) expressed the view that both these Scottish organisations 'had only limited impact'. Admittedly, the first three missionaries sent from Scotland to Native Americans in the 1730s ended up at frontier forts serving as military chaplains, with 'little interchange with the local Indians' – but the language difficulties and the fact that the native Americans were 'moving around' added to their challenges (Pestana, 2009, p.171 & Mills, 1994, p.19). American David Brainerd was on the payroll of the SSPCK, but died aged 29 in 1747 (Grigg, 2009, p.50). As a missionary he had travelled some 3,000 miles on horseback, yet his posthumous impact was even greater than his lifetime's work. Jonathan Edwards (in whose home Brainerd had died) published Brainerd's diary, which became a classic of Christian literature (Stanley, 1990, p.55).

Until the 1790s, it is fair to say that the concern of British Protestants for the spiritual condition of the non-European world had been 'sporadic and geographically limited' (Stanley, 1990, p.55). Yet from the 1790s onwards there was an explosion in interest in missionary endeavours. In 1792 a group of Baptist ministers met in Northamptonshire 'for the purpose of considering the moral state of the world, and determining their personal obligation with reference to it' formed the 'particular Baptist Society for propagating the gospel among the heathen', better known as the Baptist Missionary Society (Cox, 1842, p.3, Neill, 1996, p.214 & Stanley, 1990, p.56). This was an important milestone, although the Methodists had actually sent their first missionaries to the West Indies from December 1786 (Stanley, 1990, p.56). The Society for Missions to Africa and the East (Anglican) started in 1799, but was renamed from 1812 as the Church Missionary Society (Stanley, 1990, p.57).

Overseas mission was directly linked to theological outlook. Devine (2011, p.195) summed up the impetus for missionary endeavour by explaining that:

'In the Scottish context, a key factor was the declining appeal of the concept of Predestination and the belief in the Elect. Only if this fundamental principle was abandoned, or significantly diluted, could the message to mission in Matthew 128:19 become the catalyst for action: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" ... To that was added the awakening of evangelicalism, which caused a new urgency to convert, both at home and overseas.'⁵⁴

Between 1796 and 1825, the formation of 61 local missionary societies across Scotland is recorded (Bardgett, 2002, p.32). Most of these societies not only sent their contributions to the London Missionary Society (LMS), but became auxiliaries of it (Stanley, 1990, p.57 & Lovett, 1895, 1, p.75). The LMS was founded in 1795, and what made it distinctive was its foundation principle of not being linked to any particular denomination. David Livingstone famously declared that it was the 'unsectarian nature' of the LMS that attracted him, since it sent, 'neither Episcopacy, nor Presbyterianism, nor Independency, but the Gospel of Christ' (Livingstone, 1857, p.6). Livingstone's faith was 'tolerant and non-sectarian', but interestingly, 'as a Congregationalist he could appeal to those who followed the largely rival Scottish churches' (Devine, 2011, p.201).

In practice, however, by the 1820s, the LMS had become the Congregational Missionary Society, not because it had become less ecumenically-minded, but rather as the inevitable consequence of more and more denominations establishing their own missionary organisations. Although the LMS in this later stage has been labelled, 'the organ of the English Congregational body', in fact it served British Congregationalism

⁵⁴ Stanley (1990, p.59) made the same observation, but across the UK, by asserting that for Congregationalists, the, 'crucial theological precondition for the rise of missionary concern was the weakening of the rationalistic hyper-Calvinism which had caused some mid-eighteenth century Dissenters to distrust the use of any human means of urging men and women to repent and believe'. Devine (2011, p.201) noted that David 'Livingstone's own faith was tolerant and non-sectarian, and as a Congregationalist he could appeal to those who followed the largely rival Scottish churches'.

(Neill, 1996, p.214). The Welsh Congregationalist Edward Williams was a prime instigator of the LMS - but Scots were not only involved in its creation and active as office-bearers, but served in great numbers as missionaries (Lloyd and Skedd, 2006).

Between 1795 and 1845, the LMS appointed 475 missionaries – of whom 81 were from Scotland (Stanley, 1990, p.57). Putting that another way, Scotland contributed about 17% of the LMS missionaries at a time when it accounted for only about 10% of the UK population.

Part of the explanation for this lies in the Church of Scotland's initial opposition to foreign mission. The General Assembly of 1796 decided against establishing a foreign missions scheme in the Kirk, primarily because the opposing Moderate party had succeeded in branding the supporters of overseas mission as 'dangerous radicals' (Stanley, 1990, p.57 & Breietnbach, 2009, p.54). The Church of Scotland did not start its own foreign missions until 1824 (Stanley, 1990, p.57). The London Missionary Society, therefore, functioned initially in effect as the missionary society for Scotland.

The first LMS expedition, just a year after its foundation, was in 1796 to Tahiti and the neighbouring islands. In December 1797, six missionaries arrived at Freetown, Sierra Leone, in west Africa – two each from the Edinburgh, Glasgow and London Missionary Societies. 'Within half a year three of the six missionaries were dead, a fourth had to be recalled, and the other two were able to pursue their labour only for a brief period' (Lovett, 1899, 1, pp.479-480). Expeditions quickly followed to South Africa (1798), Ceylon (1804), Canton (1807) and Demerara (1808) (Devine, 2011, p.195).

In the first decade of the 19th century, we find the LMS employing a French prisoner of war (to work in England amongst fellow French prisoners), another Frenchman (for work in Naples, Paris and Guernsey), and a German Jew (to work with Jews in London) (Sibree, 1923, pp.5,7 & 11).

The LMS had a concern for the ‘unchurched in the colonies’, as well as for native populations (Skerman, 2011, p2). The first Congregational church in Australia was the Pitt Street Congregational Church, Sydney, established in 1833 (Lyons, 2015, p.107).⁵⁵ Initially, despite seating for two thousand, the congregation totalled just two to three hundred, but by the close of the 19th century it was the largest Protestant congregation in New South Wales, and ‘mother church’ to the Congregationalists of the State (Quiver, 1898, p.428). The LMS supplied the first ministers of the church including Scotsman Robert Ross, who ministered at Pitt Street from 1839 until 1854, and is also regarded as one of the founders of Congregationalism in New South Wales (Sydney Morning Herald, 1862 & Prentis, 1981, p.80). His ‘Melbourne counterpart’ was another Scot, Alexander Gosman (Lyons, 2015, p.107).

Australia was a base from which LMS missionaries were able to visit many of the islands of the Pacific (Lyons, 2015, p.107). William Mills of the Congregational Church in Arbroath, Angus was amongst the first team of six missionaries sent to Samoa by the London Missionary Society, sailing from the UK in November 1835 on a voyage which lasted 6 months. ‘All these missionaries were plunged at once into hard and congenial labour. The natives were eager to be taught ... by 1838 not less than 23,000 were under instruction’ (Lovett, 1899, p.375). James Chalmers was another missionary who set out from Australia (being ship-wrecked on his first attempt). Born in Ardrishaig, Argyll (where the former Main Street was renamed in his honour - Pallister, 2010, p.33), Chalmer’s call to missionary work came whilst he was working in a lawyer’s office in Inveraray⁵⁶, the county town. Though admitted into membership of the United Presbyterians, it was with the London Missionary Society that Chalmers trained, and to the Congregational ministry that he was ordained in 1865 (Porter, 2004 & Serle, 1949). For ten years he worked in

⁵⁵ In fact the first Congregational church in what is now recognised as Australia was formally constituted in Hobart in 1832 (Evans, 2006, p.9) where a second church was formed in 1836. Formerly regarded as part of New South Wales, when the Hobart Congregational churches were founded, Van Diemen’s Land was a separate colony (Van Diemen’s Land was recognised as a separate colony from December 1825 – and renamed Tasmania in 1856.)

⁵⁶ Inveraray, Argyll was remodelled in the late 18th Century - a planned town, with the Church of Scotland standing in the middle of the main street, presenting the same façade on the north and south sides (Inverary Marketing Group, 2019). Originally there were English and Gaelic speaking congregations. The former Gaelic church on the north is now a church hall. There is a tribute to Chalmers in the vestry of the church.

Rarotonga before moving to New Guinea. On 8 April 1901, 'on an expedition to Goaribari Island ... Chalmers and his party were captured, clubbed, killed, and eaten'. Chalmers':

'methods were often seen as casual and unconventional, for he avoided genteel living and Anglicization, preferring instead the assimilation of missionaries into indigenous conditions of diet or housing where possible; he also encouraged the inculcation of the gospel through the ordinary experiences of everyday life' (Porter, 2004).

In the first class of Robert Haldane's Theological Academy, there were 3 students called John Campbell out of a class of 24! Whilst the published research of this study focused on the student who became minister at Lochton, Perthshire, the other two were also studied. One John Campbell ran an ironmonger's shop in Edinburgh which in the late 18th century was 'the only repository in Edinburgh for religious tracts and periodicals' (Haldane, 1852, p.125). Active in Scotland and in London, his first missionary trip to Africa was described as 'one of the most remarkable in early African travel' resulting in 'important developments in the home administration of the African Mission' as well as 'ultimately the wide extension of missionary labour' in Bechuanaland (Lovett, 1989, pp.533-534). On Campbell's second African trip, he was accompanied by John Philip (1775-1851), 'the able man who in 1820 became permanent Superintendent of the African Mission at Cape Town' (Lovett, 1899, 1, p.536). Philip, a weaver from Kirkcaldy, Fife was ordained as a Congregational minister in 1802, and served as superintendent of the LMS missions in Africa for thirty years.

Missionary Robert Moffat (1795-1883) is now overshadowed by his more famous son-in-law, David Livingstone. Born in Ormiston, East Lothian, Moffat moved to Cheshire in 1814 to find employment as a gardener (Elbourne, 2007). Moffat's achievements included

translating the Bible into Setswana – and inspiring Livingstone to put himself forward for service in Africa!⁵⁷

William Charles Willoughby (1857-1938), was a Cornishman, who ministered for a short time at Perth Congregational Church. In 1895 Willoughby accompanied King Khama and Chiefs Bethoen and Sebele to England, successfully pleading for Bechuanaland (now Botswana) to remain a British Protectorate – resisting handover to the capitalist Cecil Rhodes. At Tiger Kloof (near Vryburg in modern day South Africa), he also established in 1905 a hugely influential school (Rutherford, 2009).⁵⁸

As a native of Morpeth (who never ministered in Scotland), Robert Morrison (1782-1834) falls outwith the remit of this study. He arrived at Canton in 1807 as the first Protestant missionary to China (Lovett, 1899, 2, p.404). Only there and in the Portugese colony of Macau, were ‘foreigners (permitted) to reside at all’ (Neill, 1996, p.238).

‘During the years 1808 to 1842 it was impossible for missionaries to gain a footing in China itself, and to enjoy there any liberty for preaching and for Christian work ... The plan was to choose places frequented by Chinese, as near to China as possible, and make the work there carried on a base for successful work in China when the time should come ... for China to be thrown upon to the Gospel’ (Lovett, 1899, 2, p.409).

