

ART. XV.—*The Reverend Thomas Sewell of Whitehaven and the publication of the Bible in Manx.* By WILLIAM R. SERJEANT, B.A.

Read at Carlisle, April 11th, 1959.

THE little Anglican diocese of Sodor and Man, with its seventeen parishes, contained in the 18th century some 20,000 souls. The great majority of these were country folk, occupying themselves with farming and fishing; and although they were still much influenced by superstitions traceable to pagan times, they had assimilated these to their Christian beliefs, and accepted the authority of the Church as personified in their Bishop and the parochial clergy and as reflected in the still considerable power the Church and its courts exercised in their everyday lives. They were not a wayward flock, but they were a passive, even to some extent an indifferent, one.

Such a situation could not be acceptable to a good shepherd, and the Isle of Man was fortunate in having, during the first three-quarters of the 18th century, two excellent and devoted shepherds in Bishop Thomas Wilson (1698-1755) and Bishop Mark Hildesley (1755-1772). In an age not noted for its piety, both these men dedicated themselves to the service of the Manx people, and endeavoured to ease their lot and revivify their Christian faith. Both, in so doing, realised that apathy was the result of ignorance and isolation. An alien administration, which drew into its orbit most of those who should have been the natural leaders of the people, was largely indifferent to the needs and aspirations of what it saw not as a society, but simply as a revenue-producing possession. The Church, in the patronage of that administration, had hitherto been usually associated with it. Between rulers

temporal and spiritual, and people, there was a cessation of communication, which left the latter unguided and unheeded.

A bad and unhealthy situation was, moreover, made worse by a tangible, physical obstacle to communication. The language of the people was Manx. English was an alien tongue of which they were ignorant, or with which they were at best unfamiliar, and on awkward terms. Any attempts to proffer moral and spiritual guidance to them must contend at the outset with this obstacle. Wilson and Hildesley successively attacked the problem in three ways — firstly, by creating facilities for the better education of the Manx clergy, and, by improving their material conditions (for the livings of almost all were at poverty level), to improve the quality of the parochial clergy: secondly, by ensuring that every parish had an effective school: and thirdly, by providing Manx translations of religious works, particularly of the Bible and Prayer Book, so that the people had direct access to the Scriptures.

The difficulty of the Church, as Hildesley found it, is explained in a letter written by him to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1762:¹ “. . . the major part of the people are unable to attain any knowledge of the genuine Scriptures, but what they receive from the *off-hand translations*² produced by the minister in the desk out of the English Bible: and in like manner, of the *Common Prayer*; every portion of which, consequently, must be varied, and more or less exact, according to the judgement, the diligence, and the abilities of the officiating reader. How very defectively this part of the office must be performed — by the junior clergy at least, at their first taking orders, just after having been versed for some years in English and the learned languages, under an academick tutor bred in England — anyone may readily

¹ Weedon Butler, *Memoirs of Mark Hildesley, D.D.* (London, 1799).

² *i.e.* extempore.

conceive." Later in the same letter, he adds: "the Manks people in general, are naturally shrewd, of quick apprehension, and very apt to learn: and they would be, I am confident, extremely fond of perusing the Scriptures if they had them, and were taught to read them, in their own tongue . . ."³

There is an implication in these last words which, while it was not in itself of moment to Bishop Hildesley, gives the translation of the Bible an added importance, and has made it a significant event in the history of the Island. Having translated the Scriptures into Manx, he says, the people should be taught to read them. This was not a mere question of teaching the alphabet, but of the fact that Manx had until this period been an oral language only; never set down in writing. Now that, in the last 50 years or so, the language has become virtually extinct,⁴ it is to the translation of the Bible promoted by Hildesley, more than to any other source, that we owe our knowledge of the language, and in it, more than in any other source, that the record of the Manx tongue will be preserved.

The publication of this first complete translation of the Bible into Manx is therefore of special interest and importance to Manx people, but it also has an interest to Cumberland people, because it was in Whitehaven that the work of publication was undertaken and carried through. Its history has been traced in detail by more than one author⁵ and it is unnecessary here to do more than summarise. What has not hitherto been given prominence is the rôle of a Whitehaven clergyman, the Reverend Thomas Sewell, who evidently supervised the execution of the work, and thus placed the people of the

³ Bishop Hildesley's confidence was justified, and the Manx Bible was in due course to be found occupying a position of honour, and bearing signs of much use, in cottages and farmhouses throughout the Island.

⁴ At the time of writing, only two "native speakers" survive — both advanced in years.

⁵ Butler, *op. cit.*, and see G. W. Wood's account in the *Manx Church Magazine* for 1896 and 1897, and W. Cubbon's *Bibliography of the Literature of the Isle of Man*, ii (1939).

Isle of Man greatly in his debt. Butler's *Memoirs of Bishop Hildesley* mentions Sewell on several occasions, but he remains a shadowy figure. Recently, however, there has come to light among the MSS. of the Manx historian, A. W. Moore, in the Manx Museum Library, a small group of letters from Sewell, mainly to the Reverend Philip Moore, the editor of the Bible, which bring him out of the shadows, and present a pleasant portrait of a modest, witty, and kindly cleric, and a devoted and unselfish supporter of Bishop Hildesley's project, whose endeavours must have smoothed its path, and done much to ensure its successful completion.

