

David Bogue and the Gosport Academy

Noel Gibbard

David Bogue (1750—1825),¹ a native of Berwickshire, moved to London in 1771, and in 1777 was ordained as a Congregational minister at Gosport, Hampshire, where he served until his death. Gosport was a port of 5,000 inhabitants, very cosmopolitan in character as the Dutch, English, Welsh, Scots and the French mingled together. For many of them it was a port of call, but a number settled down there, and Bogue must have welcomed with open arms those who came from his native country, the families of Geddes, Campbell, McLeod and McDonald.² In 1789, after a period of twelve busy years, Bogue received the first three students to prepare for the ministry of the Word. In 1800 the academy came under the auspices of the London Missionary Society.

This work of **ministerial training** was made possible through the kindness of George Welch,³ a wealthy London banker, with the help of two other gentlemen. Welch was concerned with the spread of the gospel and was one of the principal supporters of the 'Societas Evangelica'. In a discussion with William Jay, Welch lamented the presence of an 'unregenerate ministry' and was moved to support students under the care of three ministers in three different places, David Bogue of Gosport being one of them.⁴ The tutor was to be paid ten pounds a year for each student during a three year course. After Welch's death, others carried on the good work, and were anxious to enlarge the academy at Gosport. James Bennett, a former student, took up the matter with Robert Haldane, who with Robert Spear,⁵ a Manchester cotton merchant, offered the LMS five hundred pounds to pay ten pounds per annum for each additional student at the academy. The fruit of the discussion was the establishing of Gosport as a missionary centre for training men for overseas work, as well as for the home field.⁶

Life and Work of the Academy

Bogue was an able man, well read, cultured, but not an outstanding scholar. His aim was to prepare men for the task of preaching the gospel. Like William Jay, he distinguished between an educated ministry and a learned ministry. Candidates had to be educated as thoroughly as possible, but only a few could excel as scholars. All the work of the academy was based on the Bible, the Word of God. As far as Bogue was concerned the Scriptures were the divine oracles, and one of his students referred to the reverence Bogue had for them: 'For the inspired Scriptures David Bogue entertained a deference the most profound';⁷ they were the source of truth and authority and the Bible was always open in front of him. As he lectured a great deal on the New

Testament, he made use of helpful sources, especially Griesbach's critical edition of the New Testament.

The tutor laid a firm foundation for the work, but there were many uncertainties and difficulties. There was no purpose-built building, and they met in the vestry adjoining the red brick chapel, in a room thirty feet by eighteen feet. There was a table and a chair for Bogue, and benches for the students. The tutor did not have much help in terms of teaching. David, his son, helped for a while, but the only continuing help came from Thomas Eastman. This was partly Bogue's own fault, however, and he was guilty of taking on too much work himself. The library facilities were inadequate for a theological college. Indeed, for the early period, the only books available were those in Bogue's own library. Also, the differences in age and ability posed a real problem for teaching in class. Some of the students came with a little knowledge of Greek and Latin, while others came having had hardly any education previously.

Bogue made an effort to meet the needs of the students. They were given a general education, a knowledge of Greek and Latin while Hebrew was left until the third year, and he succeeded in this work: 'The theological lectures were especially adapted to remedy this evil. For they were remarkably simple; and though they often contained the result of much learned reading and close thinking, they were as far as possible, level to the understanding of all who possessed the indispensable prerequisite for the ministry — 'good sense, genuine piety and respectable acquaintance with the Bible.'⁸

The former student was referring specifically to the theological lectures, and in the same context said, 'Theology was the alpha and omega at Gosport', while another former student referring to Bogue, commented that '**His forte was theology**'.⁹ He drew up a course of a hundred and twenty lectures,¹⁰ reflecting the influence of Doddridge and as he lectured Bogue would recommend particular matters to his students. Pride of place went to Jonathan Edwards, who had greatly influenced Bogue personally and he had studied the **Religious Affections** in detail. Others who were recommended included John Owen, John Howe, William Bates and Witsius, and Richard 'for powerful application to the heart and conscience'.¹¹ The students had to work on their notes and their reading, then present them to the tutor for inspection and advice.