The second missionary sent by the London Missionary Society to China was William Milne (1785-1822), a member of the Huntly Congregational Church. Milne arrived in Macau in 1813 – but his presence there was not welcomed by the Catholic priests already

⁵⁷ Moffat was formally commissioned by the LMS in September 1816. Moffat would be succeeded at Kuruman Mission by his son, John Smith Moffat. A grandson, Howard Unwin Moffat, would become Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia (The Times, 1951).

⁵⁸ It is ironic that Willoughby’s school at Tiger Kloof should fall foul precisely because of its commitment to equality of opportunity. On 1 January 1956 the LMS was advised that the Native Affairs Department would take over the school, but maintain it for three years only. ‘In pursuance of the Nationalist policy of segregating the races, the Group Area Act was to be applied to the locality and, since this meant that in future no black man might reside there, the Institution must cease to exist’ (Smith, 1957, p.43).

in situ, and he (and his wife and infant child) lasted just three days there. Although Milne travelled widely, for most of his missionary career he was based in the British Straits Settlement of Malacca (now part of Malaysia) (Lovett, 1899, 2, p.409). Milne is credited with being the, 'first missionary to portray, in nineteen Chinese-language pamphlets, evangelical theology in the Chinese cultural idiom' (Bohr, 2001, pp.175-6). One of Milne's converts was Liang Fah, a printer, 'apparently the first Chinese to be ordained to the ministry in any Protestant Church' (Neill, 1996, p.239).

James Legge (1815-1897), also a member from Huntly, would go to Malacca (and later Hong Kong) later. When he retired, after a distinguished missionary career, he was not only the first appointee to the new Chair of Chinese at the University of Oxford, but the first non-conformist to be appointed to a professorship in that University (Giradot, 2004).

The Evangelical Union's most famous son is probably Eric Liddell (1902-1945), who would not run on a Sunday in the Paris 1924 Olympics. Though Liddell's family came from this tradition, by the time he was born, the union with Scottish Congregationalism had taken place and the Evangelical Union was no longer a separate entity. Liddell also was a Scottish Congregational missionary in China – indeed being born there, to missionary parents (Magnusson and Curthoys, 2006).

It has already been noted that Scots formed a greater proportion of LMS missionaries than would be expected in terms of the Scottish population as a proportion of the UK population. This is explained in part by other denominational missionary societies being slower to establish in Scotland than in England. Was there anything distinctive, however, about Scottish Congregational missionaries? This is a tricky area to assess – and there is a potential danger in being influenced by the hagiography inherent in many missionary accounts. In addition, should missionaries be assessed simply by the badge under which they served – or should account be taken of the formative influences of earlier denominational allegiances (such as James Chalmers moving from the United Presbyterians to Congregationalism, or David Livingstone transferring from the Church of Scotland via the Relief Church)?

Despite these caveats, some trends emerge. The Congregational tenet of equality of people, for example, found very practical expression in John Philip. A strong opponent of slavery, he was deeply convinced that its abolition would be the ‘first step towards achieving full human dignity’ for Africans. For Philip, just as all people were ‘equal in sin and guilt’ before God, Christians were ‘also made equal in the eyes of God by their conversion’. Native converts were in no way second-class citizens. Philip’s approach contrasted greatly with ‘colonial administrators and Boer settlers, who were often bitterly opposed to his values’ (Devine, 2011, p.198). David Livingstone, probably Scottish Congregationalism’s most famous son, exhibited that same commitment to equality. Demanding much of himself, Livingstone expected the same of his colleagues, and often seemed to get on better with Africans than with fellow Europeans. A former First Minister of Scotland recalled that Kenneth Kaunda, the first post-independence President of Zambia, called Livingstone Africa’s first freedom fighter.

‘Livingstone led the way, And he stuck the course ... That is why today Blantyre⁵⁹ is still Blantyre, and so many other places still hold his name’ (McConnell, 2013).

After Livingstone’s death, his body was taken an astonishing 1,500 miles across Africa to the coast for transportation back to Britain by two Africans:

‘note those two names – James Chuma and Abdullah Susi. It is important to repeat them, not just because it is surely demeaning to award them only one, the conventional double act of Susi and Chuma, as though, as Africans, that is all they required or deserved. We should identify them properly, not least because their names indicate that, fascinatingly, one was a Christian and one a Muslim’ (Mackenzie, 2017, p.278).

⁵⁹ Nyasaland, now Malawi.

It was said of John Philip that his social background 'gave him a particular empathy for ordinary African people' (Devine, 2011, p.198). Larsen (2017, p.41) also noted that Congregationalists often championed the rights of indigenous peoples.

Congregationalism did not have a monopoly on empathy for native peoples – far from it. Mary Slessor served with the United Presbyterians in Calabar, Nigeria – and had a reputation for living as the Africans did, not set apart as European missionaries often did (Birkett, 2004). Yet the fact that Slessor is remembered for this is itself an indication that she was an exception.

It has been suggested that, 'Livingstone's Scottishness still awaits full exploration by students of his career ... the medical and scientific education which he obtained at the Anderson University – impossible to obtain in English universities for a man of his humble social position' (Shepperson, 1973, p.209). Breitenbach (2011, p. 212) noted that although:

'Scottish-supported foreign missions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a Protestant phenomenon, dominated by the main Presbyterian churches ... it was from the dissenting churches that some of the most famous Scottish missionaries emerged – Robert Moffat, David Livingstone, and James Chalmers'.

The legacy of Scottish Presbyterianism in foreign missionary work is clearly significant. It would be foolish to pretend that Congregationalism had a monopoly on overseas missionary work, when clearly it did not. Yet, as with home mission, Scottish Congregationalists played an early foundational role. It is not coincidental that the three individuals selected by Breitenbach as famous Scots missionaries should all have been Congregationalists.

Chapter Six Denominational Boundaries

6.1 Decline and fall of Scottish Congregationalism

South of the border, it has been claimed that Oliver Cromwell and John Milton, 'sought freedom from the devil rather than freedom from the dictates of human institutions' (Walsham, 2013, p.117). Undoubtedly, many of those attracted to Congregationalism in Scotland in the 1790s were drawn by its warm and personal evangelicalism. For them, the primary draw was not independency as a form of church organisation. Bearing this in mind, it is unsurprising, therefore, that Congregationalism should decline as other forms of dissent grew.

Thomas Paton was the first Congregational minister in St Andrews, Fife. For a time he supported his family by running a shop, selling soft-goods, but it appears that running a business alongside his ministry had a detrimental effect on his health. Only when a holidaymaker (the wife of a director of the Bank of England) offered an annual allowance was Paton able to concentrate on his ministry full-time (The Edinburgh Magazine, 1899, p.499). The minister in Letham, Angus also kept a shop – until an English benefactress (with relatives in the town) provided support. On the Isle of Man, when Samuel Haining received support from the Lancashire Congregational Union, it was noted that he was 'more successful than in any former year, having been enabled to give himself wholly to the ministry' (Nightingale, 1893, p.255). These examples illustrate that some of the early Congregational churches struggled to be self-supporting financially.

Whilst the Haldanes may be the most famous of the Congregational donors – they were certainly far from being alone. Miss Mary Anne Baxter is a good example. Miss Baxter's father had started as a 'shrewd buyer of flax', with her brother Edward having the commercial acumen to start dealing directly with foreign suppliers. Father and son started spinning in 1822, and by 1836 had a factory with 216 looms (Southgate, 1982, p.3). (Edward Baxter was also a substantial contributor to the funds of the Congregational Union of Scotland.) Foundress of University College Dundee (the predecessor body to the University of Dundee), Miss Baxter (a founding member of Panmure Congregational

Church in Dundee) donated generously to a wide variety of Congregational causes (Baxter, 2011, pp.34-35). A donation to the Scottish Congregational Theological Hall, for example, made provision for an endowment for the principal, with the balance supporting a move to new premises. Baxter was 'largely responsible' for funding the Hilltown Congregational mission in Dundee, purchased a manse (in fashionable George Square) for Edinburgh Congregational Church, and was also a generous benefactor to the London Missionary Society.⁶⁰

Individual causes certainly struggled when a particular donor died or transferred their allegiance elsewhere. Miss Baxter's death in 1884, combined with rural depopulation, led to the closure of Letham Congregational Church, Angus around 1886. The root causes of the decline of Congregationalism in Scotland, however, lie elsewhere.

The Chapels Act of the 1834 Church of Scotland General Assembly had a wider significance than its title might suggest. By fully incorporating the 'new extension charges, especially in the Central Lowlands', this Act consolidated the 'Evangelical ascendancy' and facilitated the return of Dissenting congregations to the Kirk (Cheyne, 1993, p.2). Denominational theologies also changed – and as the Church (and Free Church) became less Calvinist, so the distinctions between Presbyterian and Congregational outlook softened.

Empirical studies of religious dissent in post-medieval England, 'failed to establish that only, or even predominantly, people of a certain social class became dissenters' (Collinson, 1999, pp.158-159). What is rather clearer, at least in studies in England, is that the Free Churches exhibit a, 'a steady tendency to move "upwards" socially across the generations, slowly surrendering a body's vital links with the social strata in which it had first been nourished, until identity is smothered by the embraces of the establishment'

⁶⁰ In 1874, she spent 3,000 guineas on a steamer for the mission in New Guinea (which was named Ellangowan, after the family home in Dundee, with a further gift of 2,000 guineas in 1881 for a second steamer. Baxter founded the Papuan Institute on Murray Island, New Zealand (training teachers) and contributed to the Central African Mission.

(Hastings, 1991, p.106).⁶¹ Congregational Churches have not been immune from disagreements and disputes. In Montrose a break-away group worshipped in the Court Room before reuniting. The Forfar minister claimed at his congregational annual general meeting in 1898 that some members were withholding offerings in an attempt to starve him out. In researching the short-lived Congregational presence on Bute, it was apparent that since the ultimate (human) authority in Congregationalism is the meeting of members, causes need to be sought internally since there is no bishop nor Presbytery to blame!

Two Congregational ministers whose careers were followed in this study (Chapters 8.1 and 8.4), ended up as Unitarians in America. Yet though Congregationalism moved from Calvinism to Arminianism, it always remained firmly Trinitarian. A study of English Presbyterianism in Carlisle, England examined why English Presbyterianism appeared to have been more susceptible to Unitarian influences than Congregationalism. Whilst acknowledging that the reasons are difficult to discern, that study did propose that Presbyterianism in England:

'lacking the moderating influence of higher councils and without the equivalent of the Church Meeting, were open to decision-making, and consequently responsibility for the appointment of ministers, resting in the hands of trustees and other leading members ... in many instances, where unorthodox ministers were appointed, the orthodox Calvinist-minded members of congregations frequently left to form their own meetings, usually along Congregational lines' (Moonie, 2012, pp.200-201).