In 1763, Hildesley addressed a letter to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge urging the desirability of an impression of the Scriptures in the Manx language. The Society gave support to the idea, and a subscription list was opened for the purpose of financing the venture, to which the Bishop was from the first a major contributor. Sufficient money was soon forthcoming for work to be put in hand, and in the same year the Society's publishers, J. and W. Oliver of London, produced 1,000 copies of the Gospels and Acts. In 1767 this was followed by a similar number of the Epistles and Revelation, published in Ramsey by W. Sheperd of Whitehaven,⁶ thus completing the translation of the New Testament.

The Bishop now turned his attention to the publication of the Old Testament. The appeal for subscriptions to finance this work met with a ready response, and the money was again quickly forthcoming. His two chief agents in the undertaking were the Reverend Philip Moore and the Reverend John Kelly. The major share of the credit for the swift and successful completion of the work must go to Philip Moore, editor of the translation, and the man with whom Thomas Sewell corresponded during its progress. Born in 1705, he owed his education to the

⁶ This is the first book to bear an Isle of Man imprint, and presumably Sheperd set up in Ramsey especially to undertake the work. (See below, p. 270 and footnote 16).

facilities created by Bishop Wilson, and began his studies at Douglas Grammar School, which had been founded in the year after his birth. In 1731 he became Bishop's Chaplain; and in 1734 he was appointed Chaplain of St Matthew's, Douglas, and Master of the Douglas Grammar School, retaining all three posts until his death in 1783, and also becoming in turn Rector of Ballaugh (1751) and Rector of Bride (1760). He was the most distinguished Manx cleric of his day, possessed of considerable learning, a shrewd wit, and a natural kindness. He was on intimate and affectionate terms with both Wilson and Hildesley, and it is said that at his death, all but four of the Manx clergy had been educated by him. In addition to his general editorship of the Manx Bible, he translated part of the Psalms and the Acts, and was responsible for the final revision of the whole Bible. At his death, the *Cumberland Pacquet* carried a long and eulogistic obituary, in which he is described as "well-known in the literary world" and "eminently distinguished as the divine, the gentleman, and the scholar."⁷

John Kelly, his chief assistant, born in 1750, had entered into collaboration with Moore at the tender age of 16, in revising, correcting, and preparing the second volume of the Old Testament; he corrected the proofs of both volumes for the press, and transcribed the third volume, containing the New Testament. He became the most knowledgeable Manx scholar of his day, and was the author of the first grammar of the language, completed in 1780 and published in 1804. Turning to the wider field of Gaelic languages, he later produced his major work, a triglot dictionary of Scottish, Irish, and Manx Gaelic, of which the first portion, up to the letter *L* was printed in 1807, but was tragically lost by fire.⁸ For

⁷ The *Cumberland Pacquet*, 28 January 1783. Other details from Butler, *op. cit.*, and A. W. Moore, *Manx worthies* (1901).

⁸ Only two copies survived. One of them is in the Manx Museum Library, together with the MS. of the whole work.

his services to the Manx translation, the S.P.C.K. allowed him a grant which enabled him to go to Cambridge University and there take his B.A. degree. In later life he was rector of Copford in Essex, and appears to have been a man of some mark in the county.⁹

In addition to these two principal helpers, Bishop Hildesley called on 24 other men to share in the work of translation, 22 of them being Manx clergy, so that it represents a remarkable collective achievement. It is further noteworthy that, as the title-page states, the translation was "from the first tongues carefully translated into Gaelic (*i.e.* Manx)," and not from English. The method, Philip Moore wrote in 1780, was "to consider and treat the Scriptures as we would any other classical author of whom a new translation is to be made . . . we were under the necessity of making many variations from the present English version." The resulting production was therefore an original work of distinct literary merit, and has rightly been described as "the greatest monument of the language".¹⁰

The work of printing the Bible was given to John Ware and Son of Whitehaven. In the absence of Manx printers, Whitehaven was at this time an obvious choice, as being the nearest port to the Isle of Man, with a regular packet service and considerable contact with the Island. It has already been noted that the first book printed in Man, the Epistles and Revelation, was produced in Ramsey by a Whitehaven man, W. Sheperd. Sewell's letters reveal that Sheperd was Bishop Hildesley's original choice as printer of the Manx impressions, but mention in these letters of his illness, coupled with the fact that two other works, printed in Ramsey in 1769, bear the imprint M. Sheperd, suggest that his death made a new choice of

⁹ A. W. Moore, *op. cit.*

¹⁰ G. W. Wood, *op. cit.* A knowledge of Manx was necessary to the clergy of the Island, most of whom were of Manx origin. As Hildesley's letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury implies, they were not all equally fluent in the language, and there is reason to believe that the burden of revision that fell on Moore and Kelly was a heavy one.

printer necessary, after his wife (probably) had seen work in hand through the press. Nothing more is known of the Sheperds, but John Ware and Son were for a century or more the best known printers in Whitehaven. Their business was at 26, King Street, and they were the founders of the *Cumberland Pacquet* newspaper. John Ware junior, who was the promoter, editor and manager of this journal, was a classical scholar and a man of considerable attainments. It was he who printed the Manx Bible, and he was evidently well-qualified for a difficult task of this nature.¹¹

The Bible was printed in five stages. The first printing of the first volume (Genesis to Esther) of the Old Testament — 1,000 copies — appeared in 1771, and this was followed by another 1,000 copies, having a different title-page, and some revision and resetting, in 1772. A print of 2,000 of the second volume (Job to Malachi, and including the Apocrypha) of the Old Testament appeared in 1773. The work was completed with the publication of 2,000 copies of the third volume, containing the New Testament, in 1775. All these were octavo volumes, and finally 40 one-volume quarto copies of the whole Bible for the use of the clergy were printed, also in 1775.

