

'Catching the Infection of His Zeal:'¹ Francis Johnston, a Baptist Voice in the mid-Nineteenth Century Scottish Evangelical Debate on the Work of the Holy Spirit

ABSTRACT

In the nineteenth century there was a growing divide between Evangelical Protestants in their understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. Traditionally revival had been seen as a sovereign work of God that took place without the necessity of direct human intervention, except for appeals in prayer. However, under the influence of American Evangelist Charles Finney a new understanding was promoted that suggested that if certain measures were adopted then evidence of a revival could be expected. In Scotland the most prominent advocate of this new understanding of this subject was Presbyterian clergyman James Morison. Another adherent of these views was John Kirk an Independent minister. These two individuals were the key influences on Scottish Baptist leader Francis Johnston, whose zealous adoption of the new measures caused serious division in Baptist ranks in Scotland in the 1840s and 1850s. This study considers the background to Johnston's adoption of a fresh understanding of this subject and interprets his conduct in this period. It also evaluates his interaction with colleagues and explains his reconciliation with other leading Scottish Baptists in the early 1860s. The impact of the 1859 revival was the critical factor that brought Scottish Baptists closer together in their understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The nineteenth century had seen a growing divide between Evangelical Protestants in their understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. Religious revivals were traditionally seen apparently as largely spontaneous in character and perceived as sovereign acts of God in response to the appeals of God's people.² Some of the most recent

¹ W. Landels, 'Denominational Reminiscences by an Old Baptist', III, *Scottish Baptist Magazine*, (Vol. 12.10, October 1886): 268.

² See *The Revivals of Religion Addresses by Scottish Evangelical Leaders delivered in Glasgow in 1840*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1984 [1840]).

studies in the nineteenth century revivals have discovered that these movements are considerably more complex in their origins than had been believed by earlier scholars.³ Prior to the 1840s a majority of Scottish Evangelicals would have affirmed the definition of revival, given by New England minister Solomon Stoddard in 1712, that revival was understood to refer to ‘some special seasons wherein God doth in a remarkable manner revive religion among his people.’⁴ However, revivals were normally located in local communities in which there was evidence of enthusiastic and deep-rooted practical piety, as in, for example, the eighteenth century New England awakening associated with Jonathan Edwards. These revivals did not normally occur in less fertile religious environments.⁵ There was at times a concern that enthusiasm for evangelistic work was perceived as being associated with erroneous notions. James Haldane, secretary of the Baptist Home Missionary Society for Scotland (BHMS), in 1832 assured Scottish Baptist churches of the adherence to the historic Reformed faith by the preachers employed by this home mission agency. Haldane declared that:

The conversion of the soul is the exclusive prerogative of the Almighty. Paul and Apollos were but instruments whom he condescended to employ; and while engaged in the work, their eyes were towards him...They felt more powerfully their obligations to the Lord, who by His Almighty power, had plucked them as brands from the burning.⁶

The most prominent leader of this evangelistic agency wished to communicate that the best approach to adopt when seeking future religious revival was to stay true to the traditional and long held beliefs and practices amongst Reformed Evangelicals in Scotland.

³ For example, K.S. Jeffrey, ‘Making Sense of the 1859 Revival in the North-East of Scotland’, in A. Walker & K. Aune (eds), *On Revival A Critical Examination*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 105-118. K.S. Jeffrey, *When the Lord Walked the Land: The 1858-62 Revival in the North East of Scotland*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002). For a representative earlier view see J. Kent, *Holding the Fort: Studies in Victorian Revivalism*, (London: Epworth, 1978), 71 and J.E. Orr, *The Second Evangelical Awakening*, (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1949), 58-77.

⁴ S. Stoddard, ‘The Benefit of the Gospel’, in *The Efficacy of the Fear of Hell, to Restrain Men from Sin*, (Boston, 1713), cited by M.J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England’s Revival Tradition in Its British Context*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 110.

⁵ This point is discussed in S. Piggan, *Firestorm of the Lord: The History of and Prospects for Revival in the Church and the World*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 45-49.

⁶ J.A. Haldane, ‘To The Preachers Of The Baptist Home Missionary Society’, in *Baptist Home Missionary Society Reports*, (Edinburgh: J&D. Collie, 1832) app. 29-38.

A new era in the religious history of Scotland began with the appearance of the publications of American revivalist preacher Charles Finney.⁷ His *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* had been published in America in 1835, but was only freely available in Scotland in 1839. John Kirk, who was later one of the most prominent supporters of Finney in Scotland, recalling the revolt there against traditional Calvinism in the 1830s, stated that there were two books that were particularly influential in stimulating this process. The first was Andrew Reed and James Matheson's *Visit to the American Churches*, whose descriptions of revivalist meetings in America led enthusiasts such as Kirk to imitate these practices in Scotland⁸, and of even greater value, Finney's *Lectures on Revivals*, that was both widely circulated and inexpensive to purchase.⁹ The standard biography of John Kirk, *Memoirs of Rev. John Kirk D.D.*, noted that:

This remarkable revival...was inspired continually from abroad and around. Prof Finney's *Oberlin Evangelist* was regularly read by many of the leading workers and much influenced their methods and aims. Mr Kirk was then to some extent a pupil of Finney, though they had never met.' (Kirk did meet Finney later in 1859. The American Evangelist occupied his pulpit in Edinburgh that year for approximately three months.)¹⁰ It is important to state that Charles Finney was the most important outside influence on the growth and development of these newer revivalist ideas in Scotland. The significance of this influence had been often overlooked due to the overshadowing importance of the 1843 Disruption in the Church of Scotland, in which a far greater number of people were involved, though it could be argued that the effects of Finney's influence on the churches in Scotland had been equally substantial.

⁷ The best account of the views of Finney is found in D.L. Weddle, *The Law as Gospel: Revival and Reform in the Theology of Charles G. Finney*, (London: Scarecrows Press, 1985).

⁸ A. Reed & J. Matheson, *A Narrative of the Visit to the American Churches*, (2 Vols; London: Jackson and Walford, 1835, Vol. 1, 294-298; Vol. 2, 1-50, 64-78). H. Kirk, *Memoirs of Rev. John Kirk D.D.*, (Edinburgh, 1888), 138-154.

⁹ *Christian News*, 2 September 1865, cited by R. Carwardine, *Trans-Atlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1978), 97.