⁶¹ A 20th Century social study of church membership in Falkirk, concluded that the Congregational Church there was 'fairly typical' of Scottish Congregationalism. The worship was described as being little different to that in the Church of Scotland, but the congregation was noticeably 'much smaller and generally belongs to a lower social class' (Sissons, 1973, p.47).

What is noteworthy is that, when their theology changed, Robert Little and John Campbell left. There is no suggestion that they tried to change the theology of the Congregational Churches of which they had been minister.

It has already been highlighted that many were drawn to Congregationalism in the late 18th century and early 19th century because of its evangelical outlook, rather than because of its approach to church order. It comes as little surprise then that Congregational churches should lose out in some places as various shades of Presbyterian dissent emerged as the 19th century progressed.

'Up until the Disruption, many of those who desired a more evangelical form of preaching than that offered in the Established Churches often found it in a Congregational Church. After 1843, those amongst such individuals who had never given up their nominal connection with the Established Church or their Presbyterian views of church-order, could find their needs satisfied in the Free Church or the new-born zeal of the residuaries' (McNaughton, 2007, p.23).

In the 1830s, whilst acknowledging the impact of the minister's ill-health, Larkhall Congregational Church in Lanarkshire noted that the 'erection of other places of worship in the village' was a contributory factor to declining membership in the Congregational Church (Commissioners of Religious Instruction, 1838, p.98). Competition became even more intense in the aftermath of the 1843 Disruption, when the Free Church aimed to replicate a Church in every Church of Scotland parish.

The difficulties faced by a lack of central record-keeping have already been highlighted. It is not always clear when particular cause started or closed. By looking at the published records of the origins of Congregational Churches in Scotland, however, Figure 9 attempts to illustrate trends by summarising the number of churches opening and closing by decade. Where a Congregational church was reconstituted, or united with another church, this has been treated as a church opening. It might be argued that this overstates

the number of new churches. To balance this out, however, the former church existing until reconstitution has been treated as a closure.

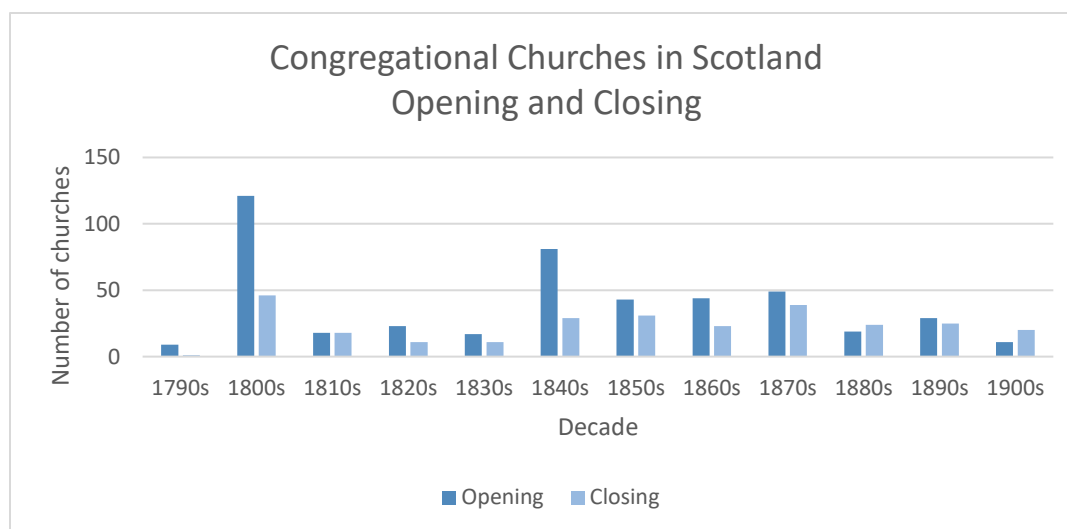


Fig. 9 – Congregational Churches in Scotland – Opening and Closing⁶²

The highest number of new churches occurred in the period from 1800 to 1809, and reflects the wave of evangelical revival in which Scottish Congregationalism had its rebirth from the 1790s onwards. The high number of churches closing in the same period reflects the shift of the Haldanes and others to support the Baptist movement. This also impacted on the number of new churches in the same period – as congregations split, and new Congregational churches were formed from those who remained committed to infant baptism. The greater number of new churches in the 1840s compared to the preceding decades reflects the formation of the Evangelical Union in 1843.

Whilst new churches continued to be formed, the chart also shows a greater number of churches closing in the second half of the 19th century than in the first half. Figure 10 illustrates that nearly 40% more churches closed between the 1850s and 1900s, compared to the period of the 1790s to 1840s.

⁶² Compiled from information on the history of individual Congregational Churches – McNaughton (1993, pp.287-485).

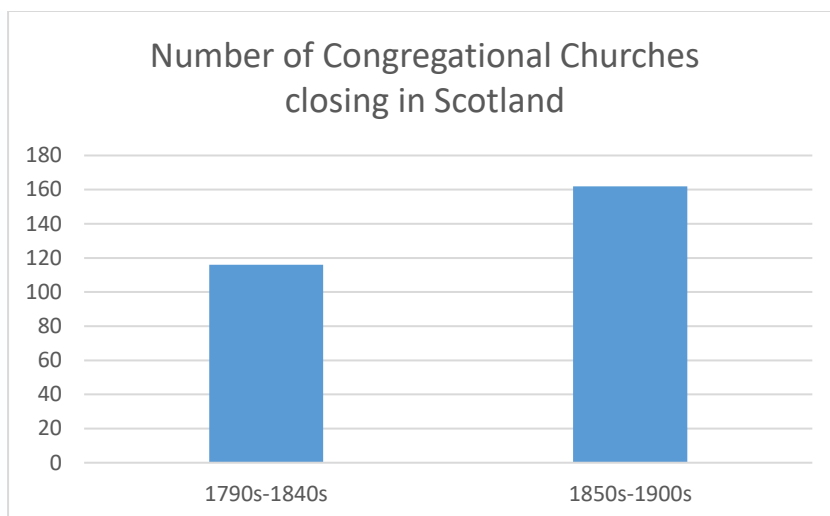


Fig. 10 – Comparison of Church Closures – 1790s-1840s and 1850s-1900s⁶³

If the three decades before the Disruption (and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland) are compared with the three decades after – the picture is even more dramatic, as illustrated in Figure 9.

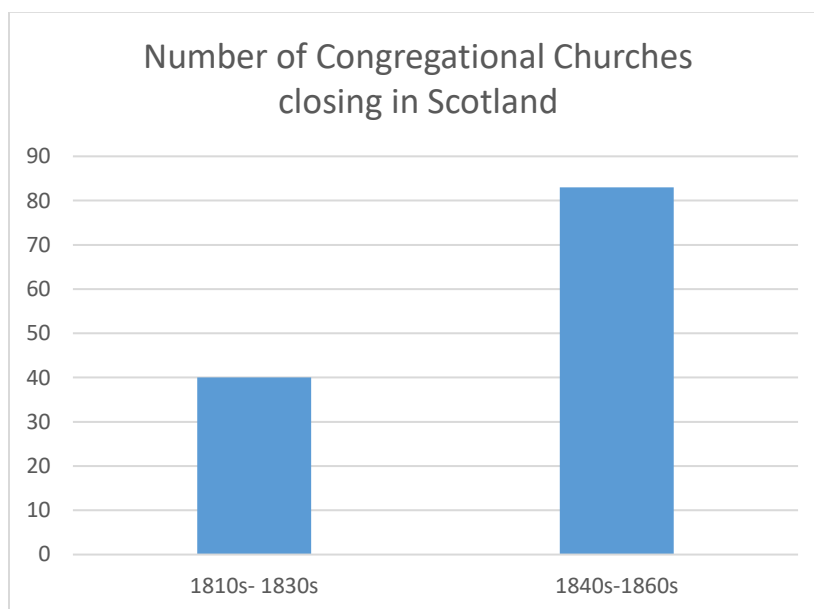


Fig. 11 – Comparison of Churches Closures – 1810s-1830s and 1840s-1860s⁶⁴

⁶³ Compiled from information on the history of individual Congregational Churches – McNaughton (1993, pp.287-485).

⁶⁴ Compiled from information on the history of individual Congregational Churches – McNaughton (1993, pp.287-485).

6.2 Fluidity of denominational boundaries

The transition to denominational plurality was never going to emerge without controversy. Writing in England towards the close of the 18th Century, Burke (1791, cited by Mansfield, 1984, p.306) had been alarmed by dissenters, at least 90% of whom he considered supporters, ‘some with greater some with less zeal, to the principles of the French Revolution they compose a more active, a more spirited, and a more united body, than the Jacobites ever were.’ In Scotland, Robert Haldane was , ‘one of the few lairds who supported the French Revolution’ (Drummond, 1947, p.72). Though his adherence to the ‘doctrine of human depravity’ quickly eroded his ‘earlier confidence in the efficacy of political experiments, his ... evangelicalism led him into activities which ... drew ... accusations of subversive intent’ (Lovegrove, 2004). Itinerant preachers, often not ordained, were a challenge to the *status quo* even where political revolution was not suspected. The Church of Scotland minister of the Perthshire rural parish of Muthill, for example, displayed his exasperation at the proliferation of ‘churches’:

‘For long I have seen, and with increasing plainness as years pass, that a great weakness and defect of religious life and thought in Scotland is the low and confused idea professing Christians have regarding the nature and place of the Church as a divine institution, preceding and apart from the multitude of sects which partly represent but more largely thwart true religion. Every fragment, however small, presumes to call itself a Church ... Each “bonnet-laird” kirk ... cries out for plantation of new churches ... according to their own hobby ... It never occurs to (them) ... that these several towns would be more blessed still if several more exemptions from paltry sects existed to promote Christian unity and peace.’ (Rankin, 1898, pp.1-2⁶⁵).

⁶⁵ Rankin (1898, p. 3-4) also declared of the Congregational Union of England and Wales that, ‘The dreadfully one-sided political character of the sect may be inferred from their own report that 98 per cent of their students are total abstainers, and that 2,364 of their ministers occupy the same rabid position’. Noting a deficit at the October 1897 meeting of the Baptist Union of Scotland, Rankin exclaimed, ‘It does not seem to occur to them that this is a hint that they are not needed in a country that has sects and to spare of its own’.

Reference to the fluidity of denominational boundaries does not simply apply to individuals moving from one church tradition to another. It is patently obvious that the adherents of new denominations must have come from somewhere. David Livingstone moved from the Church of Scotland to Congregationalism via the Relief Church. David Dale moved in the same direction - 'repelled by chilly Moderatism' in the Kirk to the 'more liberally minded Relief Church', he 'later became a Congregationalist', though technically an Old Scots Independent (Donaldson, 1990, p.111). Keir Hardie (1856-1915) started working in a mine aged just ten and would go on to be a founder of the Labour Party and its first parliamentary leader. His religion was of a 'highly practical form' with high priority given to the quest for a 'just and equal society' (McLeod, 1984, p.35). It comes as little surprise to find Hardie attracted to the non-hierarchical nature of Congregationalism. He joined Cumnock Congregational Church, Ayrshire in 1882 – but was then instrumental in forming an Evangelical Union church (Barclay, 2014, p.85).