Of the Reverend Thomas Sewell, who was clearly the essential “go-between” in this great undertaking, little is known. He was born in 1711, and died in 1780 at his house in Howgill Street, having been incumbent of Holy Trinity, Whitehaven, from 1745 until his death. He was married in Holy Trinity in 1748 to Susan Oliver.¹² The tone of his letters implies that he was on terms of personal friendship with Philip Moore, and that he was a friend and admirer of Bishop Mark Hildesley. Some references to mutual acquaintance, which cannot be elucidated, have been omitted. All the letters except one to, and one from, the S.P.C.K., are to Philip Moore.

¹¹ W.S. Harper's note on Whitehaven printers in CW1 xiv.

¹² For this information I am indebted to Mr C. Roy Hudleston, F.S.A.

Whitehaven

Feby. 22, 1768

Dear Sir,

I feel a particular satisfaction in being able by any means to contribute to alleviate the distress of my friend. How wisely has the author of our nature contrived our frame! We enjoy the comfort we endeavour to give; and is not this a strong inducement to our possessing our souls of that amiable principle you mention, the bond of peace and of all virtues.

If Price were here, I have no time at present, nor indeed scarce eyes to read him; none without glasses — you need not therefore be so anxious for his immediate return. Let not our worthy friend your Diocesan be hurried in the perusal. A knowledge of the Bishop's and your sentiments of the several articles might qualify me to read them with a better goût.

You use no glasses! *Quot annos numeros?* No improper question, my friend, from one that has been condemned to them for nearly three years. If you are, with me, entered your 56th, or within two years and a half of that period, you enjoy a blessing which many are deprived of. The loss of 90 ounces blood in the month of March 1765 had a surprizing effect on my sight — happy there are glasses to repair the decays of that most valuable organ.

You say nothing of my two guineas heckle consigned to your care — perhaps it was sent directly from Ramsea to Bishops-court,¹³ while my letter that should have attended it travelled to Douglas.

You are such peremptory, huffy folks in the Island that I dare not but set down, even against my own inclination, the price of the sticks of wax. Lord Bishop has threatened to turn me out of my post of agency: for what? — because I have neglected to charge his letters, which he calls business letters, to his account. And perhaps my friend at Douglas might take it into his head never to give me another commission, if his sticks were not specified. I could not get a smaller box for wafers — it holds more than you mentioned. Should any of your neighbours unhappily have occasion for their use, you are enabled to supply them . . .

Poor Sheperd is in a very weak, consumptive state, most of his time confined to bed. He has hopes of recovering — his friends fear for him — his wife, poor creature, does what she can — intends if possible to send binders by the next paquet,

¹³ Bishops court is the palace of the Bishops of Sodor and Man, and is situated in the parish of Kirk Michael, in the west of the Island.

and has no apprehension of the printed sheets suffering. Tell me you are pretty well in health and get a little abroad. You have my wife's sincere wishes, along with those of, dear Sir,

Yours,
Tho. Sewel

Whitehaven

December 7th. 1772

My dear Sir,

In the midst of life we are in death! How surprising, how affecting to my wife and me your account of our dear and worthy friend. By this time we fear he is no more. We are sincerely concerned for you all, particularly for good Mrs. Hildesley and yourself. I had flattered myself from your former accounts of His Lordship's improving health, that he would be blessed with life to have the comfort of seeing the great work on which his heart was fixed, entirely finished. How happy that he saw it so far advanced. Poor Kelly has lost a friend, a worthy friend, who no doubt would have provided for him — however, he is a very valuable young man, and will be, I trust, the care of Providence.¹⁴

It is a favourable circumstance on this melancholy occasion, that you have of late corresponded with the Society; they will, I am persuaded, pay great regard to your representations both of persons and things. I have Mr. Kelly and the folio Proper Lessons in my eye. The folio must go on, here, as particular provision both of paper and a new font of types is made for it — the former by me, the latter by Mr. Ware — all this by the Bishop's directions.

I am concerned for the interest of the Wares, and have my fears that the Society's printer will want to interfere. In this selfish age, mankind are unwilling to let any job go past them. All the Manx printing must if possible be kept here. I entered a volunteer into the service without any prospect of fee or reward but the pleasure of serving his Lordship, and contributing what I could to the carrying on and forwarding so beneficial and noble a work; and no other reward do I now look for, but that of doing you, Mr. Kelly, and the Wares what service I can

¹⁴ Bishop Hildesley had said of the Manx Bible that "he only wished to live to see it finished, and then he should be happy, die when he would." The completed second volume of the Old Testament was put into his hands on the 28 November 1772, and on the second day following he had a seizure from which it was clear he would not recover. He lingered for a week, and died on 7 December. His wife had predeceased him, and Mrs (Mistress) Hildesley was his sister.

with the Society. Should any other be offered, *valde recusem*. I am a corresponding member of the Society but have so seldom writ for any of their tracts for several years past, that the Secretary Broughton has, I suppose, in a great measure forgot me: *entirely* with respect to the Society's annual sermon. You will, I make no question, represent me as a volunteer labourer in this vineyard in such a light as to give me sufficient credit to do you all some service. I think that not only Mr. Kelly, but *you* ought to be duly considered for your uncommon care and labour — there is fund enough and, the work finished, to what better purpose can a proper share of it be appropriated. The labourer is worthy of his hire. 1,000 more copies of the New Testament ought certainly to be printed; for it is absurd to have two thousand of the Old Testament and Common Prayer, and but one of the most essential part of the Sacred Writings: but let Ware be still the printer.