¹⁰ G.M. Rosell & R.A.G. Dupois (eds), *The Memoirs of Charles G. Finney*, (Zondervan: Academic Books, 1989), 591, records that 'Finney commenced preaching on Sunday 21 August and continued to 6 November 1859', E. Finney, 'A Journal Kept by Mrs Elizabeth Ford Atkinson Finney during a Visit to England in 1859-1860', 50-53, ms in the Special Collections, Oberlin College Library, as the source of this reference.

Finney's book, *Lectures on Revivals*, promoted the idea that conversions could be encouraged by the adoption of certain practices such as the isolated 'anxious seat', on which needy sinners had been placed. Although this book appeared to encourage Welsh Christians in 1839-43 in their promotion of traditional revival practices, which in some cases had affinities with the newer measures,¹¹ it has been suggested that it was a different story in Scotland, where enthusiasm for the new ideas began to emerge following the Kilsyth Revival of 1839.¹² These new measures, however, did not appear to be in evidence in the events at the Parish Church at the centre of the revival.¹³ By contrast, the tensions between members of the United Secession Church in the town led eventually to a division and the formation of an Independent Evangelical Church associated with these new opinions that were being spread by a number of the younger ministers in this denomination, the most prominent of whom was James Morison. This Kilsyth cause was formally constituted in 1848.¹⁴ The opinions of Finney were not uncritically accepted by his Scottish supporters, but they provided a springboard for a fresh evaluation of many traditionally accepted beliefs.

One Scottish minister who was greatly indebted to Finney was James Morison.¹⁵ The Kilmarnock minister was so excited about his discoveries that he discussed their importance in a letter to his father Robert Morison, a United Secession Church minister, in 1838. 'I do strenuously advise you to get Finney's lectures on Revivals, and preach like him; I have reaped more benefit from the book than from all other

¹¹ R. Carwardine, 'The Welsh Evangelical Community and "Finney's Revival"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, (Vol. 29.4, 1978): 463-480; See also Carwardine, *Trans-Atlantic Revivalism*, 85-94; and Crawford, *Seasons of Grace*, 244.

¹² D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 116.

¹³ W.J. Couper, *Scottish Revivals*, (Dundee: James P. Mathew & Co., 1918), 118-129; though I. A. Muirhead, 'The Revival as a Dimension of Scottish Church History', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, (Vol. 20, 1978): 182-3, 195; implied that the newer measures were more in evidence than Couper had suggested. However, evidence of a more intense spirituality and greater fervency in preaching does not prove that parish minister William Chalmers Burns had accepted Finneyite opinions about the means of creating revivals.

¹⁴ J. Hutchison, *Weavers, Miners and the Open Book A History of Kilsyth*, (Cumbernauld: James Hutchison, 1986), 106-107.

¹⁵ K.B.E. Roxburgh, 'James Morison (1816-1893)', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, (Vol. 32, 2002): 132-133, provides a helpful discussion of some of the similarities and differences between the views of Finney and Morison.

human compositions put together'.¹⁶ James Morison had had a similar doctrinal pilgrimage to Charles Finney. The two men had both been brought up in traditional Calvinistic Presbyterian circles and had begun their ministry believing in the Reformed doctrine of election, before later discarding it.¹⁷ The old ideas associated with the consequences of a belief in the doctrine of original sin were also rejected by both men.¹⁸ Likewise the necessity for a supernatural work of the Spirit in a person's heart before conversion was also rejected.¹⁹ Finney, in his 1835 *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, declared: 'A revival is not a miracle, nor dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means'.²⁰ James Morison had already drawn the attention of his peers to his independent mind when he had chosen to oppose his own denomination's belief in the eternal Sonship of Christ.²¹ These rationalistic influences had also made inroads into Scottish Baptist ranks in this era. An article in the Baptist Union of Scotland periodical *The Evangelist*, in April 1851, also denied the validity of the traditional understanding of this doctrine.²² This was not the first time that this opinion had been held within Baptist circles in Scotland. In the earlier

¹⁶ W. Adamson, *The Life of the Rev. James Morison*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1898), 55. A contrasting view was presented in the 1840 *Revival of Religion Addresses*, which included these words in the preface: 'It is because our American brethren have so frequently mistaken what is at most only concomitant, or merely adjunct or consequent, for what is essential to conversion, that they have fallen into such multifarious errors and abuses, in their zealous attempts to 'get up' and 'conduct' revivals.', xvii.

¹⁷ Adamson, *James Morison*, 79. G.W. Gale, *Autobiography of Rev. George Gale*, (New York: n.p., 1964), 186, 274, cited by K.J. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney 1792-1875*, (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1990 [1987]), 52.

¹⁸ Ferguson, *A History of the Evangelical Union*, (Glasgow: Thomas Morison, 1876), 63. Hardman, *Charles Grandison Finney*, 15-21. For a fuller explanation of Morison's rejection of this doctrine, see J. Morison, 'Original Sin', *Evangelical Repository*, second series, (Vol. 1.4, June 1859): 270, 272. For Finney see C.G. Finney, *Sermons on Gospel Themes* (ed.), R.M. Friedrich, (Grand Rapids: Alethea in Heart, 2002 [1876]), 98-111. In the New England context Nathaniel Taylor had prepared the way for this view with his 1818 pamphlet, *Man, a Free Agent Without the Aids of Divine Grace*. This point was noted by N.A. Hardesty, *Your Daughters Shall Prophecy: Revivalism and Feminism in the Age of Finney*, (New York: Carlson, 1991), 30, though Finney developed Taylor's position by insisting that the sinner had 'a natural capacity for faith', Weddle, *Law as Gospel*, 188-189. John Kirk also rejected the traditional understanding of this issue, Kirk, *John Kirk*, 375.

¹⁹ Ferguson, *Evangelical Union*, 61.

²⁰ C.G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (ed.), W.G. McLoughlin, (Cambridge: Harvard University, Belknap Press, 1960), 13.

²¹ Adamson, *James Morison*, 41-43.