What is rather more fascinating is how difficult it can be to establish when Congregational churches commence or dissolve. This is not just because sometimes records are missing or non-existent. Congregational churches have sometimes had very fuzzy edges. It has been said of England that Congregationalism was 'more of an ethos and philosophy' and that the 'boundaries between different strands of dissent could be porous' (Orchard, 2018). That was also the case in Scotland.

The minister of Thurso Congregational Church, for example, moved to Elgin in 1801 to minister to a 'Free Presbyterian Congregation'. This must not be confused with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, which was not formed until 1893. In any event, the minister was dismissed – and Elgin Congregational Church was formed by those who followed him as he preached first in a garden, then in a hall, and finally in the huge Tabernacle (seating 1300) built by Robert Haldane (Escott, 1960, pp.261-262). In Banff, the Congregational Church was formed in 1808 when the Relief Church in the town broke away from that connexion and 'adopted the Independent form' (Grant, 1845, p.49). Ward Chapel, Dundee was formed in 1810 when a former Relief congregation (which had become Independent and had been received English Congregational

ministerial support) merged with the congregation meeting in the Dundee Tabernacle, built by Robert Haldane (Falconer and Low, 1934, pp.11-13).⁶⁶ Lindsay Street Congregational Church in Dundee was formed in 1840 by seceders from the Wesleyans or Methodists (Escott, 1960, p.268). Gilfillan Memorial Church in Dundee emerged in 1879 from the expulsion of a minister from the United Presbyterians (for agitating for revision of the Westminster Confession of Faith) and the worshippers who followed him (Escott, 1960, p.269). In Newburgh, Fife, the Relief Church united with a Secession Church in 1847 to form a United Presbyterian congregation – but joined the Evangelical Union when a union was proposed with another United Presbyterian church (Escott, 1960, p.270).

The church in Aberfeldy was Congregational from the beginning (with some tenant farmers 'deprived of their farms for daring to associate with the cause' (Escott, 1960, p.279), but in Helensburgh there were 'protracted discussions' amongst the gathered community about whether to be an Original Secession or Relief Church before agreeing to be Congregational. The Helensburgh Church opened in 1802 but was not constituted as a Congregational church until 1804 (Escott, 1960, p.323).

When the mother of playwright J. M. Barrie married in 1841, she continued to use her maiden name. In addition, 'by custom she dutifully changed to her husband's kirk', moving from the Auld Lights (one of the schisms from the churches of the First Secession – which favoured a continuing Church State connection) to the Free Church of Scotland (Dunbar, 1970, p.15).

It is often assumed that people, if they changed denomination at all, moved only once. In fact, evidence shows people moving backwards and forwards – indicating that allegiances were formed for various reasons. People who moved from Presbyterianism to Congregationalism might have been drawn by its form of church order. When people

⁶⁶ Escott (1960, p.267) claimed there was a third party to the union, a breakaway from the Anti-Burghers which formed as a church of the Old Scots Independents – but Falconer and Low (1934, pp.11-12) were quite clear that Ward Chapel was 'not lineally descended from that pioneer'.

move from Congregationalism back to Presbyterianism, it might suggest that their views on church order had changed yet again. What is rather more likely, is surely that they were attracted to Congregationalism by its theological outlook – and then later found that same outlook elsewhere. The example of Helensburgh is instructive – illustrating, as it does, a church formed before an agreement on its denominational allegiance.

Chapter Seven Legacy

7.1 The nature of God

Calvinism is often reviewed as being the preserve of presbyterianism. Certainly, until the mid-19th century, the three largest presbyterian denominations in Scotland (i.e. the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, and the United Presbyterians), though holding different views about organisation, were still 'at one in their conservative Calvinist theology' (Fry, 2013, p.113). As breakaways from the Kirk, the Glasites, Old Scots Independents, Bereans and Scotch Baptists also all had Calvinist foundations (Coffey, 2006, p.84). Rational Calvinists they have been called, with the Westminster Confession being the standard from which they deviated (Murray, 1984, p.48). Theological adherence to Calvinism crossed denominational structures. There was a time when Scottish Episcopalians were Calvinist (Coffey, 2006, p.84). Neither was attachment to Calvinism a Scottish phenomenon. It is telling to remember that George Whitefield claimed to be a Calvinist 'precisely because he was a loyal Anglican' (Jones, 2015, p.105). At the beginning of the 17th century, indeed, the Calvinist theologies of both the Churches of Scotland and England meant that they were, 'nearer to each other than they have been since' (Reid, 1960, p.57).

It is hardly surprising that Calvinism should impact on the Scottish Congregational story. churches formed as breakaways either from the Church of Scotland or from the various shades of Presbyterian dissent. Scottish Congregationalism has largely steered clear of creeds and formula, there being no Scottish equivalent of the Savoy Declaration for Congregationalists in England.

South of the border, it was Congregationalism's attachment to limited atonement that prevented William Booth (the founder of the Salvation Army) finding a home there. At the age of 23, he had already aspired to be ordination with the Wesleyan and Wesleyan Reform groupings, but left Congregationalism because he 'disputed Calvinism' and took 'exception to being questioned about it' (Hattersley, 1999, pp.52-53).

Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (1750-1823) was a distinguished Scottish lay theologian whose religious allegiances have been described as 'essentially eclectic' (Hart, 2004). Closely associated with the Scottish Episcopal Church, he was, nevertheless, associated for around a decade with the West Port Independent Chapel in Dundee. Erskine was excommunicated from this church⁶⁷ following the publication of his book, *The Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel* (Erskine, 1828/1870). The West Port minister, David Russell, sprang into print the following year repudiating Erskine's claims, and emphasising that 'all men are under a curse; that Christ, becoming an Atonement, suffered in the stead of those who are brought by faith to believe in and accept him as their Saviour' (Low and Falconer, 1934, p.16).

The poet and novelist George MacDonald (1824-1905) was brought up in Huntly Congregational Church, Aberdeenshire and attended the Blackfriars Street Congregational Church, Aberdeen until 1845 as a student. In that Aberdeen church, 'the Calvinist doctrines of everlasting punishment and election that he had heard as a child continued to disturb him' (Sadler, 2004).⁶⁸

In England, by the mid-19th century, Congregationalism had 'quietly replaced ... *high Calvinist* doctrine ... by a more moderate, effectively Arminian belief' (Dieleman, 2012, p.28). What that meant in practice was a shift from the standpoint that only the elect would be saved, to a more optimistic approach opening up the possibility of salvation for all. In 18th century Wales, Edward Williams was influential in promoting the theology of Jonathan Edwards, forging a middle path between hyper-Calvinism (denying that the Gospel should

⁶⁷ Needham (1987, p.213) stated the date of expulsion as 1828, whereas Falconer and Low (1934, p.17) put the date 'about 1830'.

⁶⁸ MacDonald was ordained at Trinity Congregational Chapel at Arundel, Sussex in 1850. Sadler (2004) observed that, 'Because MacDonald refused to subscribe to any sectarian position, 'neither of Arminian nor Calvinist' ... some members of his congregation were offended and unable to grasp his poetic sermons ... The reduction of his small stipend led to his resignation in May 1853'. Power (2006, p.45) suggested that the description by Lord MacLeod of Fuinary of 'Iona as a "thin place or a place where the veil is thin" ... may have originated from the writer George MacDonald ... (though) its source is ultimately biblical, where it refers to the veil of the Temple and to the division between this world and the next (Hebrews 6:19 and repeatedly in 2 Corinthians'.

be preached to all) and Arminianism (denying a divine role in election). Modern Calvinism declared that:

‘although God elects some to salvation, Christ died for all people and thus all people should hear the Gospel’ (Tudur, 2018, p.73).

Modern Calvinism may not be a familiar term in Scotland, yet Scottish Congregationalism underwent a similar shift in theological outlook. David Russell, for example, exercised a long ministry in Dundee – preaching three times every Sabbath at Ward Chapel, Dundee for forty years except for one Sunday and two evening services. His preaching was described as an ‘inexhaustible stream of Scripture truth, in a channel of mild Calvinism’. The church, during his ministry, was said to resemble a ‘huge Bible Class’ (Falconer and Low, 1934, p.41).

Change did not happen universally – in either space or time – but David Livingstone’s family story is a good example of what this shift in understanding meant in practice. Livingstone’s father, Neil, a tea salesman, was a deeply religious man who spent the last twenty years of his life as a deacon at a Congregational Church in Hamilton (Livingstone, 1857, pp.2-3). Livingstone’s family had originally attended the Church of Scotland in Blantyre. The move to the Congregational Church at Hamilton necessitated a walk of about three miles each way, but in theological terms the distance between the two churches was much greater. In the Hamilton Church, shaped by the outlook of the Evangelical Revival, Neil Livingstone found the different outlook liberating - ‘Salvation was seen as available to all would accept it through faith in Jesus Christ’ (Ross, 2002, p.5).

David Livingstone himself did not immediately follow his family. Asserting a degree of independence, he remained for a while in the Church of Scotland, before taking ‘sittings in the Old Relief Church for the sake of its fine Library’ (Ross, 2002, p.6). The elders of the Relief Church would, no doubt, have been horrified to realise that a young man found the intellectual basis for rejecting Calvinism in their library – but this library membership

was to crucial in Livingstone's personal journey, for here he encountered the works of Dr Thomas Dick (1774-1857)⁶⁹, which he found extremely helpful in 'proving and enforcing' his personal view that religion and science need not be incompatible. In due course, Livingstone joined the rest of his family at Hamilton. 'By accepting the belief, that salvation was freely available to all willing to receive it ... like his father before him, (he) was now free from the fear created by traditional Scots teaching on Election and Limited Atonement' (Ross, 2002, p.6). Livingstone's essay on the Holy Spirit, submitted to the London Missionary Society as part of his application process:

'is not classic Scottish Calvinism ... Rather the young Scot is asserting that Jesus died for all and that salvation is accessible to all, if only they will accept it' (Ross, 2011, pp.16-17).