My wife has just now brought me up to my study a letter from His Lordship dated Novr. 23 writ pretty well. He names the arms, Kelly's pocket money, and an *ample final reward*, but not specifically what. He says "You will please to do as you please with regard to binding a quarto Bible for His Majesty." What say you? Must it not be done? Mr. Kelly too, has shewn me yours of the 4th. Alas, all must be ere this over with our worthy friend — pray let not any of his works die with him. He certainly intended the Catechism for the press, and tho' it cost you and Kelly no little labour in correcting and revising, no directions in his will are wanted: the lower part of his fold ought to have the benefit of it.

I am sorry, very sorry for your bodily ailments and sincerely wish them speedily and happily removed. 'Tis cruel in your brethren to propose to you the melancholy task.¹⁵ Have been confined for three weeks (Sundays excepted) with a severe cough and cold. My curate too fell sick on Saturday evening and continues very poorly. Write in a hurry to save the packet. My wife joins in cordial regards with, dear Sir,

Yours most sincerely,
Tho. Sewell

Whitehaven

Decr. 14th 1772

My dear Sir,

We concluded our worthy friend was happily released from this vale of sorrow before your last favour came to hand; his bodily

¹⁵ Presumably the funeral sermon for the Bishop.

frame was too much shaken with the first, to be able to stand a second shock. My wife and I sincerely sympathize with you all in your concern for the loss of so good, so valuable a man — but I will not expatiate on his excellencies, *nos tenues non grandia*, some of you will surely take the pen and do him justice to the world, hold him forth to his brethren the Bishops, to the clergy, to mankind in general, as an example highly worthy their imitation. I could wish to know some particulars of his will, who are his executors, how he has disposed of his manuscripts in our way, what orders if any, he has left relative to the great work we are engaged in.

I named in my last what is yet to be done, and should the Society make any difficulty about printing here the Proper Lessons, they must take Ware's font of ordered types off his hands, as they will be otherwise quite useless to him, for he has letters enough of that size to answer common printing. As to the paper made agreeable to the specimen the Bishop pitched upon when here, I must do as well as I can if we are left in the lurch.

Mr. Kelly has suggested a difficulty with respect to the Second Lessons, which usually proceed according to the days of the month, and which, if the whole New Testament is printed with the large letter, would swell the folio Bible to a large size. This thought never occurred to me, nor I believe, to his Lordship — the Second Lessons are generally not *proper* but *common*; *proper* only, where on one or two of the great festivals and on several of the saint days they are particularly ordered; these, I suppose, are all that our deceased friend intended when he gave orders to have the proper lessons printed. However, to have the whole New Testament printed on this large type along with the first proper lessons would make the folio Bible very complete for your churches and would not, I believe, exceed the size of our church Bibles. What are your sentiments? I dare say there is fund abundantly sufficient for this, and the printing another 1,000 of the New Testament in octavo in the same type with the present octavo Bible — this surely ought to be done for the reasons assigned in my last.

I know not what to say about the Catechism. If the Bishop has left any directions about it they should be fulfilled, if none, as you have already Lewis and, I think, one by Bishop Wilson in Manx, 1,000 more New Testaments would be more useful.¹⁶

¹⁶ This is a reference to (a) Bishop Wilson's *Principles and Duties of Christianity* (London, 1707), which had parallel English and Manx text, and was the first work to be printed in Manx; and (b) *The Church Catechism* translated by H. Corlett from J. Lewis's English original, and

You are a very competent judge of the Catechism and want no assistance from my good for nought head, that often plagues me with its pains. However, would be glad to see anything of the worthy Bishop's composing. Mr. Kelly's will be a safe hand when he returns after Christmas. I am sorry to find you still distressed with aches and pains — if rheumatic, flannel and friction will, I hope, relieve them, and that you will be long blessed with a happy enjoyment of life for the comfort of your friends and the benefit of the inhabitants of Mann. This is my wife's cordial wish and that of, dear Sir,

Your affectionate,
Tho. Sewell

If you see or write to good Mrs. Hildesley, assure her my wife and I sincerely condole with her.

Whitehaven

Jany. 1st. 1773

Dear Sir,

I did not intend to have acknowledged your last favour by the return of the packet, as Mr. Kelly, who knows my sentiments about all matters here, was ready to sail the very day it was brought to my hands. However, as he is still here after a fruitless attempt to keep the greatest part of his Christmas in the Island, I cannot let him sail again without my cordial wishes that you may see many New Years with comfortable health and increased happiness.

I do not know what to say about large octavos. The good Bishop directed a folio — all our church Bibles are folios, and as we have a desk for them to lie on, we find no difficulty in turning over the leaves from one part to another. But this, as you justly observe, must be postponed till his Lordship's further directions (if any such are left), and the Society's pleasure is known. One thing, however, will be needful to be settled pretty soon, i.e. the way to come at cash. The bill given me by the Bp. for 80 has not answered all the paper made use of for the octavo printing. I must advance, or the papermaker give me longer credit. Mr. Kelly has had *now* a guinea and a half of me, and Mr. Ware is not paid for his lodging and diet. The printing

printed by M. Sheperd in Ramsey in 1769 — the second of the two works under this imprint, the other being *The Book of Common Prayer* (1769). Evidently nothing came of the project for a folio Bible, or the printing of the Proper Lessons. Ware produced in 1777 octavo and large paper editions of the Book of Common Prayer, but both were printed in the same size type as his Bible. No new version of the Catechism was published until 1802.

the additional 1,000 of the first volume is now a debt, and cash would be very acceptable to the printer. Binding 3,000 vols. &c &c must be paid when due. As you correspond with the Society, the easiest and best way I think would be for you to prepare them, and solicit their leave for *draughts* or *drafts* upon their Treasurer by me. If they dare repose a confidence in me, I shall never draw without advising the Treasurer, and specifying the particulars for which the money is drawn. The Treasurer's name, address, and place where he may be found will be all needful to be known.