²² *The Evangelist*, (Vol. 6.4, April 1851): 79.

part of the nineteenth century a 'correct understanding' of the nature of Christ's Sonship was perceived as a mark of either heterodoxy or orthodoxy within Scotch Baptist circles.²³ A further parallel between Morison and the Scotch Baptists was concerning the nature of true faith. Morison, in his booklet *Saving Faith*, taught that faith is a simple act of belief in Christ which must not be confused with its effects,²⁴ a view shared by Sandemanians, the members of the Glasite denomination in Scotland, led by John Glas and his son-in-law Robert Sandeman.²⁵ Morison referred to the disputations on the nature of true faith between Andrew Fuller²⁶ and Archibald McLean,²⁷ making it plain that he took the side of McLean on this matter.²⁸ He declared that 'faith is just the same as belief',²⁹ and though he recognised the need for the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners, it was 'in no mechanical way ... and must be accomplished by moral means ... through the truth as it is in Jesus.' Morison denied that regeneration occurs prior to faith. Because saving faith is a belief of the truth, the preacher must do everything in his power to present the gospel to the minds of his hearers that they may understand, believe and be saved.³⁰ Morison was a consistent rationalist who required doctrinal statements to be both biblical and rational. Although he built upon ideas advanced by the Glasites and Scotch Baptists, and especially Finney,³¹ Morison himself had a significant influence on fellow Scottish Christians in the nineteenth century.³²

²³ J. Williamson, *Some Reminiscences of The Old Baptist Church Pleasance*, (Edinburgh: John Anderson, 1901), 15. See also B.R. Talbot, *Search for a Common Identity: The Origins of the Baptist Union of Scotland*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 63-64.

²⁴ J. Morison, *Saving Faith*, (Kilmarnock: J. Davie, 1842), 50-51.

²⁵ D.B. Murray, 'Sandeman, Robert (1718-71)', in N.M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993) 744.

²⁶ J. Belcher (ed.), *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 3 Vols, (Harrisonburg: Sprinkle, 1988 [1844]), Vol.2, 561-647.

²⁷ W. Jones (ed.), *The Miscellaneous Works of Archibald McLean*, 6 Vols, (London: William Jones, 1823), Vol.2, 1-127.

²⁸ Morison, *Saving Faith*, 50-51.

²⁹ Morison, *Saving Faith*, 4.

³⁰ Morison, *Saving Faith*, 49-50. See also J. Morison, 'Nature of the Holy Spirit's Work: Or are the influences of the Spirit Direct or Mediate', *Evangelical Repository*, (Vol. 2.6, June 1856): 238—258; and 'Does Scripture teach that the Influences of the Holy Spirit are Resistible?' (Vol. 3.10, June 1857): 121-134.

³¹ C.E. Hambrick-Stowe, *Charles G. Finney and the Spirit of American Evangelicalism*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 258-259, reveals some differences between Finney and Morison, implying that the latter man employed a more rigorously rational approach to theological issues.

³² Morison's influence on Francis Johnston and other Scottish Baptists is noted in Roxburgh, *James Morison*, 138-140, and Talbot, *Common Identity*, 229-276.

Another important Scottish theologian who would be influential upon Baptist leader Francis Johnston was John Kirk, minister of Hamilton Independent Church from 1839 to 1845, then an Evangelical Union (EU) minister in Edinburgh from 1845, settling in Broughton EU Chapel, in that city, in 1846 until his retirement in 1876.³³ Johnston had moved to Edinburgh in 1845 to found a new Baptist congregation that would be in sympathy with his views, after his attempts to impose his opinions on his Cupar charge had been without success.³⁴ The closeness of their geographical location and a similar theological pilgrimage made it inevitable that Johnston and Kirk would at the very least have been aware of the contribution each had been making in the contemporary theological debates. Kirk in the 1840s was a young minister with strong opinions that were very forcefully expressed. His 'new views' caused considerable unease within the network of Scottish Independent churches.³⁵ Here the controversy was not directly related to the Atonement debate in the United Secession Church; instead it centred on the extent and nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. Kirk passionately rejected the distinctive Calvinistic doctrines that were commonly associated with the Independent tradition. By contrast, he focussed on the universal love of God, a universal atonement and the influence of the Holy Spirit being brought to bear equally on every person without distinction or exception.³⁶ It was, though, the publication in 1842 of *The Way of Life Made Plain* that brought Kirk to the attention of his denomination. This is a popular rather than an academic study of Christian doctrine. It was 'to the common people that his heart especially turns'. This work was a compilation of thirteen 'lectures' that were originally distributed as individual tracts in the district where he served as a minister.³⁷ It is most probable that this book served as a model for

³³ N. Needham, 'Kirk, John (1813-86)', in Cameron, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History*, 460.

³⁴ R.B. Hannen, 'Francis Johnston', *Scottish Baptist Magazine*, (Vol. 66.7, July 1940): 5. It is probable that a proportion of Johnston's congregation of Morisonian Baptists had previously attended as hearers at Kirk's church due to the lack of a Baptist cause in Edinburgh that espoused this theological perspective. See Kirk, *John Kirk*, 226.

³⁵ It led to the expulsion of nine ministerial students from their Theological Academy in 1844. They had faced an additional examination in the autumn of 1843 regarding their beliefs, which had been viewed (correctly) as sympathetic to the opinions being promoted by Kirk. See W. Adamson, *The Life of Fergus Ferguson*, (Glasgow: Thomas D. Morris, 1900), 36-48, and *The Expulsion of Nine Students from the Glasgow Theological Academy*, (Glasgow: G. Gallie, 1844).

³⁶ Adamson, *Fergus Ferguson*, 37.

³⁷ J. Kirk, *The Way of Life Made Plain*, (Glasgow, 1842), Preface, v-viii. Kirk, *John Kirk*, 193-202.

Johnston's most controversial publication, *The Work of God and the Work of Man in Conversion*, published in 1848.³⁸ Johnston's book was also aimed at the common man rather than the academic community and was a compilation of fourteen 'lectures' on similar themes. Kirk was unafraid of controversy and where it might lead and his Baptist contemporary was a minister with a similar disposition. As a result Kirk within Scottish Independent circles and Johnston in Baptist ranks would cause breaches of fellowship within their constituencies that would take a number of years to heal.