Attention was also given to Homiletics and during the lectures Bogue emphasised simplicity and clarity in the presentation of the gospel, urging the students to wait upon God for unction on their ministry. He did not give too much attention to the finer points of pulpit behaviour and was criticised by some of his contemporaries for this neglect. They could also draw attention to the fact that Bogue himself had deliberately hidden his Scottish accent.¹² However, his ministerial experience was evident as he prepared them for the ministry, and he would point out the difficulties of the work: from the work of the ministry; from the opposition of enemies; from the professors of religion; from friends; from personal enemies and from self.¹³

All aspects of their lives had to be regulated in such a way as to honour God and promote the gospel, even the dress of the students. He advised them: to guard against extremes; dress should be regulated to the place in which the minister lives; it should be suitable to station; suitable to years and it should not be mean.¹⁴

The students stayed in Gosport and district and with members of the chapel if at all possible. Consequently, they were separated from each other for some time during the week. Bogue overcame this problem in two ways. First of all, he held prayer meetings for students and tutors. This he did regularly, and occasionally, especially at the beginning of a new term, devoted a whole morning to prayer and 'on such occasions the awe of the divine presence has been very powerfully felt, and the most devout and profitable intercourse has been maintained between the tutor and the students, as well as between them all and God'.¹⁵

Missionary Emphasis

From the very beginning of his ministry David Bogue was outward looking in terms of preaching the gospel. He thought of the academy as an instrument of evangelism and it is no surprise that he was a co-founder of the Missionary Society in 1795. The new missionary emphasis in the academy from 1800 gave him a wider sphere of activity. In Hampshire itself there was a great need to visit declining causes and pioneer work in rural areas. A less experienced student would be sent out with a more experienced person, and they would report on their work to the tutor.¹⁶ There was a measure of success with the pioneering work and a number of churches were planted.

Bogue worked with others in the county, especially John Griffin, and the two men, their congregations and the students gave themselves to the work of evangelism whole-heartedly. For one period during 1797 David Bogue was ill in bed but took the opportunity to draw up a plan for the propagation of the gospel in Hampshire. It was due to the providence of God that he was still in Gosport, for a year earlier he had discussed with Haldane the possibility of going to India. They were prevented from going there and Haldane was led to Geneva, and Bogue stayed in Gosport. His plan for the county was accepted by others and the students became a part of this more organised work. In 1814 the Hampshire Association took another step forward when it decided to prepare preachers to work in the county. Members of the association were to look out for single men, under thirty years of age, those who were men of piety, of good natural powers, prudent, of a public spirit, able to persevere, apt to teach, and capable of labour and study. Such men would enter the academy at Gosport for six months; 'Their education is generously offered by Mr Bogue to be given them free of expense.'¹⁷

Hampshire, however, was only part of his parish, and Bogue travelled in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France. The course in the academy included a study of a number of countries and their languages. Bogue wanted to see as many as possible going overseas, but he did not want to see them going unprepared.¹⁸ Dealing with the 'Office and Qualifications', he had five

main points to make and then dealt with each one in fair detail:
'Office and Qualifications', he had five main points to make and then dealt with each one in five main points to make and then dealt with each one in fair detail:

- Natural Qualifications (eg good temper)
- Knowledge (of doctrine, of the heart, of customs)
- Spiritual Disposition (10 examples, eg peculiar affection for souls)
- Generous, liberal principles
- Continued aims and ends.¹⁹

It was made quite clear to the students that there was no short cut as far as reaching the natives of a country was concerned. Bogue believed that the gift of 'tongues' had ceased and, therefore, there was need to work at languages. He knew of the work of David Brainard and urged the students to read his life story, but in terms of preaching he was, according to Bogue, the exception.

The work was spiritual although some attention had to be given to the natural and cultural needs of the people. The main task, however, was **to win men for Christ**. Bogue advised the future missionaries concerning preparing a sermon: let a pagan be before you; write as you would speak to him and represent to yourself how Paul would have spoken to him.²⁰ Nothing should stand between them and the work of rescuing perishing souls.

Bogue kept reports of the students and it is interesting to find references to well known missionaries. Most of the early missionaries from Wales went to Gosport, including the first two missionaries to Madagascar, David Jones and Thomas Bevan. William Milne went there too and Bogue reported concerning him, 'designed to assist Mr Morrison in China, is well qualified for that arduous task'. He commented on John Le Brun, 'a peculiarly zealous young man, and likely to be useful in a situation where the French language is spoken'. C Frey went to the academy and he did much to reach the Jews with the gospel — a work which was very close to Bogue's heart.²¹