The conservationist John Muir (1838-1914) wrote that his father 'made' him memorise so many Bible verses on a daily basis, that by the age of eleven he could recite about three quarters of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament. Muir recorded that his Bible memorising was achieved through 'sore flesh'. His father, Daniel, had not rejected corporal punishment (Muir, 1965, p.27). Daniel Muir was a strict, even harsh father. Like Neil Livingstone, he was suspicious of all but religious and practical books – and as his children cleared the Wisconsin forest to plant crops, he 'retired to his study' and travelled widely as a preacher (Stoll, 2019). Pierce (2013, p.115) commented that in understanding John Muir, the religious impact of his upbringing is too often ignored, under-estimated, or mischaracterised as Calvinist. In fact Daniel had rejected orthodox Calvinism in being drawn to the doctrine of 'free grace to the repentant and a religion of the heart' – and though he struggled to find a denomination with the 'right combination of zeal and holiness', he found his spiritual home when the Campbellites visited Dunbar in 1810 (and

⁶⁹ Dick was a minister of the Anti-Burgher Secession Church (Astore, 2006). In 1805, whilst a minister in Stirling (and Moderator of the Presbytery) he was 'deposed and excommunicated', having been found guilty of adultery with his servant. When both the servant's child and his wife's baby died shortly after birth, Dick viewed it as God's 'just punishment for his transgression'. 'Seeking to rehabilitate himself, Dick endeavoured to become a Christian philosopher in the tradition of Robert Boyle and others who had consecrated their pursuit of natural knowledge to the greater glory of God.'

followed that grouping to America drawn by the offer of religious freedom and cheap land) (Stoll, 2019).

In the 21st century, debates about Calvinism or Arminianism may seem dry and theoretical, yet Livingstone's own experience illustrates how these doctrines, in fact, coloured all of life. Calvinism, or at least what people perceived Calvinism to be, was rooted in the Scottish experience. John Wesley had been of the belief that Calvinism 'blunted evangelistic zeal', but 'mistakenly assumed that Calvinism was a monochrome theological system'. George Whitefield, in contrast, distanced himself from 'some of the more fatalistic implications of predestination'. His stance had been described as preterition (that is the state of not being predestined to salvation) rather than High Calvinist (Jones, 2015, pp. 98, 109 & 111). Missionary zeal was intrinsically linked to this shift in theological understanding. Recognising the potential for all to be saved gave an impetus to missionary endeavour both at home and abroad.

Scottish Congregationalists were neither the first nor the last to question how Calvinism was interpreted. William Hamilton, professor of divinity at Edinburgh from 1709, was accused of departing from Calvinistic doctrine – and John Simon, divinity professor at Glasgow from 1714, was charged with heresy for denying predestination (Donaldson, 1990, p.104). Yet the Church of Scotland upheld a 'more legalistic interpretation of the doctrine of election' in 1720 when it condemned the teaching of the book *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. Interestingly, White (1998, p.13) saw a clear correlation between the 'greatest rate of growth for the Episcopal Church ... before 1840' and the fact that in that period its 'distinguishing feature ... was its indifference to Calvinism'. Edward Irving (1792-1834) of the Catholic Apostolic Church, and John McLeod Campbell (1800-1872) also need to be included in any list of figures who have contributed to reshaping views about Atonement in Scotland (Brown, 2014 & Jinkins, 2004). Yet Congregationalism (in both its Congregational and Evangelical Union varieties) clearly acted as a catalyst for change well beyond its own boundaries.

The Morisonian or Evangelical Union Churches emerged later than the churches of the Haldanite revival – but that movement too emphasised a more benevolent view of God.

Until his deposition from the Secession Church, James Morison had described himself as a 'moderate Calvinist'. Yet, observing through his ministry that the doctrine of the elect was a stumbling block for many, Morrison rejected the notion of original sin. Instead he maintained that human beings are born neutral, and began to preach of Universal Atonement (Roxburgh, 2002, pp. 119, 121 & 126). At the Golden Jubilee Celebrations for the Evangelical Union in 1892, Oliver Flett of Paisley stated that, when fifty years earlier Morison:

'began his labours, the idea of the love of God for every man was all but ignored in the religious teaching of Scotland, now, it has obtained a firm footing in all the churches' (Scott, 2002, p.141).

Within five decades, the theology that brought Morison before the courts of his denomination had become 'the mainstream of Christian thought in Scotland' (Ritchie, 2004). The Christian News (5 October 1889, cited by Scott, 2002, p.141) declared that, 'No-one had done more ... to mould the theological mind of Scotland of the present day and to liberalise the Church of Scotland than James Morison'.

Even if one stops short of quite so fulsome praise, it is clear that the impact of Morison extended far beyond the Evangelical Union of which he is recognised as the founder. Christian News claimed for Morison a key role in shaping the Church of Scotland – which was not even the denomination from which he broke away. It is interesting also to note how language changes with the 'Evangelical' Union being considered a 'liberalising' influence – when 'evangelical' and 'liberal' are usually regarded now as being at opposite ends of the theological spectrum.

7.2 The nature of the Church

In a tradition where each member has an equal voice, it might reasonably be expected that Congregationalism would have exhibited gender equality since its earliest days. That was not the case. Studies of Congregationalism in America in the early Colonial period, and in Edwardian Hampshire, have each demonstrated how Congregationalism mirrored the patriarchal nature of wider society (Dunn, 1978, p.583 & Ottewill, 2016, p.54). Scotland was no different. Despite its democratic principles, the early Independents thought that the ‘people’ were electing a minister when the male members of a church did so (Henderson, 1957, p.129).⁷⁰

Gender equality in terms of ordained ministry in Congregationalism falls outwith the primary period of my research focus. Antoinette Brown was ordained as minister of South Butler Congregational Church in Wayne County, New York as early as 1853, but this was to be a short-lived appointment (Thorpe, 2017, p.13). Brown left her post the following year, and although she ‘did not formally associate herself with any denomination’, she continued (under her married name of Brown Blackwell) to write and speak in ‘ministerial capacities’ (Hutton, 2015, p.200).

The ordination of Constance Coltman in a Congregational church in the west end of London in September 1917 was the first female ordination in any denomination in England (Thorpe, 2017, p.8).⁷¹ The first female ordination in Scotland was five years earlier. In 1912, Olive Winchester was ordained at Parkhead, Glasgow in the Pentecostal Church

⁷⁰ Gillespie, the founder of the Relief Church ‘had been satisfied that the people were choosing a minister when the heritors and elders did it for them in a sort of parental capacity’ (Henderson, 1957, p.29).

⁷¹ Maude Royden had been appointed to an ‘assistant preaching post’ (but not ordained) at the Congregational City Temple in Holborn, London in March 1917 (Morgan, 2013, p.787). Australia’s first woman minister was also in the Congregational tradition. Manchester born Winifred Kiek neé Jackson was ordained in 1927 to the Colonel Light Gardens Congregational Church, Mitcham, Adelaide (Phillips, 1983). In Canada, the United Church (which emerged from Congregationalism) was the first denomination to have a female minister when Lydia Emelie Gruchy was ordained in 1936 (Archeion, 1986).

of Scotland (The Scotsman, 1912, p.8). (The Pentecostal Church of Scotland united with the Church of the Nazarene in 1915.) Winchester, however, was an academic theologian, and returned to pursue a distinguished career in her native America.

Congregationalism was, however, the first church tradition in Scotland to call a woman to be minister of a church. In 1928, Miss Vera M. M. Findlay was called by Partick Congregational Church, Glasgow in 1928, with the first female deacons following in April 1929 (Fielding, 2011, Chapter 3⁷²). Even this, however, was a somewhat limited breakthrough. It would be another eight years before the next Scottish Congregational church called a female minister – with the appointment, in 1934, of Helen Woods to St Andrews Congregational Church. The United Free Church (Continuing) was the first of the Scottish Presbyterian churches to follow suit, ordaining its first female minister in 1935 (The Scotsman, 1935a, p.14).⁷³ Woods stressed that St Andrews was an ‘ordinary congregation’ which would never claim to be a ‘citadel of advanced thought’ (The Scotsman, 1936, p.36). Amusingly, she stated that she did not think that ‘a woman could be a thoroughly efficient minister in a congregation of a thousand in a big city’ but went on to say that neither could a man (The Scotsman, 1936, p.16)! Thurso was the third Scottish Congregational church to appoint a female minister with the ordination of Miss Nancie Ward in 1937 (The Scotsman, 1937, p.12).

When Rev. Vera Findlay was married (in her own church), ‘six policemen regulated the crowds’ (The Scotsman, 1933, p.13). She offered at this time to resign, ‘but was requested by the congregation to continue’. Since the birth of her son, however, a section of the congregation expressed concern about her ability to juggle ministerial duties with motherhood (The Times, 1934, p.9). At the baptismal service for her seven-weeks-old son, Mrs Kenmure tendered her resignation in the face of ‘deep opposition and active hostility’ (The Scotsman, 1934a, p.13). 261 members of the Patrick congregation also

⁷² Note Chapter reference – this little booklet has no page numbers.

⁷³ The United Free Church (Continuing) was the minority group which remained independent when most of the United Free Church of Scotland re-united with the Church of Scotland in 1929. In 1930, the United Free Church (Continuing) agreed that the eldership and ministry should be open equally to men and women. Elizabeth Barr was licensed to preach in 1933, and ordained and inducted to Auchterarder in 1935.

resigned. After worshipping for two years in a hall, Mrs Kenmure was called to be minister of Hillhead Congregational Church in Glasgow, and funds collected with a view to building a new church, were transferred to Hillhead (The Times, 1936, p.19).

Morgan (2013, p.787) called Coltman, 'Britain's first woman priest'. In fact her Congregational tradition would not have regarded her as such. Unlike priests, ministers do not 'claim to act as mediators of the divine' (Jamet-Moreau, 2012, p. 170). Traditions which stress the priesthood of all believers tend to favour women's ordination 'more than those whose position derives from the mediaeval Catholic view' where a male priest represents Christ (Fink, 1996, p.466).

Why then did it take until 1928 for Scottish Congregationalism to appoint a female minister? In view of its democratic principles, and the fact that there was no theological hurdle, change might have been expected to come much earlier. Yet churches, even Congregational ones, emerge out of society, rather than being separate from it.

As late as 1959, a committee of the Church of Scotland's Glasgow Presbytery declared that:

'It may be observed that every religion which has instituted priestesses or otherwise afforded office to women has become degenerate and corrupt. It is noteworthy that several of the discredited heresies of our faith (e.g. Gnosticism and Montanism) offered a greater place to women in their councils and are remembered today for the damage they did to the Christian cause. Again, the opening to women of ordained office in some non-conformist communions has not noticeably strengthened them – e.g. Scottish congregationalism and the Scottish U.F. Church⁷⁴ are probably weaker now than at any point since their inception (Hight, 1960, p.165⁷⁵).

⁷⁴ United Free Church of Scotland.

⁷⁵ Citing a Majority Report of a special committee of Glasgow Presbytery of the Church of Scotland established to consider a report from the General Assembly of 1959.

The fact that this was a Majority Report indicates the degree of prejudice existing, even in the same city, thirty years after Vera Kenmure's ordination – and it is surely stretching imagination to imply that no Congregationalists would have shared the outlook of their Presbyterian neighbours.⁷⁶

What Congregationalism did achieve, however, was a competitive edge in bringing about change. In Presbyterian churches when ministers and elders were all male, female voices were unrepresented in the decision-making courts of the Church. Women found a voice earlier in Congregationalism – through its congregational meetings. In organisational terms, Congregationalism did not require a majority of churches to be convinced of the appropriateness of a change in policy before change could happen. All that was necessary was for one Church to decide this was the appropriate action to take. Change at the local level then influenced wider change. It falls well outwith the time frame of this study – but on 29 April 1929 the Congregational Union of Scotland, 'carried a constitutional amendment which allowed the designation "Minister" to apply equally to women and men' (Macdonald, 2004).