But my company below are impatient, the coffee cold, &c. I am ever, with my wife,

Yours most sincerely,
Tho. Sewel

Whitehaven

Jan'y. 18th 1773

My dear Sir,

As the packet is kept here by this very boisterous, dreadful weather, it gives me an opportunity to thank you for your last obliging epistle, and to trouble [you] with the enclosed short letter of condolence to good Mrs. Hildesley.

No tale or tidings from the Society; great, like heavy bodies are slow in their motions and resolves. I never heard before that Dr. Owen was a gentleman of such extensive learning and critical acumen; our friend Ware, I believe, wishes he had some of that same *unum necessarium* from him; however, the great Dr. is not to know that our wants in that way are somewhat urgent; it might give him an unfavourable idea perhaps, of our abilities in printing &c . . .

You have a ready pen and love to use it; shall I therefore pity [you] for the imposed task of answering the posthumous letters?; I pity you not — no one more equal thereto — only I shall be sorry if it in any wise interfere with Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus. Your scheme of jumbling and cramming the proper lessons on a much larger type into the present finished quarto appears to me the most awkward and absurd that ever entered the pericranium of so sensible and clever a Manksman — Kelly's scheme of printing the whole New Testament with the proper lessons from the Old is infinitely preferable, as it would make the whole an excellent church Bible; and as there is fund enough to answer that, and 1,000 more copies of the New Testament, and anything else you want or wish to have printed in Manx, why should not the cash which the late worthy Bishop with

much labour and pressing applications solicited and raised, be applied to fulfill and complete his own noble scheme. That he would, if blessed with life, have ordered a 1,000 more copies of the New Testament to have been printed, I am most fully persuaded, because he expressed a concern, that a larger number had not been printed at first; but he did not at that time know that the benefactions would swell to so large amount. He agreed to 2,000 copies of the Old Testament because he found his cash greatly equal thereto.¹⁷

If the future conducting the work is left by the Society to you and me, pray let us entirely settle and agree what is yet to be done, that our representations to our great directors above may be one and the same; therefore determine the affairs of the Bible &c with Mr. Kelly. When all that I have named is finished, there will be fund enough accumulating at interest to answer a new impression 20 or 30 years hence, when you and I are dead and gone. Whatever is done now is the work of our late worthy friend the Bishop, and for his credit I will, if blessed with life, freely give my time and labour to complete the above scheme. The Society will have all the merit of distant, hereafter impressions.

Am pleased with his Lordship's remembrance of me in his will — have not named it in my letter to Mrs. Hildesley, because I wish for the favour of a line, and the acquainting me with it may perhaps induce her to make use of her pen.

My wife joins me in cordial wishes and salutations as usual.

Yours affectionately,

Tho. Sewell

Remember us kindly to Mr. Kelly.

You will have learned from the papers that Dr. Richd. Richmond, Vicar of Walton nigh Liverpool is nominated to be your new Diocesan. He solicited half a guinea subscriptions from the company at last Preston Gill for a quarto volume of sermons, 12 in number, and had extraordinary success. A most flaming dedication to the Duchess of Atholl introduced them to the world; all from the information of others, for he says in it that he "had not the *honor* of enjoying himself the opportunities of remarking her eminent and amiable qualities".¹⁸ You will know

¹⁷ In speaking often of "more" copies of the New Testament, which, in its shape as companion to the Old Testament of 1771-3 was not published until 1775, Sewell is referring to the New Testament as published in two portions in 1763 and 1767. (See above, p. 268.)

¹⁸ The appointment of the Bishop of Sodor and Man was presumably in the nomination of the Duke of Atholl, who, although no longer Lord of Man after the Revestment in the Crown in 1765, retained many of his proprietary rights.

from this that I have the sermons by me. One of the subscribers made me a present of them for being at the trouble of cutting open and reading them. You shall have the perusal of them if you choose it, that, if he is to be your Lord, you may if you please, have an opportunity of complimenting him thereon.

This violent wind will not suffer my fire to burn — I am starved to prevent suffocation from smoke.

Whitehaven

Feby. 1st. 1773

My good friend,

I am not sit down to complain of your silence because, I believe, you are fully employed along with Mr. Kelly in the arduous task of correcting and revising; my purpose is to show you by the enclosed, that I have not been quite idle in the vineyard in which we are fellow labourers. How the Reverend Secretary and the Society will relish the length of my epistle, I know not; this I know and feel, that my bad breast has suffered on the occasion; and I promise both them and myself never to offend in the like manner again.

Young Mr. Ware was so good as [to] make these copies for your perusal. I was not able to do it myself. You may keep them both. I intended to have thrown in, the propriety of a compliment to you, but I find you have given the Society such a high opinion of your noble, *disinterested* mind, that I was afraid such a hint might perhaps give you offence, and look too like pointing out a compliment to myself. But tho' I cannot equal you in ability, labour, and usefulness, I will not yield to you in a disinterested spirit with respect to this world; to the next we both cast our eyes, where, I trust, our reward will be sure and certain.