Kirk, like Morison, held to a Sandemanian view of faith. There are a good number of references to 'simple belief' throughout *The Way of Life Made Plain*.³⁹ In Lecture nine, 'The Holy Spirit alone overcomes man's enmity to the truth of God', Kirk rejects the traditional Reformed view of a supernatural intervention in the human mind and heart by the Holy Spirit to predispose an individual to respond to the gospel proclamation. He declares that 'you can undergo no change but in the simple way of believing'... and followed it up with a question: 'Why does it require Omnipotence to bring about what is nothing more than the belief of a simple truth?' 'The Spirit's work with the unbeliever must be an 'external work', because until an unbeliever turns from his unbelief 'the Holy Spirit of the Lord is excluded from your mind and his work is necessarily from without.' The question that then arises is this: In what way does God speak to people? The answer given by Kirk is that 'God regards himself as speaking when his word is spoken by man.'⁴⁰ The idea of an effectual call from God or any form of irresistible grace was discussed in Lecture ten of his book. Kirk declared; 'You must remember that while his power is unlimited, its exercise is limited by the nature of the mind with which he deals. He has pleased to make man a moral being and not a stone and it is no dishonour to his power to say, that he cannot influence a stone as he influences a mind...if, after God has brought the utmost amount of motive to bear on man which he is capable of receiving, and still he is unchanged, it is no disparagement to turn and ask, 'What more could I have done?...' Kirk also stated that each person was 'absolutely free' in the choices they could make.⁴¹ Johnston's understanding of this doctrine was the same as that of Kirk. In the Baptist minister's eighth lecture on man's ability to turn to God and

³⁸ F. Johnston, *The Work of God and the Work of Man in Conversion*, (Edinburgh: W. Innes & A. Muirhead, 1848).

³⁹ Kirk, *Way of Life Made Plain*, for example, 24, 32, 73, 74, 95.

⁴⁰ Kirk, *Way of Life Made Plain*, 68-79, but see also 61-68 where similar points are made on this subject.

⁴¹ Kirk, *Way of Life Made Plain*, 80-86.

believe the gospel there is the following statement. 'You will never get the Holy Spirit till you take Jesus. When you receive the truth of the Spirit, then you receive the Spirit of truth, but not till then. Do not, dear friend, be deluded with the notion that you are as passive as a stone...'.⁴² This approach to commending the Christian faith was very attractive to a significant proportion of working-class people attending Scottish churches in the mid nineteenth century who had struggled to comprehend some of the doctrines propounded by preachers holding to the standard Reformed views.

Lecture six in Kirk's book, 'Christ Jesus is, in the same sense, and to the same extent, the propitiation for the sins of the whole of mankind', addresses the issue of the extent of the atonement using I John 2:2 as the basis for his discussion of various biblical texts. The author leaves his readers in no doubt as to where his sympathies lie.

All the sophistry in earth and hell combined, will never be able to make that "whole world" anything less than that same "whole world" which the same Spirit says "lieth in wickedness". If, therefore, anyone excludes *you* from "the whole world" for which Jesus died, he must also exclude you from that which "lieth in the wicked one".⁴³

Kirk's motivation for promoting these 'new' ideas in mid-nineteenth century Scotland was primarily evangelistic. Some proponents of Reformed opinions, in his view, had been reluctant to invite people to respond to the gospel message. The justification for the controversy he and other Morisonians had created was this - the large number of people who had professed faith through hearing this interpretation of the Christian faith.⁴⁴ For example, Kirk himself was aware of 'many hundreds' who had 'found peace and a total change of character and experience' through reading the separate 'treatises' that made up this book. He also had another aim in producing this work - to show 'earnest Christians' how to more effectively in sharing their faith and 'so be better able to bring it successfully home'.⁴⁵ Johnston had used the same reasoning for insisting that the home evangelistic work of his Morisonian Baptist Union must be kept separate from the operations of the BHMS, a society whose leaders and preachers held to an Evangelical Calvinistic interpretation of the Christian faith. He believed that given time it would

⁴² Johnston, *Work of God and Work of Man*, 123.

⁴³ Kirk, *Way of Life Made Plain*, 44-52.

⁴⁴ A similar interpretation of the justification for Morisonian theology is given in H.F. Henderson, *The Religious Controversies of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1905), 182-193.

⁴⁵ Kirk, *Way of Life Made Plain*, Preface, vi-viii.

be self-evident that the new approach to evangelistic work would produce more converts and therefore ‘we shall more effectively and rapidly advance the cause of God in the land.’⁴⁶ Johnston’s confidence was misplaced, but the atmosphere of the mid-1840s following the formation of the Free Church of Scotland through the Disruption of May 1843, together with the genesis of the Evangelical Union and the start of the co-operative meetings of the Churches of Christ, all within a twelve month period, could only be described as a revolutionary change in the allegiances of a significant number of Scottish Christians.⁴⁷

Johnston’s book, *The Work of God and the Work of Man in Conversion*, was produced as a conscious challenge to the existing views of theological orthodoxy on the part of some of his colleagues in Scottish Baptist ranks.⁴⁸ It was also no coincidence that this work appeared at the same time as Johnston and some of his colleagues had dramatically reshaped the Baptist Union of Scotland as a militant Morisonian body. Theological differences between the Scottish Baptist ministers had not been at the heart of disputes between the Baptist Union and the BHMS in the 1840s. Differences in methodology between men of different generations and personality conflicts had taken priority at that time. This was to change after August 1849 when the editorship of *The Evangelist*, transferred from James Taylor, a Baptist minister who had moved to a charge in Birmingham, and who was a moderate Arminian, to William Landels, minister of Cupar Baptist Church and a Morisonian.⁴⁹ Taylor had taken on too many responsibilities and his health had broken down.

⁴⁶ Words taken from a motion agreed by delegates at the Baptist Union of Scotland Annual Meeting in Perth, August 1846, n.p., MS in the possession of Bristo Baptist Church, Edinburgh. More details are given in Talbot, *Common Identity*, 249-251.

⁴⁷ A similar confidence was found in the wider social and political context at that time. In Parliament in the previous two decades there had been the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829; the Reform Bill of 1832; the Abolition of Slavery in the British Colonies in 1833; the Poor Law of 1834; the restoration of the rights of municipalities in 1835 and the foundation of a system of national education in 1839. Henderson’s summary of these social trends was apt; ‘Brotherhood, equality, and fair-play were clamouring loudly at every closed door, and refusing to be turned away. A corresponding claim, quite independent of politics, was being made in the name of Christian theology. Here also it was demanded that the doors of privilege be thrown open. The conception of a God who maintained His Church and provided redemption for the favoured few was being declared an intolerable anachronism. Freedom for all, food for all, education for all, and salvation for all, were now coming to be the national watchwords.’ Henderson, *Religious Controversies*, 182-183.