It has already been asserted that Congregationalism was for many of its early adherents a means rather than an end. Interestingly, this sometimes proved to be the case for women in ministry also. Of the 18 women ordained after Constance Coltman in the Congregational Union of England and Wales between 1917 and 1938, '11 were from Anglican, Presbyterian or Methodist backgrounds, where the path to full ordained ministry was not yet possible for female candidates' (Thorpe, 2017, p.14). This is a trend, however, which appears not to be echoed by the experience in Scotland.

The deaconess movement predated the ordination of women – and saw lay women supporting clergy in a range of pastoral and social duties – in the Church of Scotland from 1888, and in the Scottish Episcopal Church from 1917 (Edwards, 1987, p.432). In 1860,

⁷⁶ The Church of Scotland would not ordain its first female minister into a parish until 1971, when Euphemia (Effie) Irvine 'became minister of Campsie Trinity Church and Milton of Campsie Parish Church' (Life and Work, 2018, p.40).

however, a Miss Abel was appointed a Biblewoman by Albion Congregational Church, Aberdeen (Allan, 1909, p.72).

The Biblewoman movement had started in London in 1857 (Argent, 2019), and within five years it was reckoned that Biblewomen, in some form, existed in almost every town in England (Ranyard, 1862, p.16). Their role was to visit the poorer homes in their district with a particular ministry 'in sickness or health' to women, and children (Allan, 1909, p.73). The Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, and the United Presbyterians would all go on to employ Biblewomen (Bardgett, 2002, p.56; Aberdeen Weekly Journal, 1894 & Glasgow Herald, 1871). Not all such appointments were made directly by denominations or individual churches. In the late 19th century, the Bible Women's and Evangelical Association in Aberdeen was employing up to eleven Biblewomen in Aberdeen where the work was not undertaken by 'any evangelical congregation' (Aberdeen Journal, 1886, 1896 and 1899).

What is interesting, however, is that the pioneer was again a Congregational church. Devolved decision-making to the local level made it possible to respond much more quickly to new initiatives. Nevertheless, it is sobering to read an assessment that the introduction of Christianity to Samoa by the London Missionary Society actually 'domesticated' women who had formerly enjoyed 'places of honour' by proposing UK cultural norms as inherently Christian – and a call for a, 'Pacific ecclesiology free from the remnants of a Victorian culture that we find hard to shake off' (Taulé alé ausumai, (2014, pp.68-69, 73).

Back in the 18th Century the Congregationalist poet John Milton (1608-1674) wrote that, "it is a fond Error ... to think that the University makes a Minister of the Gospel' (Milton, 1738, p.579). Three centuries later, the Anglican Bishop of Burnley (Rt. Rev. Philip North) declared that the Church of England's selection procedures would need to:

'change radically if the Church ... is to expand its priesthood beyond an "executive class" ... The current criteria deployed by those selecting ordinands "hugely favour

eloquence and education and confidence, over authenticity and evangelistic gifts and genuine vocation' (Davies, 2018).

Over the centuries, the Church has continued to struggle with how best to select people for ministerial training, and the Congregational churches in Scotland were no exception. Post-Reformation, the Church of Scotland, desperately short of ministers, introduced the office of Reader to read a sermon when a minister was not available. In 1574, over three-quarters of the Kirk's parishes were served by a Reader rather than a minister (Lynch, 1992, p.198). Only later were Readers authorised to prepare and deliver their own material. There existed in Scotland, a, 'deep-rooted distrust of lay preaching that remained throughout the eighteenth century and beyond' (Fawcett, 1971, p.206)⁷⁷. There were various expressions of lay preaching in 18th century Scotland (including by Baptists and Methodists), but lay-preaching often seemed to be a stop-gap until a minister should become available (Fawcett, 1956, p.100).

One has to treat with some caution the assertion (no doubt biased) by a Congregational historian that the early, itinerant Wesleyan lay preachers in Scotland, 'were usually inoffensive, and always obscure' in contrast with James Haldane who was:

'young and handsome, of commanding presence and powerful voice. The fact that he had the education and bearing of a gentleman, and had mounted the pulpit from the quarterdeck gave a certain piquancy to his utterance' (Escott, 1960, p.58).

What is rather more convincing is that lay-preaching created sufficient impact for the Church of Scotland to issue a Pastoral Admonition to all its people in 1799.

'It is much to be lamented, that, while we are assaulted by false principles imported to us from abroad, there should of late have arisen among ourselves a set of men, whose proceedings threaten no small disorder to the country. We mean those who,

⁷⁷ The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland of 1799 in fact passed a Pastoral Admonition against 'vagrant teachers'.

assuming the name of missionaries from what they call the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home, as if they had some special commission from Heaven, are at present going through the land, not confining themselves to particular stations, but acting as universal itinerant teachers, and as superintendents of those who are established the teachers of religion by the Church' (Church of Scotland, 1799).

Churches of many denominations would later seek to harness the gifts of all members – recognising that congregations may operate without a minister. Congregationalism can certainly claim to have helped lay a trail for others to follow. This recognition of lay participation is not to imply that Scottish Congregationalism did not value an educated ministry. Ministers like Glasgow's Ralph Wardlaw (1779-1853) and Edinburgh's William Lindsay Alexander (1808-1884), 'held sway over the minds and hearts of multitudes' (Escott, 1960, p.135). Yet some of the success of the Congregational revival in Scotland must rest in the range of social backgrounds from which preachers came. The Haldanes were, 'among the first to begin to harness a newly literate population to full-time Christian work and service' (Bardgett, 2002, p.36).⁷⁸

At a meeting of the Congregational Union in England in the second half of the 19th century, listeners were reminded that the adequate resourcing of ministers for churches depended on God's call and equipping, and not in an, 'increase of salaries, sustentation funds, comfortable residences' (Sheffield and Rotherham Independent, 1869, p.3). Physical resources were important - but not foundational. Although Congregationalism proved attractive to many in business, many Congregational churches in the early 19th century had a significant followings from 'the poor'.⁷⁹ The effectiveness of some Congregational ministers was undoubtedly enhanced by being seen as coming from the communities they sought to serve, rather than being a class apart.

⁷⁸ Bardgett (2002, p.37) would point out that men of the 'background, education, personal faith' that the Kirk employed as catechists, the Haldanes 'released as preachers and evangelists'. But deployment only followed a rigorous (and full-funded) training programme.

⁷⁹ Brown (1996, p.175) suggested that high seat rents charged by Glasgow Council (as the heritor) alienated many in the working classes from the Church of Scotland.

In a small way, Congregationalism played its part in developing hymnody in Scotland – not always easily. Robert Little introduced an edition of the psalms of Isaac Watts (the father of English hymnody) to Perth in the early 1800s, an action which generated such controversy that ‘seven church members were excluded from the fellowship’ (p.134). Morison, the founder of the Evangelical Union, compiled a hymnbook in 1844 (as John Glas had done before him). The North Dundas EU Church in Glasgow⁸⁰ was certainly pioneering in installing an organ in 1853 (Sell, 2012, p.159).⁸¹ It would take until 1864 for the Church of Scotland to give ‘broad consent’ for organs (‘subject to Presbytery approval’), with the United Presbyterians following in 1872, and the Free Church of Scotland in 1883 (MacLagan, 2016, p.4).⁸²

⁸⁰ Escott (1960, pp.303-304) recorded that this congregation was formed in November 1848 with ‘its origin in the Cowcaddens Society for Propagating the Gospel which had been inaugurated in the spring of the previous year ... For eighteen months the church met in the Mechanics’ Hall, North Hanover Street ... and then from 1850 to 1852, in the Athenaeum Assembly Room, Ingram Street’. James Morison was minister from 1851 until 1884 (Escott, 1960, p.355).

⁸¹ The majority of Free Church of Scotland congregations united with the United Presbyterians in 1900 to form the United Free Church of Scotland – then reuniting with the Church of Scotland in 1929. A much reduced Free Church of Scotland continued – and it was only in 2010 that ‘by the narrowest of margins’ that denomination agreed ‘to allow some 100 congregations in Scotland and five in North America to use “instruments and other items of praise”’ (The Scotsman, 2010).

⁸² Thomson (2006, p.178) claimed for St Andrew’s Church, the ‘first recorded use of a musical instrument being used in a Presbyterian Church ... in Glasgow in 1807’. The Episcopalians appear to be the pioneer, however, with the installation of a Snetzler organ at St Andrew’s Qualified Chapel ‘by the Green’ in Glasgow in 1775 (earning it the nickname the Whistlin’ Kirk), an instrument which had originally been installed in the St Andrew’s Qualified Chapel, Carrubers Close, Edinburgh in 1747 (Jamieson, 2019).

7.3 The purpose of the Church

The brothers James and Robert Haldane were pivotal figures in the revival of Congregationalism in Scotland in the 1790s. Yet over a century later, the biographer of James Haldane's grandson (Alexander Chinnery-Haldane, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles in the Scottish Episcopal Church) wrote that it was difficult to recognise any 'direct outcome' of their labours (Ball, 1907, p.49).

Admittedly, some Congregational churches existed for a very short time - Ardbeg, Bute and Kirriemuir, Angus being but two examples. On Shetland also, 'some of the Congregational centres proved to be relatively short-lived'. (Cant, 1984, p.211). Indirect outcomes will always be harder to identify. Yet, 'it was to the pioneer efforts of the early Congregationalists that the remarkable revival in the religious life of Shetland was in great part due' (Cant, 1984, p.212).

In the Shetland experience, Baptists (from 1816) and Methodists (from 1821) built on the foundations laid by the early Congregationalists – and so the legacy of Congregationalism must be fairly interpreted in terms of those traditions in addition to the one surviving Congregational church at Lerwick. In contrast to its limited impact on mainland Scotland, Methodism is second only to the Church of Scotland in terms of its strength in Shetland. (In 2024 there are two Methodist Districts in Scotland – Shetland, and the rest of Scotland.)

John Nicolson, who served with the Royal Artillery at the Battle of Waterloo, was converted during his army service. On discharge, he became an 'apostle of Methodism in his native islands' (Donaldson, 1990, p.121). Going back to the catalytic role played by Congregationalists, it is remarkable that McWhirter (1968, pp.82-83) was able to record that, 'practically every one of the persons' he wrote to in Shetland, 'most of whom were local Registrars', recalled the missionary visit by James Haldane and William Innes 167 years earlier.