I beg you will favour me with your friendly sentiments on every part of my letter, and if the carrying on the work is entirely left to us, let us unanimously draw together. As the fund, you see in the last year's settlement, is amply large — £1,500 at least, when all the draughts made on it last summer by the late Bishop, and Mr. Kelly's justly merited wages are discharged — why should not therefore New Testament, folio Bible, Catechism, everything that can in any wise contribute to promote the interests of piety and religion among your common Manx people, be printed under our inspection? The fund is appropriated to Manx impressions, and I apprehend cannot be otherwise applied. Societies, as you justly observe, are fluctuating bodies, and if they have a confidence in us, we

should be wanting in duty not to make a proper use of that confidence, without leaving any necessary or useful thing to be done by heaven knows who, when we are dead and gone. Few will be found hereafter so hearty and disinterested in the cause. The more is printed, the better for the honest Wares, it will contribute in part to ease them of the rent of their large new house.

Your new Bishop, I learned yesterday, is not Dr. Richmond, Vicar of Walton, but his brother, a correspondent and friend of yours, as Mr. Ware tells me from Mr. Kelly; if that is the case, Mr. Kelly through your means may promise himself a patron in the Diocesan; I hope he will countenance the Manx printing, and if he takes upon himself the trouble of directing and drawing for cash, so much the better.

You will no doubt be consulted by the Society on the particulars of my letter — consider therefore what number of New Testaments may be proper on my scheme; 3,000 at least. Learn from your clergy their sentiments. The expense of printing a 1,000 more when the types are set is a mere trifle except in paper and binding. My breast will not let me add more, but that I am, with my wife,

Your sincere friend,
Tho. Sewell

Remember us to Mr. Kelly.

Mr. Ware will take care to give this packet to a private hand.

Whitehaven

Copy of the Rev. Mr. Sewel's letter to the Rev. Mr. Broughton, Secretary to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Dated January 30, 1773.

Rev. Sir,

I am favoured with your letter of the 21st instant, and beg leave to return through your hands, my thanks to the Honourable Society, for their favourable and obliging sentiments of my care and labour in superintending the press and helping forward, as far as I could, the great and good work of printing the Holy Scriptures in the Manks language.

I sincerely lament the loss of my worthy friend the late pious and excellent Bishop. It was my earnest wish that his valuable life might have been prolonged till the work had been entirely finished; but Heaven decreed otherwise, and Heaven's will be done! When he first acquainted me with the design of having the work executed by one of our printers here, I readily engaged

to give it all the assistance in my power, having no other motive or view therein, but the pleasure of obliging my worthy friend, and of being in some degree an instrument, under God, in promoting so good and charitable a work.

When the first volume of the Holy Bible went to the press, I found that the work was likely to be retarded for want of a regular supply of paper, and therefore, at his Lordship's request, I undertook to provide that article from the first hand, and entered into an agreement with the maker, who lives and has his paper mill, at five miles distance from hence, to furnish regularly all the paper wanted, and to take back again whatever surplus remained when the whole work was finished. Thus acquainted with the quantities of paper from time to time supplied, I have obliged the printer (after making a reasonable allowance for proof sheets and accidents in printing and drying) to account for the whole. When I wanted cash for this article of paper, the good Bishop gave me or the maker a draught on your Treasurer.

Since the beginning of last May 2,000 copies octavo of the second volume of the Bible, and an additional 1,000 of the first have been printed, and are now all ready for binding; the last named 1,000 are begun with, and, when bound, will be sent in the packet (which sails every week from hence, wind and weather permitting) or in other small trading vessels, to such ports in the Island as the Revd. Mr. Moore shall be pleased to direct. Freight, or expense for conveying them is pretty easy, and half of it, I believe, born by the printer. The 2,000 of the second volume cannot be bound, till the books of Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom, those fine moral lessons (now under correction and revision in the Island by Mr. Moore and his assistant Mr. Kelly) are printed off; these added to the end of the second volume will make it nearly of equal size with the first.

As the Society are pleased to request the continuance of my superintending care, you will be so good as assure them that, if blessed with life and health, I will cheerfully contribute my best assistance as heretofore, till the whole Manx printing is finished; only they must grant me permission to draw upon the Rev. Dr. Owen, their Treasurer, when cash is wanted. I shall never draw without advising you or the Treasurer, and specifying the particular article for which the draught is made, whether for printing, for binding, or for paper. I superintend the accounts for printing and binding, as well as provide the paper. The work finished, a general account current, of the whole, shall be faithfully transmitted.

The printing of the additional 1,000 of the first volume, and

the diet and lodging of the corrector of the press for about nine months with the printer, are yet undischarged. I am too a little indebted for paper, and a little in advance for some necessaries for the corrector. But if the Society will be pleased to give permission for a draught of £90 or £100 to be shortly made on their Treasurer, in favour of the printer, on account of printing and binding the additional thousand of the 1st volume, they shall have credit with me till I have laid in a fresh supply of paper.

I am much pleased to find the Society have thought of printing in octavo another edition of the New Testament, having often expressed my concern to Mr. Moore, that a much larger impression of that *most essential* part of the Holy Scriptures was not struck off at first. I will endeavour to learn from him, what number, with the 1,000 already printed, will be sufficient to supply each present family with one copy; and then if 1,600 more were at the same time printed, and deposited with the parochial clergy, in numbers proportioned to the extent of each parish, and such numbers registered in some public office, I presume they would answer the demands of the Island for forty years to come, at the increase of forty new families each year. I would humbly recommend the new edition to be printed in *one* volume octavo; the letter and paper the same with the octavo Bible. The volume will not be too large, and a great expense in binding saved. If the Society have determined the affair, I beg to be soon favoured with their orders, that a sufficient quantity of paper may be provided in time. The months of March and April, when all the frost is over, are the best seasons of the year for making it.