⁴⁸ Johnston, *Work of God and Work of Man*, 3-4.

⁴⁹ *The Evangelist*, (Vol. 5.5, May 1850): 99-100; (Vol. 5.10, September 1850): 176.

Under his editorship, the magazine had maintained a careful avoidance of controversial issues and a policy of co-operation between Baptists of different theological persuasions. William Landels, had a very different approach. Noting that the Union had adopted *The Evangelist* as its publication, Landels decided that progress would be made most effectively by having a clear doctrinal position to advance. His doctrinal limits excluded the majority of Scottish Baptists. Landels was encouraged in this matter by Francis Johnston, the Union's inspirational leader, and by Thomas Hughes Milner, an Edinburgh Silk Mercer, Draper and Haberdasher,⁵⁰ who was a lay member of Johnston's congregation in Edinburgh, and who was to succeed Landels as editor of *The Evangelist*. The January 1850 editorial address was a clear statement of the new public position of the Union. Noting that a formal decision had been taken on the matter in April 1849 at the annual meeting of the Baptist Union at Cupar, Landel's church, the following resolution was passed:

That from January 1850, *The Evangelist* be taken under the sanction and management of the Union; and be recognised as the Union's organ. It will henceforth be employed in defending and propagating the three great scriptural doctrines, which the brethren in the Union generally are understood to hold – The love of God to – The death of Christ for – The influence of the Spirit on – all men. This doctrinal triplet we now adopt as our motto, and intend to inscribe on the front page of every future number, as an indication of its nature and design. We regard it as presenting the only consistent view of the character of the Triune God...And the better to secure this, we respectfully request our brethren to assist us, by contributing carefully written papers, in which these doctrines, in their bearings are explained, illustrated and applied, and shall refuse insertion to all such papers as do not harmonise therewith...⁵¹

The contrast between this theological stance and that presented by the committee of the 1827 Baptist Union of Scotland was marked. In 1827 the Baptist Union committee could count on almost unanimous approval from Scottish Baptists for their broadly Reformed position.⁵² The 1849 Union, by contrast, knew that this Arminian declaration of faith was a source of division. This small group of Baptist leaders had deliberately chosen to take this step knowing that it would lose them

⁵⁰ *Post Office Annual Directory 1849-1850*, (Edinburgh: Johnstone, Ballantyne & Co., 1849), 90.

⁵¹ *The Evangelist*, (Vol. 5.1, January 1850): 1.

⁵² Talbot, *Common Identity*, 203.

some of their existing supporters. There was, however, an honest admission that they knew what they were doing:

We have counted the cost. Our principles we cannot renounce for friendship's sake...We calculate on the defection of those friends, with whom we differ in sentiment...The spread of truth, so important, is worthy of labour, of self-denial, and sacrifice...We ask no favour.⁵³

Landels was editor of *The Evangelist* from September 1849 to May 1850. He was obliged to follow Taylor's conciliatory approach in the remaining issues of 1849, but became free to change that approach in the 1850 issues. He was asked to resign in April 1850 after receiving a call to a Baptist church in Birmingham. He at first refused to accede to this request, but upon the threat of the withdrawal of financial support from the Baptist Union he admitted defeat. The reason for requesting his resignation was that he would be living outside Scotland and this rendered his position as editor of a Scottish periodical untenable. Readers of the May issue of *The Evangelist* were given an opportunity to read about this unhappy incident.⁵⁴ It may also be pertinent to this decision to note that there was a significant and steady decline in the circulation figures for *The Evangelist* after the change of editorial policy in January 1850.⁵⁵ The readership of this denominational periodical, therefore, must have previously included a significant proportion of Calvinists who could not accept the new confrontational approach. The Baptist Union men were clearly prepared to lose their ties with Calvinistic brethren, but this issue indicated that they could not work in a satisfactory manner with each other.

Francis Johnston was a complex character who combined zeal for the promotion of the Baptist cause in Scotland with an equal zeal to put right the perceived faults of his fellow Baptists. His conflicts with some of his Scottish colleagues will illustrate why this attempt at union would ultimately founder. One individual to face censure was Peter Grant, a lawyer and lay-pastor of an 'English' Baptist Church in Stirling. Grant had written a booklet entitled, *A Brief Review of a Recent Publication entitled, 'The Work of God and the Work of Man in Conversion'*, in response to this highly controversial book produced in 1848 by Francis Johnston. The Johnston book attracted criticism from many Scottish Baptists besides

⁵³ W. Landels, 'Editorial Address', *The Evangelist*, (Vol. 5.1, January 1850): 1-2.

⁵⁴ *The Evangelist*, (Vol. 5.5, May 1850): 99-100.

⁵⁵ Minute Book of the Executive Committee of the Baptist Union of Scotland and Theological Academy, September 1850 to August 1855, 11 February 1852, MS in the Scottish Baptist History Archive, Baptist House, Glasgow.

Peter Grant, but it is the Stirling pastor to whom Johnston responded in the pages of *The Evangelist*. There were five instalments in successive issues from August to December 1850. Johnston's manuscript would have been published earlier, but the editor of *The Evangelist* who first received it in the spring or summer of 1849, James Taylor, refused to publish it on the grounds that 'enough had been said on that subject'. This was a wise decision. A less discerning editor, Thomas Milner, was willing to publish his pastor's remarks.⁵⁶ It is important to ask why Johnston's book had caused so much alarm amongst his fellow Scottish Baptists.

Peter Grant, together with other Calvinistic Baptists, had been concerned about the spread of new theological ideas in Scotland associated with James Morison and the Evangelical Union. Mainstream evangelical Calvinists like Peter Grant tended to follow Andrew Fuller's line in his debates with Archibald McLean regarding faith and to reject the other newer ideas associated with Morison and his colleagues. In 1827 Scottish Baptists had been in almost total agreement about theological matters, their disagreements being confined to ecclesiological issues. Now it appeared that the very foundational doctrines of the faith were being undermined. In such a context as this it is not surprising that Johnston's book aroused strong responses within the Scottish Baptist constituency.