At the inauguration service of the London Missionary Society in 1795, one of its founders grandly declared that its interdenominational approach was the 'funeral of bigotry' (Bogue, 1795, p.130). Church history in Scotland would have developed in very different ways had the Church of Scotland responded less defensively to the missionary tours of the 1790s, or had the Secession Church not expelled James Morison. It is not the role of the historian, however, idly to speculate what might have been.

In time, the wider church rediscovered 'that 'mission ... was its chief task'. With 'some modifications' the model of evangelism pursued by the Haldanes and their followers was 'adopted by ... the national church' (Bardgett, 2002, p. 37). Here is a clear indicator of the indirect outcomes of Scottish Congregational missionary zeal, all the more noteworthy for the recognition coming from another tradition (Bardgett writing from within from the Church of Scotland).

In respect of the early Unitarian missionaries in Scotland, a degree of caution has been urged in the interpretation of accounts of large attendances at their meetings:

The same accounts are given by Wesleyan, Swedenborgian, and Quaker travellers, and it must be assumed that most people would attend because of the strong religious interest then prevailing, and the human fact that such a visit then was a welcome change from the usual round of life. It is to be feared that converts secured at these visits often were ready to embrace the Faith of the next visiting preacher' (McWhirter, 1959, pp.142-143).

Undoubtedly there is truth in that statement. The new and novel would create waves of interest for many for whom life had no variety in its routine. What is striking, however, is that Congregationalism did not just attract crowds when there were preaching tours. Evangelistic endeavours bore recognisable fruit in the establishment of churches right across the country. The theology of Congregationalism was neither uniform nor constant – yet the message of revivalism was personal and optimistic, in contrast to a fatalistic interpretation of Calvinist principles.

The Independent or Congregational Church in Huntly, Aberdeenshire, was nicknamed the 'Missionar Kirk', because of its 'evangelistic emphasis' (Pfister, 1998, p.77). It would not have earned a nickname had its activities been indistinctive from the other churches around. The first minister of the church, Georgie Cowie, had been deposed from the Anti-Burghers for, 'admitting to his pulpit deputations from the London Missionary Society ... encouraging meetings for the revival of religion, and promoting the establishment of Sabbath schools' (Sinclair, 1845, p.1042).

Cowie left the Anti-Burghers in 1800⁸³, retired in 1802, and died in 1806. Yet a historian of the Free Church of Scotland, in writing about the 'revived spirit of religion' (which prepared Scotland for the Disruption), described Cowie in glowing terms as 'a man of eminent piety, vigorous mind ... and remarkable zeal in his Master's work' (Brown, 1893, pp.10-11). It is not being suggested that Cowie's personal qualities were only shown when he became an Independent minister, but it is surprising nevertheless to note the reasons for his deposition. It is telling too that, over time, 'Missionar Kirk' ceased to be a contemptuous nickname, and became 'a phrase which reflected its wide and respected influence' (Giles, 2008, p.22).

In mid-19th century Dundee, the Congregational Ward Chapel had 'fifteen stations in different parts of the town and neighbourhood, in which Prayer Meetings were held weekly ... and eighteen Sabbath Schools and Bible Classes'. In 1839 the congregation erected Princes Street Chapel – twenty members leaving 'with the prayers and good wishes of all, to commence a new body of worshippers' (Low and Falconer, 1934, p.35).

When Robert Moffat arrived in Cape Town in 1812, two Missionary Societies were at work – the Moravians and the London Missionary Society. Some sixty years later, there were more than twelve Societies operating in the area, deploying Americans, French, Swiss, Norwegians and Finns, as well as Britons (Deane, 1880, p.156). The London Missionary

⁸³ Cowie's departure was viewed by some as the loss of one of the denomination's 'most outstanding ministers' (Fawcett, 1956, p.188).

Society was clearly pioneering⁸⁴ - but not all of its endeavours went to plan. Within three years of the LMS initial mission to Tahiti, 'two-thirds of the members had abandoned the enterprise; the mission had withdrawn from the outer islands ... and the *Duff* (the society's own ship) ... had been lost as a prize of war to the French' (Porter, 2004, p.57).

Was the contribution of Congregationalism, and Scottish Congregationalism in particular, intrinsically different to that of other denominations?

On the one hand there are remarkable stories. Huntly Congregational Church not only had missionary zeal for its surrounding community, but inspired not just missionaries for overseas service, but missionaries of the stature of John Philip, William Milne and James Legge. One might argue that a church with an active interest in missionary activities is more likely to inspire others to follow – and there is some logic to that. In light of the initial resistance of the Presbyterians to overseas missionary activity, Congregationalism also became, by default, the outlet for Scottish Protestants drawn to overseas service.

In the course of research into Congregationalism in Angus, the founding of a new Congregational Church in Glen Clova was noted - nearly a century and half after the last Congregational church had been constituted in the county. This was a new form of church, meeting in a borrowed building, on a Saturday. It still seems daring and novel to many when church services are held in secular venues – and on days other than Sunday (Bannerman, 2010 & Church of Scotland, 2018). Rushen Abbey on the Isle of Man is now in the care of Manx National Heritage – and imaginative displays present the Christian heritage of the island. One panel speaks of 'fresh expressions' with a congregation taking worship to a public house. Yet that is exactly what the Scot, Samuel Haining, did some 200 years earlier.

⁸⁴ Children's author Leonard Malcolm Saville (1901-1982) was the grandson of Congregational missionaries - and his parents chose his Christian and middle names so that his initials might be a tribute to the Society (Bigger, 2014).

When Scottish Congregationalism was at its peak, many were attracted by its evangelical nature and its optimistic theology. Because their loyalty was not to a form of church organisation, Congregationalism inevitably declined when other evangelical alternatives emerged. Just as Congregationalism did not emerge from a vacuum, so its continuing fortunes were closely linked to what was happening around its churches.

Chapter Eight Published Papers

- 8.1 Wanderings – Spiritual and Physical: The Ministry of Robert Little (2011)
Congregational History Society Magazine, 6.4, pp.192-203.
<https://quintapress.webmate.me/CHS/2011-Autumn-CHC-Magazine.pdf>
- 8.2 Congregationalism in Angus (2012)
Congregational History Society Magazine, 6.6, pp.319-334.
<https://quintapress.webmate.me/CHS/2012-Autumn-CHC-Magazine.pdf>
- 8.3 Congregationalism in the Isle of Man (2014)
Congregational History Society Magazine, 7.3, pp.124-135.
<https://quintapress.webmate.me/CHS/2014-Spring-CHC-Magazine.pdf>
- 8.4 Perthshire to Pittsburgh – The Ministry of Rev John Campbell (2015)
Congregational History Society Magazine, 7.6, pp.262-277.
<https://quintapress.webmate.me/CHS/2015-Autumn-CHC-Magazine.pdf>
- 8.5 A Second Chance: The Story of Rev James Colquhoun (2016)
Congregational History Society Magazine, 8.1, pp.15-20.
<https://quintapress.webmate.me/CHS/2016-Spring-CHC-Magazine.pdf>
- 8.6 Congregationalism on Bute (2016)
Transactions of the Buteshire Natural History Society, 29, pp.79-82.
- 8.7 Congregationalism on the Island of Bute (2017).
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Note: An article on “The Legacy of Scottish Congregationalism” was accepted for publication in Volume 19.1 of the International Congregational Journal – but, sadly, this publication folded before the due publication date in 2021.

Chapter Nine **Missionary Zeal of Scottish Congregationalism**

9.1 Congregational research

The starting point for a research project should be a question. There may be supporting or supplementary questions – and, as research progresses, the focus of the question may be altered or redefined. With the benefit of hindsight, there is no question that this task could have been approached in a different way. The simple truth is that at the time of researching the first article, there was no intention to write a second. Likewise, when writing the second, there was no firm outline for a third. At the beginning, therefore, there was no route map setting out the destination and what it was hoped to achieve. Had there been, a lot of time might have been saved in researching areas which ended up being dead-ends, at least for the purpose of this exercise. The published articles might also have formed a more logical and orderly progression of chapters.

There was also no plan (sophisticated or simple) for deciding upon the geographical areas to research. Work began in places with which there was a personal connection. Looking back, it might have been preferable to try to select geographical areas in a less scatter-gun approach. Dividing Scotland up in some way – and selecting Congregational churches from the different categories would have been more systematic. It is not entirely clear, though, the best way to partition Scotland. Would samples from different geographical regions take sufficient account of urbanisation, or socio-economic groupings? The challenge lies in trying to decide which factors might be most relevant. My later work ranged very widely geographically, precisely in order to demonstrate that themes initially identified in my areas of particular focus had more general wider applicability.

As the later work would argue for a horizontal approach to church history, it seems contradictory that earlier work (such as those on Little, Campbell and Colquhoun) followed a linear pattern. These studies did follow individual ministerial careers, rather than tracing succeeding ministries in a particular church. This proved enlightening in highlighting

movements in and out of Congregationalism for a variety of reasons. Whilst it was unsurprising to find people changing denominational affiliation (new movements have to attract supporters from somewhere), it was unexpected to discover ministers changing affiliation more than once. When movements were detected backwards and forwards between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, it pointed to issues other than church organisation being of primary importance.

In the absence of a clear research plan at the outset, a growing body of work was amassing – some published, some not. The research questions emerged part-way through the process, and were in turn refined. These then informed the later direction of the work. Where common themes seemed to be emerging, there was a desire to explore whether these had wider applicability. Hopefully, in future, some of the apparent dead-ends to the research may be able to be revisited.

There is a difficult balance to be struck between making national generalisations and recognising local specifics. One of the contributions this study makes to the field lies in highlighting that Congregational churches developed in Scotland from the late 18th century onwards for a wide variety of reasons. All too often, the origins of revived Congregationalism have been traced to the earlier Glasite, Old Scots Independent and Berean movements – despite there being few direct links to the later missionary endeavours of the Haldane brothers and James Morison, and their followers.

Common themes emerge from the cultural setting - an established church perceived (in some localities) as formal and passionless, a political landscape in turmoil over Revolution in France, and society transforming as Scotland industrialised and urbanised. Yet at the local level, a variety of motivations may be evident. Preaching tours across the country resulted in the sprouting of new communities where evangelical religion was seen to be lacking. There were Congregational churches, though, which emerged out of disputes and disagreements in other denominational traditions – and some causes were remarkably short-lived.

Another contribution to the field has been the highlighting of the fluidity of denominational boundaries as individuals moved between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, and vice versa. It was not surprising to find examples where Congregationalism's non-hierarchical structures allowed it to respond more quickly to emerging needs. What was unexpected was to find examples of churches being formed before a denominational affiliation was agreed.

Perhaps the most significant contribution to scholarship has been in making clear the ways in which Congregationalism helped shape thinking in other denominations. A major omission in the previous research in this field has been a tendency to restrict the legacy of Congregationalism to its own tradition. This is a major failing – since the impact of Congregationalism should not be interpreted only on the basis of the limited number of surviving Congregational churches. This study has tried to highlight Congregationalism's role as a catalyst – recognising a much wider legacy across Scottish churches.