Vision

The tutor at Gosport was absolutely convinced of the inspiration of Scripture and the power of the gospel. He was convinced that the gospel would triumph, and he was taken up with the glory of the latter days. During one period in his ministry he preached a series of twenty sermons on the millennium, that period of unusual blessing which would precede Christ's coming in glory. Bogue himself says, 'one effect of these predictions on every true disciple of Jesus is to invigorate his zeal in promoting the christian religion.'²² He saw his work in an **eschatological setting**. Bogue saw his work in this way because of the nature of Christ's work on the cross. He died to save his own, but they were to be called in time. The Lord Jesus Christ was to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. The soteriological and eschatological aspects meet in Christ.²³

Bogue was wise enough to see that what the academy was doing was a part of what God has in mind for the world. Consequently he was flexible, always ready to find new ways for the academy to reach out to others. It never became a storehouse where knowledge was heaped up, but a channel of blessing to

those in need. As he saw that need Bogue never deviated from making preaching central in the work of the academy and the church. The whole curriculum was related to preaching. The tutor himself was an eminent example of zeal and industry and in this context was referred to as an Origen. Frequently Bogue would say that the Christian's rest is in heaven.

There were criticisms of Bogue and the academy. John Angell James believed that students were sent out to preach at too young an age. Because of the range of ability the more able tended to be neglected. Although 'missionary aspects' were introduced they were not developed as fully as possible and the work could have been more effective if Bogue had shared the work with others.

It is amazing, however, that Bogue had such a vision of the great work from that small, ill-equipped chapel vestry. Bogue gave himself to the work and the students, and most of them loved and even adored their tutor. This is just one of many tributes to the work at Gosport: 'No one could leave Gosport without a deep impression of the grandeur and responsibility of the ministry and an awful anticipation of the day when each shepherd of souls must render up his account to the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep'.²⁴

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4. Bennett, OP CIT, 119, 131
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11. Bennett, OP CIT, 124, 135-36, 396-97
12. IBID, 126
13. Bogue's Missionary Lectures (Copied from MS Robert Moffat in LMS library for the Rev Chester Teapstra, American Board of Missionaries): Teapstra's thesis on Bogue in Congregational College, Edinburgh
14. IBID
15. BENNETT, OP CIT, 130
16. IBID, 135-36
17. EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE, February 1814
18. The missionaries continued to study Bogue's lectures after leaving college, eg a group of six sailing for the Cape of Good Hope would meet every morning after breakfast to study them, EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE, October 1816
19. Bogue's Missionary Lectures
20. IBID
21. CWM, Home Letters

22. SERMON PREACHED AT SALTER'S HALL, MARCH 30, 1792, also OBJECTIONS AGAINST A MISSION TO THE HEATHEN (1795) and THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS TO SEEK THE SALVATION OF THE JEWS (1806)
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24. Bennett, OP CIT, 130-31. Bennett and John Angell James, with former students published funeral sermons for Bogue! John Griffin a fellow labourer did so and Robert Winter at the request of the family

Book Reviews

According to Luke

David Gooding

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362pp (paperback) £5.95

Possibly the reader has exactly the same mental reaction as the reviewer when the term 'Form Criticism' is mentioned. Shutters fall across the mind to protect it from the often sterile and seemingly worthless debates that characterise text-book student days. To add to the description, names such as Thucydides and Aristotle may even produce emotional tensions to the point of discomfort!

Yet these are amongst the terms which David Gooding uses as he tries to explain the principles of his exegesis in this book. There is a danger that the introduction could put some readers off the rest of the work, and if it does, it will be a very great pity.

David Gooding is former Professor of New Testament Greek at Queens University Belfast and brings to his commentary on Luke a method that very much reflects that of R H Lightfoot's commentary on St John. It is neither an approach which gets bogged down unnecessarily with textual detail, nor a verse by verse

exposition, but concentrates on the themes, movements and goals of the writer.

To achieve his analysis, Professor Gooding uses the methodology of Form Criticism. It must be emphasised that having explained and justified his use of this approach it has little prominence in the text of the commentary. Like a steel girder giving strength to a concrete pillar, so the method is buried away in the exposition. It is only noticed when the author deliberately reminds the reader of its presence.

To identify the movements of the arguments and events, Professor Gooding divides Luke into two parts. The Coming, 1—9:50 and The Going, 9:51—24:53. Each part is further subdivided into five divisions. In these divisions such exciting themes as 'Christ's way with sinners', 'Christ and the goal of redemption' and 'Preparing to reign with Christ' are explored.

The commentary is liberally scattered with charts which are inserted into each of the ten subdivisions to make sure the reader can see the overall theme of the division and how it links in with the whole.

Perhaps one note of caution might be