It is important to be aware that Johnston had completely rejected the Calvinistic understanding of God, humanity and salvation. Some modern writers, unlike his contemporaries, appear to underestimate the significance of this development.⁵⁷ Johnston in his debate with Peter Grant admits that he is an Arminian and that Grant is a Calvinist and that the traditional differences between these two systems regarding the doctrine of salvation are upheld in their writings.⁵⁸ Francis Johnston, however, is unwilling to accept the main charges brought by Grant against him. Grant's fundamental criticism refers to the apparent equality of roles in the process of conversion undertaken by man and God:

in treating of the glorious work of the new creation, thus to place God and man side by side, and as being, as far as the terms go, compeers, and on a footing, is an exceeding violation of reverence and right feeling towards God...the doctrine of the lectures

⁵⁶ *The Evangelist*, (Vol. 5.8, August 1850): 150.

⁵⁷ E.g. D.B. Murray, 'Johnstone, Francis', in D.M. Lewis (ed.), *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860*, (2 Vols; Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1995), Vol. 1, 616.

⁵⁸ F. Johnston, 'Reply to Mr Grant IV', *The Evangelist*, (Vol. 5.11, November 1850): 221.

indicates views and feelings tending to the utter subversion of the grace of God.⁵⁹

At the heart of the issue is the debate over the manner in which the Holy Spirit brings people to faith in Jesus Christ. Peter Grant assumed that Johnston followed Finney and Morison in denying the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit in conversion as the determinative factor as to whether a person was brought to faith. The claim was denied by Johnston, though his book appeared to confirm the suspicions of his opponents. He argued that the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Holy Scripture and they passed on the sacred writings to the members of the church who are commissioned to preach it to the world. 'It is thus that the Holy Spirit is at work for the conversion of man to God.'⁶⁰ The idea of the Holy Spirit working directly and actively on a human being in opening the mind and bringing it to respond to the gospel, as understood in Reformed theology, was decisively rejected. The effectual call of the Spirit is a doctrine of devils, a doctrine in which Satan and his angels and agents delight, as being so subservient to their hellish purposes in deceiving and destroying millions of souls. It behoves the people of God therefore to set their faces against it as a flint.⁶¹

Johnston appears to believe, echoing Finney, that if the right human methodology is used that there will be a mass turning of the people in the land to the Christian faith. 'Of one thing the writer is certain, that were the doctrines here stated universally preached, there would be a universal revival of religion in our churches.'⁶² The notion of one religious prescription to cure all the spiritual ills of Scotland would be challenged by the religious revival of the late 1850s and early 1860s. However, in the 1840s the men of Morisonian opinions were supremely confident that they would win the competition for the spiritual allegiance of a growing proportion of Scottish Christians

It was only to be expected that other Scottish Baptists besides Peter Grant would declare their opposition to Johnston's theology. Jonathan Watson in a public lecture in June 1852, given to the Tabernacle congregation in Edinburgh, spoke by contrast of:

the indispensable need of the Holy Spirit's influences for our personal establishment and general usefulness.' He exposed the

⁵⁹ *The Primitive Church Magazine (P.C.M.)*, New Series, (Vol. 6.2, February 1849): 67-68.

⁶⁰ Johnston, *Work of God and Work of Man*, 20.

⁶¹ Johnston, *Work of God and Work of Man*, 112-113.

⁶² Johnston, *Work of God and Work of Man*, 206.

modern views of the Spirit's work, and contended earnestly for the great truth, so plainly revealed in the Bible, that when Paul had planted, and Apollos watered, God must, for only he can, give the increase.⁶³

Another prominent Baptist minister to speak out against the views propounded in Johnston's book was Alexander McLeod. After commending some churches for their orthodox faith McLeod then contrasts that with others known to him:

are there not others of undisguised and undisguisable Pelagian opinions? And does not Pelagianism deny that it behoves 'the ungodly and sinners' to be illuminated and converted by the special operation of the Holy Spirit? While professing to admit 'the belief of truth' do they not stoutly deny 'the sanctification of the Spirit - the washing of regeneration - the renewing of the Holy Ghost?' of which the Lord himself said to Nicodemus, 'except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot see the kingdom of God?' Is this denial of the Holy Spirit less dangerous or less ungodly and pernicious than the rejection of our Lord's Divine glory and atoning sacrifice?⁶⁴

Johnston had the opportunity to correct any mistakes in Grant's critique of his book on the work of the Spirit in conversion, but instead appeared to confirm his opponent's position. He admitted that 'Faith is the work of man as well as the gift of God',⁶⁵ and that the working of the Holy Spirit during the ministry of Jesus on earth was solely 'the Father drawing souls simply through Christ's doctrines and miracles. We ask, were not these the means through which God exerted or put forth that influence which alone could bring them to Christ?'⁶⁶ Far from reassuring fellow Baptists by his extended reply to Grant's accusations, Johnston only confirmed suspicions that he had departed from Christian orthodoxy. This understanding of the situation ensured that there was no possibility of the views of the various types of Scottish Baptists being contained in a single Baptist Union of Scotland in the 1850s.

This conclusion was reluctantly drawn by several Scottish Calvinistic Baptist ministers in the early 1850s after the separatist declaration of the Union's magazine, *The Evangelist*, in January 1850. A

⁶³ *PCM*, New Series, (Vol. 9.8, August 1852): 232-233.

⁶⁴ *PCM*, New Series, (Vol. 12.6, June 1855): 169-172.

⁶⁵ Johnston, 'Reply to Mr Grant chapter I', *The Evangelist*, (Vol. 5.8, August 1850): 152.

⁶⁶ Johnston, 'Reply to Mr Grant chapter IV', 221-222.

group of men led by Henry John Betts, the successor of James Haldane as pastor at the Tabernacle Church in Edinburgh, sought to have fellowship with like-minded English Calvinistic Baptists. They supported a little known society called 'The Baptist Evangelical Society', (BES)⁶⁷ and its magazine *The Primitive Church Magazine (PCM)*. The BES was never intended to form the basis of a separate denomination, as a declaration, dated April 1845, made plain: 'It was never contemplated that brethren or churches, uniting with it, should be expected to withdraw, in consequence of doing so, either from local organisations, or denominational institutions'.⁶⁸ In June 1857, a doctrinal basis was recorded that made plain that the *PCM* would continue to proclaim the traditional Calvinistic theology held historically by Particular Baptists.⁶⁹ Supporters of this Society were never going to feel comfortable in the Baptist Union organised by Johnston. An anonymous Scottish supporter of the *PCM* hinted at the dissension in the ranks of the Baptist Union of Scotland as a result of the publication of Johnston's controversial book.