I understand from Mr. Moore, that the late worthy Bishop has drawn up and got translated by one of the younger clergy, an exposition of the Church Catechism; the translation, I am told, is poor and will require much correction. The Bishop, no doubt, intended it to be printed in Manx for the benefit of his flock. As they have already Lewis's Catechism, the Christian Monitor,¹⁹ and a Catechism of Bishop Wilson's, in Manx, Mr. Moore imagines the Society may deem it unnecessary. If I may be allowed to speak with freedom, I do not think the common people can have too many tracts of that kind put into their hands. An exposition by their much loved Bishop may perhaps be read with greater attention, and do more good, than any other. But this, with everything relative to the Manx printing, is entirely left to the judgement, and must be determined by, the Society.

¹⁹ Printed by Oliver for the S.P.C.K., 1763.

As to the printing in folio the Proper Lessons only for the use of the churches, my sentiments coincide with those of the worthy Society. It would certainly be a mutilated work, and could not answer the proposed end, without printing the whole New Testament along with the Proper Lessons from the Old, because the 2nd Lessons (except on some of the great Festivals and particular Saint Days) are not proper, but vary every year, with the Sunday letter. The first Proper Lessons, and whole New Testament, printed in Manx, on a large character, would be a complete church Bible, for the use of the clergy; as I apprehend they have no service in their churches but on Sundays and Holidays. Whether the late Bishop intended to have the whole New Testament printed, I cannot say; I only know that he was fully resolved on printing in folio the Proper Lessons; for when at his request, near a year ago, I sent him different specimens of large print, he told me his clergy were all for the largest; and when here last August, in his return from Durham, he chose a specimen of paper for the impression, which I gave to the maker, who was to try to make me a sufficient quantity equally good in every respect. The good Bishop, I suppose, was willing to oblige his clergy in providing them with the Lessons in large print, when their sight failed. Should the clergy in the Island be very desirous of such a Bible, the worthy Society may perhaps be willing to gratify them, if they find they can do it without interfering with their other designs. My good friend Mr. Moore (whose continued advice and assistance I must be favoured with in every branch of this great and good work, he has been the life and soul of the whole) will easily learn the sentiments of his brethren on this head.

The Society no doubt are acquainted, that forty Bibles for the use of the churches, in quarto, were carried on and printed with the octavo Bible, by transposing, i.e. adapting the octavo forms of 8 pages to the quarto size. The letter is necessarily the same with the octavo. One, as soon as finished, was bound and sent to the Bishop; the rest are stitched, but not yet bound.²⁰

I name the above for the following reason; Richard Dalton Esqr., Librarian to his Majesty, saw these quarto Bibles last October, when on a visit to this town, his native place, and wished to have one of them to present to his Majesty, and place in the Royal Library. I acquainted the Bishop with this, who, in his answer, dated the 23rd. of November, a very little before his last fatal illness, desired me to do what I pleased in the case. I shall do nothing without the Society's directions.

²⁰ The quarto Bibles, printed from the same setting, but in three instead of two-column form, were not bound until the completion and inclusion of the New Testament in 1775.

I am sorry to find that my desire to give you and the Society a clear idea of all the business transacted here should have drawn out my letter to so great a length; and yet I cannot conclude it without requesting that the Society will permit me, as the late Bishop did, to advance occasionally to the corrector of the press, while here, a little money for his pocket, his laundress, barber, and the expenses of his passage from and to the Island. Mr. Kelly is a very sensible, valuable young man, intended for the ministry in the Island, and absolutely necessary to the carrying on the business of the Manx printing. His agreeable behaviour, strict sobriety, and extraordinary care and diligence under my eye, in his province as corrector, have greatly engaged my esteem, and I do but common justice to his merit, when I say that he truly deserves the Society's notice and regard.

With reverence and esteem for the honourable Society, and fervent prayers for their success, I am, Revd. Sir, their and your most obedient

Humble servant,
Tho. Sewel

Whitehaven
February 10 1774

Dear Sir,

I purposed (but what are human purposes!) to have begun the New Year with cordial wishes for many happy ones to my worthy friend, but it was unluckily begun with a violent cough, painful breast, and great shortness of breath; with all which I have been thus far struggling. Three or four days confinement each week has enabled me to creep out on a Sunday morning, and occasionally to a feverish sick bed. I am now sit down to tell you that (thanks to Heaven) I am a good deal better, tho' not quite free from the above mementoes; long much to hear, that you have born with tolerable health the severe weather we have had ever since Christmas Day.

Apprehensive the enclosed may have been wanted, sorry I am to find it has laid by me so long; want of memory is a great misfortune . . . What success with your new Diocesan, and shall we have his countenance? I fear not, for if report says true, he has laid it down as a rule of conduct to look coldly on his worthy predecessor's friends. If, as I trust, you want not his countenance in your personal and private capacity, I am sure you want it not in the great work wherein you have been so long and so heartily engaged, and which without the continuance of your unwearied labours must be totally given up; and what am I then

to do with the large quantity of paper I have provided? It cannot be returned. The maker has got cash for it and will not refund. Let me desire therefore that you will (whether countenanced or not) proceed in your revision of the Gospels with all possible expedition. I hope to see Mr. Kelly here soon after Easter.