Historians have noted that the growing middle classes developed a 'new social system and culture based on independent values', and were often drawn in consequence to dissenting churches (Brown, 1997, p.101). It is also noted that the religious sphere was one of the few options open to most people to express an opinion or dissent.

The attraction of dissent is sometimes presented as the opportunity to use commercial acumen and to gain rather than inherit status. This focus on organisational explanations leaves, largely untapped, the theological dimension. It has been claimed that men 'found in Arminian evangelicalism greater sympathy for the male role in dynamic commercial and industrial society' (Brown, C.G., 1997, p.197). This contrasted with the perceived fatalism of extreme Calvinist interpretations. An interesting study awaits anyone drawn to probe this further – though it is doubtful whether sufficient and suitable records exist to draw meaningful conclusions (since what is required is not just information about the respective involvement of men in different churches, but their underlying motivations). In common with other Christian churches, there is a gender imbalance in Scottish Congregational history. This deficiency has already been noted – but it is worth stressing

again. The imbalance is all the more serious since women (whose voices are largely silent) were over-represented in membership.

It has been stressed that Scottish Congregationalism did not have a single theological standpoint – but that, over time, there was a general shift from Calvinism to Arminianism. The published research has touched on this with some local case studies – but there is further work which could be done there, if sufficient records can be found to evidence both theological outlook through time, and also the theological position of the surrounding churches.

There is another area where further research would help interpret an apparent mismatch between Congregational principles and missionary endeavour. Although in Congregationalism, each member's voice is equal, many early Churches had many people attending who were not in membership. Some causes were very reliant on external funding. The short-lived Church on Bute, for example, had no trustees resident on the island. It might be fruitful to explore whether there is any correlation between the sustainability of the church and the number of members as a proportion of those attending. Where membership was a very low proportion of those attending, did the Church cease to feel Congregational, and did that have any bearing on its viability?

9.2 Conclusions

The first objective of this study was to examine the reasons for the revival and development of Congregationalism in Scotland from the 1790s onwards – and to understand its place within Scottish society.

Historians of Congregationalism in Scotland have largely tended to adopt the vertical historical approach. Ferguson (1876) gave an overview of the Evangelical Union, and Ross (1900) and Escott (1960) both reviewed the early 'native' Congregational movements before going on to survey the churches of both the Congregational and Evangelical Unions. This focus on early expressions of Congregationalism in Scotland has sought to give to later movements the credence which comes from antiquity. This has been despite the fact that there is no direct link from these earliest movements to the later initiatives of the late 18th and 19th centuries. Setting these texts against a general account of Scottish church history can leave the reader somewhat confused as to the extent of the contribution of Congregationalism to Scottish church life – especially since other historians (whether of other denominations, or of Scotland) have tended to view Congregationalism as a very minor side-show in Scottish religious history. The 1851 Census of Religious Worship, for example, identified 192 Independent or Congregational Churches in Scotland – outnumbering the 117 Catholic and 134 Scottish Episcopal places of worship, but dwarfed by the 2,614 churches of the Kirk (British Religion in Numbers, 2019 citing Currie et al, 1977, *Churches and Churchgoers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p.219).

With examples drawn from across Scotland, this study has demonstrated that there were varying triggers leading to the establishment of Congregational churches. This is perhaps no great surprise in a tradition which exalts the independency of the local church - but it is worth noting nevertheless. The Haldane revival had such wide geographical spread that it can easily be overlooked that the brothers and their associates were not the founders of every Congregational church in Scotland. Understanding the Scottish Congregational revival from the 1790s (or the formation of the Evangelical Union in 1843)

comes more readily from understanding what was happening in other denominations (and in Scotland) at the time than from tracing the peculiarities of Glasites, Old Scots Independents, and Bereans. The growth of Scottish Congregationalism from the late 18th century onwards was part of a wider evangelical revival. Whilst there were churches established out of a desire to conform as closely as possible with the perceived structure of the New Testament church, in many more cases Congregationalism was a convenient vehicle. The attraction in many cases was to what people experienced in Congregational churches than to Congregationalism as a form of church order. That helps explain why some people had a loose and temporary connection to Congregationalism.

The second aim was to explore whether there was anything unique about Scottish Congregationalism's missionary zeal - at home and abroad. Although at local level, causes rise and fall for all sorts of reasons, at national level trends can be discerned. In two of the published articles (Campbell, 2012 and 2013), the starting points were not individuals, but geographical areas. In the former, the history of Congregationalism in the county of Angus was surveyed, starting with the earlier Scottish expressions of Congregationalism, and culminating in the formation of a new Congregational Church in the 21st century. In exploring the missionary endeavours of the Rev. Samuel Haining (Campbell, 2013), it was uncovered that the development of Congregationalism on the Isle of Man by this Scot bore many similarities with the history of Congregationalism in Angus. Here too was an impetus on missionary outreach to other communities, rather than ministry to a settled congregation. Congregationalism on Bute (Campbell, 2016b, 2017) had a short-lived presence. Although in both Angus and the Isle of Man, evidence was found of the importance of external financial assistance, on Bute that outside help was pivotal to the establishment of a new cause.

Reviewing the situation for Scotland as a whole, the commitment to itinerant preaching was obvious – with some city ministers undertaking annual preaching tours in rural areas, and indeed with Congregational ministers from England (some Scots born) also returning regularly to do the same. The geographical impact was wide – with a failure to make an impression only in the farthest north of the mainland, and the Western Isles. The Free

Church of Scotland, established in 1843, had nationwide coverage - but Congregationalism was found to be free of the geographical restrictions of the Secession or Relief Churches. Although the Evangelical Union had more limited geographical spread, Congregationalism clearly made an impact in both urban and rural areas. Far from existing only where adherents were generous enough to support a cause, external support was evident for a number of causes (such as poor Highlanders or the working class in Glasgow).

In terms of overseas mission, Scots were found to be over-represented in the ranks of LMS missionaries, due in part to the initial reluctance of Presbyterians to found their own denominational missionary societies.

In highlighting missionary zeal at home and abroad, it has never been the intention to imply either that others have not done what Scots or Congregationalists did. Scottish Congregationalism has a different history from English Congregationalism – with its growth coming later (and as part of wider evangelical revival) rather than emerging from persecution.

As this study makes clear, Calvinism played its part in early Scottish Congregationalism. Departing from the strictest views of predestination not only presented a more optimistic theology, but removed the lethargy engendered by a fatalistic approach to predestination. Theological outlook and missionary endeavours were inextricably linked). At home and abroad, Scottish Congregationalists were pioneers in different ways.

The third aim was to explore how fixed or otherwise denominational boundaries were at the time. James Colquhoun ministered smoothly for almost a decade at the Campsie Relief Church before disgracing himself at the Balloch Fair, and moving to Perth in 1796. Contemporary knowledge of his lapse was clearly so widespread that continuing ministry in the same area would have been very difficult. Those who imagine Congregationalism to be narrow-minded separatism might be surprised to find that it was in within this fold that Colquhoun found his second chance. Scottish Congregationalism at this stage, of

course, was just reviving. The Haldanes had not yet commenced their ambitious programme for training mission-minded ministers. Having the freedom to choose and appoint ministers, Congregational churches stood apart from the disputes about patronage which beset 18th and 19th century Presbyterianism. Training preachers and ministers became a pressing priority for Scottish Congregationalism – but it is hardly surprising that fledgling Congregational churches might look to another denominations for ministers. Nor is it unexpected that individuals disaffected with their own tradition might be amongst those attracted.

Patterns across a nation are comprised of multiple individual stories, and failing to take account of these stories can lull one into a false sense of homogeneity which does not exist. Inward-looking sects tend to be difficult to enter, and even harder to leave. Colquhoun's story is an indication of more permeable boundaries for Scottish Congregationalism of the past than is often assumed. This point was picked up in relation to the published work on Robert Little which, it was stated:

'reminds readers that international, denominational and theological boundaries were not set in stone in the 19th century, any more than in our own day' (Argent, 2011, p.154).

It may seem strange that Little should have been called in 1801 to be minister of Perth Congregational Church, since previously he had been ministering as far away as Staffordshire. Ministers, as already stated, had to come from somewhere. At a time when the Church of Scotland was closing its pulpits to all but its own (with admission closed for a while to those who had not studied at a Scottish University) it is interesting to find in an independent church the connections which made this appointment possible. The introduction by Little of Isaac Watts' renovated psalm book to Perth may have led to seven church members being excluded – but demonstrates that Perth Congregationalists at that time were closer in touch with wider UK developments in theological thinking than their Presbyterian neighbours.

The fourth aim was to assess the legacy of Scottish Congregationalism – and in particular to discern the impact of Scottish Congregationalism beyond its own boundaries. The denominational historians of Congregationalism have tended to focus on their tradition – and Scottish church historians have tended to assume that Scottish Congregationalism had a limited impact because its membership was always fairly small, certainly in comparison with the Presbyterians.

At a Perth conference of the Scottish Congregational Churches' Office-Bearers' Federation in 1935, it was declared that:

'Congregationalism in Scotland ... had a tendency to be too parochial and self-centred ... inclined to concentrate their efforts on the struggle to maintain their own organisations and their immediate Church activities. This narrowing of their horizon was harmful to the best interests and vital health of their churches. The wider outlook was absolutely essential' (The Scotsman, 1935d).

1935 falls outside the time frame of this research study – but the observation, looking back, is interesting. 'Parochial and self-centred', is exactly what this study has argued Scottish Congregationalism had not been when it was at its peak.

Chapter Seven outlined areas highlighted in this research as defining the wider legacy of Scottish Congregationalism. Scottish Congregationalists were neither the first nor the last to question the interpretation of Calvinism – and yet the tradition played its part not just in adapting its own views, but in those of other denominations.

Were David Livingstone's family alive today, they could still choose to leave the parish church in Blantyre for a Congregational (now United Reformed Church) in Hamilton – but the theology they encountered in the two denominations would no longer be vastly different. This study has argued that Congregationalism in Scotland played a catalytic role in helping bring about change – and that its legacy can be traced in Presbyterianism as well.

Although Congregationalism was the first tradition in Scotland to appoint a woman as minister of a church, this did not happen until 1928 – outwith the time frame of this study. Churches, even Congregational ones, emerge out of society rather than being separate from it. Congregationalism was well structured to be pioneering – whether in opening the first church in a new community, or introducing the first Biblewoman to Scotland. A majority of churches did not have to be convinced of the appropriateness of change ... all that was needed was for one Congregational church to come to a decision.

The open nature of Congregationalism had a special appeal to those suspicious of hierarchy. Few were attracted simply by the attractiveness of Congregationalism as a way of organising the Church. (It became too easy for Congregationalists to imagine that their distinctive characteristic was that 'no-one will tell us what to do'.) In any event, there are other traditions organised on essentially Congregational lines. The missionary zeal of Scottish Congregationalism drew people in , but some transferred their allegiances as other denominational options developed. Congregationalism was a means not an end.

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