All holding evangelical doctrine (and even some who are still of Mr J.[Johnston]'s party) are unanimous in pronouncing his book erroneous, insidious, and of evil tendency...Most sincerely do we regret the position of the theological tutor of the Baptist Union of Scotland. Some of the best supporters of his theological school, it is said, will support it no more.⁷⁰

One of Johnston's admirers who was a member of the BES, Peter Grant, minister of Grantown-on-Spey Baptist Church, had been concerned about the Cupar minister's theology in 1846, long before the damage caused by his 1848 treatise. In a letter to his son William, Peter Grant expresses his hopes and also his fears for Johnston's future:

If the Lord preserves Johnston from erroneous views you will see that he will be one of the cleverest men of our denomination. I am not sorry that you cultivate acquaintance with him, I hope it will not offend anyone.⁷¹

⁶⁷ G.R. Breed, *The Baptist Evangelical Society*, (Dunstable: Fauconberg Press, 1988).

⁶⁸ Breed, *Baptist Evangelical Society*, 10. See G.R. Breed, *Particular Baptists in Victorian England and their Strict Communion Organizations*, (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2003), for the wider context of the work of this group of Baptists in the United Kingdom. For details of Scottish supporters of this cause, see Talbot, *Common Identity*, 271-272.

⁶⁹ *PCM*, New Series, (Vol. 14.6, June 1857): 151.

⁷⁰ *PCM*, New Series, (Vol. 6.3, March 1849): 91-92.

⁷¹ Peter Grant to William Grant, 17 November 1846, Grant ms, held in a private collection of Grant papers.

Peter Grant was a most perceptive minister who had seen before many of his colleagues the direction in which Johnston was going. Johnston, unfortunately, had surrounded himself with men of like mind and had alienated colleagues who could have helped him focus his gifts and enthusiasm in a more beneficial direction. There was a sense of inevitability about Johnston's resignation from his work in Scotland in January 1856 and the acceptance of a new pastorate in Cambridge. This step closed the door on a painful episode in Scottish Baptist history.

After some time for reflection, a small group of Scottish Baptist leaders began, in September 1856, to search for new ways to build bridges to overcome the old causes of division within their denomination.⁷² *The Freeman*, the English Baptist periodical, contained the following comment on the relationships between Baptists in Scotland in 1858. 'We congratulate them on the fact that a more genial and unitive spirit has of late appeared amongst them.'⁷³ The focus of attention in this denomination, together with other Evangelical Protestants, was now firmly on the revival of religion that had been evident in the USA from 1857⁷⁴ and had now been witnessed in Northern Ireland and Scotland. It is important to note that this revival was probably the first truly national revival in Scotland,⁷⁵ with a corresponding impact on the work of the different churches. As a result of the focus on the revival of spiritual life within the churches, the increasingly sterile debate over the significance of the Holy Spirit's work in the conversion of sinners began to subside, in favour of the proponents of traditional opinions, who had stressed the necessity of an active regenerating work in the human heart prior to conversion. This development was, however, accompanied by the emergence of a more pietistical and less doctrinal form of Evangelicalism, not only within Baptist ranks, but also within the other Protestant denominations in Scotland.⁷⁶

The connection between Baptists in Scotland and the revival was made plain in the 1859 annual report. The report, which was read at a business meeting, referred to the origin of the Association as having

⁷² Talbot, *Common Identity*, chapter eight.

⁷³ *The Freeman*, (Vol. 4, 1 December 1858): 731.

⁷⁴ J.E. Orr, *The Event of the Century The 1857-1858 Awakening*, (ed.), R.O. Roberts, (Wheaton: International Awakening Press, 1989), 47-67. K.T. Long, *The Revival of 1857-58: Interpreting an American Religious Awakening*, (New York, 1998), 12-18. Orr, though, traces the start of the revival earlier than Long and in other urban centres, prior to the start of the Fulton Street Prayer meetings in New York.

⁷⁵ Jeffrey, *When the Lord Walked the Land*, 2.

⁷⁶ Talbot, *Common Identity*, 291-293. For similar developments on a wider scale, see Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 151-180.

arisen out of an earnest desire on the part of members of the churches for a larger outpouring of the Spirit of God, and to the coincidence that at the very time the same desire had taken possession of the hearts of Christians in America, Sweden, and elsewhere, which had been followed by actual Revival in these countries, and now in this. The report gratefully acknowledged that many of the churches connected with the Baptist denomination had participated in these tokens of God's mercy and grace.⁷⁷

The revival reports in *The Freeman* during 1859 from John Williams, a Glasgow Baptist minister, indicate that it was a pan-denominational phenomenon. Prayer meetings in Glasgow, for example, were held under the auspices of the 'committee of the Glasgow Auxiliary of the Evangelical Alliance'. In Helensburgh Presbyterians, Baptists and Independents united in earnest prayer and formed a large crowd of people. Many individuals were converted and baptised by Baptist minister George Dunn in Drumclare near Airdrie.⁷⁸ 'A great awakening has taken place in the North of Scotland, embracing almost all the parishes between Aberdeen and Inverness - a distance upwards of 100 miles'. The impact in Thurso, a town of 3,000 people, resulted in 150 people being added to the membership of two unnamed local congregations. A large increase of this proportion had never been recorded in their previous history. Ayrshire had seen a significant change in social behaviour with a dramatic fall in the number of cases of public disorder for the police to handle. Maybole was singled out as a good example of a town affected by the revival.⁷⁹ Eyemouth in Berwickshire had seen 'a remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit'. The local population had been only 2,000 people, but almost every home had been affected by the revival. Every night of the week the four churches, Baptist, Methodist, Free Church and United Presbyterian, had been open for prayer meetings with seats quickly taken. 'The most cordial union exists among the ministers of the town, as well as among all Christians. Denominationalism is out of sight, and all are co-operating most heartily on behalf of Christ alone'.⁸⁰ A similar account was reported later in nearby Berwick upon Tweed.⁸¹ Arminian and Calvinistic Baptists were

⁷⁷ *The Freeman*, (Vol. 5, 2 November 1859): 665.

⁷⁸ *The Freeman*, (Vol. 5, 26 October 1859): 649-650. Another account of these events was given in W. Reid, *Authentic Records of Revival Now in Progress in the United Kingdom*, (London: James Nisbet And Co., 1860), 391-400.

⁷⁹ *The Freeman*, (Vol. 5, 7 December 1859): 744-745.

⁸⁰ *The Freeman*, (Vol. 5, 21 December 1859): 778. See also Reid, *Authentic Records of Revival*, 321-335.

⁸¹ *The Revival*, (Vol. 5.104, 20 July 1861): 21.

united in favour of the 1859 Revival. The growth in the churches at this time would act as an incentive to further united efforts in prayer and evangelistic activity. The 1861 annual report declared that the SBA '...was designed to promote the cause of revivals'.⁸² When the focus was on shared activities such as prayer and evangelism, as mentioned in this context, the ties between Scottish Baptists were becoming more firmly established. The 1856 assembly of the SBA linked these two activities. It stated:

The objects of the association were - first, to promote the revival of spiritual religion in the denomination...The chairman made several remarks on each of these objects, but dwelt particularly on the first, showing the necessity there was for increased earnestness and activity on the part of the ministers, deacons, and members. Addresses of a practical character...were afterwards delivered.⁸³

In the context of revival blessings from God the theological differences between Baptists, and those between Baptists and other evangelical Christians, appeared to be much smaller than had previously been thought. William Tulloch, the president of the Baptist Union of Scotland in 1881, in his Presidential address, highlighted what he believed was one of the main sources of encouragement that strengthened ties between Baptists in Scotland.

The Union was in fact born of a revival...Quickened souls in all the churches...having been providentially led to co-operate in special efforts on behalf of the perishing, both ministers and people felt how good it was to work together for their common Lord. This excited in the minds of some of us a strong desire to see the body to which we belonged...take its part in so noble a work... The breath of heaven, which was then imparting new spiritual life to multitudes, could breathe on the Baptist churches too, and drawing together the scattered members of the body make them instinct with the life of God.⁸⁴

Promoting the cause of the revival clearly brought many Scottish Baptists closer together and as a result it strengthened the support for the work of the SBA.

The former secretary of the Baptist Union of Scotland, Francis Johnston, had taken some time to reflect on his leadership of the Baptist

⁸² *The Freeman*, (Vol. 7, 30 October 1861): 697.

⁸³ *The Freeman*, (Vol. 2, 29 October 1856): 649.

⁸⁴ W. Tulloch, 'Presidential Address', *The Fourteenth Annual Report of the Baptist Union of Scotland*, (Glasgow: Baptist Union of Scotland, 1882), 42.

Union of Scotland and its disastrous collapse in the early 1850s. A more humble and wiser Johnston sought to rebuild the links with fellow Baptists that resulted in him regaining the confidence of his colleagues.⁸⁵ At the March 1861 committee meeting of the BHMS there was an historic motion presented with the intention of restoring the name of Francis Johnston to its Edinburgh committee.⁸⁶ Henry Dickie, BHMS secretary and James Paterson, minister of Hope Street Baptist Church, Glasgow, had spent some time with Johnston in reflecting on key theological issues and discussing the content of his sermons since his return to Scotland. In a remarkable transformation of his views Johnston made the following written statements of his new understanding of divine truth. First in respect of his controversial book he stated:

All passages which it is impossible to harmonise with the absolute necessity of the Holy Spirits' work in the faith and regeneration of the sinner, I myself renounce and blot out. This acknowledgement I freely and frankly make, and hope my brethren will accept.⁸⁷

Having been presented with a copy of the unofficial Calvinistic basis of faith drawn up by James Haldane as a guide for BHMS workers, Johnston made the following assessment of its teaching. 'I have read the late Mr James Haldane's letter to the Missionaries, and regard it as a most excellent statement of divine truth.'⁸⁸ This shift on key theological issues led to Johnston's restoration to fellowship with his colleagues. Credit must go to Henry Dickie and James Paterson for their willingness to offer the hand of friendship to Johnston. Some contemporary supporters of Johnston denied he had changed his opinions,⁸⁹ but this is unsustainable in the light of the primary evidence from Johnston's correspondence. The former union secretary would be involved in future attempts to unite Scottish Baptists, but with a significantly modified theology and a more conciliatory approach towards his colleagues.

⁸⁵ 'Contrasting Interpretations of Baptist Identity in Nineteenth Century Scotland: The Contributions of Rev. Francis Johnston, Rev. Jonathan Watson and Dr James Paterson', unpublished paper delivered at the Third International Conference on Baptist Studies, at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, 2003, 6-12.

⁸⁶ The details of Johnston's correspondence and the committee deliberations are given in the Appendix to the *Report of the Baptist Home Missionary Society for Scotland*, (Edinburgh: D. & R. Collier, 1861), 17-18.

⁸⁷ Francis Johnston, to Henry Dickie, 28 August 1860.

⁸⁸ Francis Johnston, to Henry Dickie, 14 May 1860. For James Haldane's document – see n.8 on p. 2.

⁸⁹ For example, Samuel Newnam, 'Francis Johnston', *Scottish Baptist Magazine*, (Vol. 6.6, June 1880): 87.

There had been a time of great theological turmoil and conflict in the ranks of Evangelical Protestants during the mid-nineteenth century. James Morison in the United Secession Church, John Kirk amongst the Independent Churches and Francis Johnston from the Baptist Union of Scotland were amongst the most prominent proponents of the newer views in theological circles, with respect to the work of the Holy Spirit. Johnston, the primary focus of this study, was probably the least influential of the three within Scottish Evangelicalism, not least because he was a minister within the ranks of one of the smaller denominations. Johnston had the grace to recognise that in his zeal to promote his cause he had overstepped the mark and alienated colleagues who wished to work with him. His reconciliation and restoration to service in Scotland was a fitting finale to his career. The last word ought to be given to one of his closest friends, William Landels, who said this of Johnston:

His faults sprang more from an excessive zeal for what he believed... His excessive zeal sometimes led him to forget – so engrossed was he in his work – that those who differed from him might not like to have their own beliefs assailed, and that the statement of his views at unsuitable times might justly give offence to those who were possibly as conscientious as himself. This peculiarity roused prejudices against him in the minds of some; but it did not hinder others from catching the infection of his zeal... He might not always be sound; but he was always clear...⁹⁰

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⁹⁰ W. Landels, 'Denominational Reminiscences by an Old Baptist,' III, *Scottish Baptist Magazine*, (Vol. 12.10, October 1886): 268.