In a letter to the Revd. Mr. Broughton I mentioned the danger of the sea at this season of the year. He recommends from the Society the insurance of the chests from Whitehaven to the Island, if such a thing is practicable in this place. We have no office of that kind, and therefore the Bibles must take their chance. Should a chestful be lost, the Island must want that number. The Secretary likewise tells me that the Society leave the adjustment of matters between them and Ware to my discretion, as they are unacquainted with the late Bishop's contracts with him. I know the price of printing and binding from what the Bishop from time to time paid relative to those articles, but am not quite clear about the freight or conveyance to and from the Island. For this reason, in my letter to the Society last year (you have a copy of it), I supposed that expense was to be divided. You say in your last that Ware is to pay all the freight. I have a notion that the late Bishop agreed to pay some part or other of the expense either to or from the Island, which was the occasion of my supposition to the Society; and it would be no great matter, as the fund is abundantly large, if it were charged with half the expense. However, this is a point which you and Mrs. Ware must settle, as I am not clear in the case.

I have been favoured with a long letter from Mrs. Hildesley. It came the 1st. or 2nd. of this month in answer to one of mine sent her the 31 of last August, wherein I had strongly recommended a house or home of her own, in answer to her complaint of having none, and at the same time intimated that she might, I believe, have one in the Island, if she could bring herself to take it with a certain appurtenance thereunto belonging. The worthy good lady professes a most tender regard for her dear friend Mr. Moore and would be "ready to give him her hand and her heart so far as to value and respect him; that is due to such a worthy good man, but to make *one*, she has not yet been able to bring herself to that way of thinking, and they may never have a chance of meeting again in this world, as their lives draw near a dissolution". But why do I trouble you with the good lady's tender declarations at a second, when you have them immediately from the first hand — for she tells me you keep up a cordial correspondence. The following is my reason for naming the valuable lady. The late worthy Bishop generally

left 2 or 3 guineas in my hand ready to purchase for him any necessaries wanted at Bishopscourt. After you left us in August 1772 I had advanced to Mr. Kelly some money and acquainted his Lordship with it before his death, and thence concluded, that it might probably be charged to the Society in his accounts. However, when I found from the Secretary's letter, that the articles advanced to Mr. Kelly had never been inserted in his Lordship's account, and therefore were a debt due to me from the Society, I acquainted Mrs. Hildesley last August that I would pay to her order the balance remaining in my hands £2. 16. 8. At the same [time] I told her that the gold (2 gns. and half) was light, but that I would with pleasure stand to the loss. She has ordered me to remit the money to the Revd. Mr. Wilkes, deducting the loss by the light gold — "favours enough you have bestowed", says she "on me and mine, without an expectation of any loss on your side, but thousands of thanks are due to my very good friends", &c., &c.

The 2 gns. and half went to the Excise Office thro my interest with Mr. Harrison, the manager of the brewery, who gave me in October £2. 7. 4½. The loss thereon deducted from £2. 16. 8 — remainder £2. 11. 6½ to be remitted, if you will be so good as point me out the way. I once determined, out of a sincere regard to the good Bishop and his worthy sister, to bear this loss myself, but when I reflect that I paid 2s. 6 for stamps of the bond first given by Mr. Sheperd to the Bishop when he became his printer, and how many, many shillings I have paid for postage of letters on account of the Manx printing, which, tho often desired by the good Bishop, I never brought into account, and which cannot be now in any wise charged to the Society, I hope it cannot be deemed want of regard to the memory of the deceased, but an act of justice to myself, to charge this loss to his executors.

I have now writ till my breast is past biding, and yet I must tell you that my poor wife has been labouring for near three weeks under a most severe violent cough, which deprives her of rest and has reduced her to great weakness; last night, I bless God, she was rather better. Whether sick or well, you have ever our most cordial wishes for health and happiness. I am, dear Sir,

Yours affectionately,
Tho. Sewell

Pray remember me most kindly to Mr. Kelly, and desire him to accept my wife's best thanks for his obliging present of a bottle of catchup . . .

Whitehaven

April 18th 1774

Dear Sir,

Want of business to furnish out a letter and of ability to scribble a long scrawl about nothing has saved you from the plague of an answer to your favour of Feby. 26. You as well as myself must have had full employ in the way of duty the late season. The additional exercise of lecturing on the Holy Sacrament during Passion Week to the three congregations united in my chapel was rather too much for my painful breast; however, I previously took the prudent precaution of drawing twelve ounces of blood from the veins to guard against the rupture of an artery in the lungs. My wife's recovery too, who had been confined nine weeks by a severe illness, contributed to improve our spirits.

I have two heavy guineas and half to get conveyed to Mr. Wilkes by Mrs. Hildesley's order, and how to get them to him, unless thro' your hands, I know not. Has Mr. Kelly such a sum to pay to Ware for himself or others on account of ordered books and papers? — that would answer my purpose.

What can I say about the freight of the Bibles? Ware knows nothing of the agreement made between his wife and the late worthy Bishop before his day. She says his Lordship was to pay one way, and she the other. Ware paid for what went to Ramsey in the Bishop's time, and as I could not learn that the Bishop had in any account charged Mr. Ware with what came to Douglas and were paid for by Mr. Edward Moore, I supposed the whole carriage both ways was to be paid by them jointly, and mentioned, as you may remember, the supposition to the Society, and do not now choose to have ought further to say or do about it.

I am got into a kind of scrape with the Society through the forgetfulness of Messrs. Kelly and Ware to give me a full account of the paper had of Benson, the maker, during the year 1772. As I had no account of any sent in after the 30th. of September that year, I calculated the Bishop's debt to the paper maker to be about £5, and mentioned that sum to the Society, when in the beginning of last year they desired me to continue my agency. But behold when I applied to the paper maker for his general account for 72 and 73 about two months ago, I find 17 ream more than I dreamt of, sent on Decr. 3rd. 72. I suppose I was at that time confined, and the worthy Bishop's death had made the young men forget to give me an account of it. The debt, instead of £5, was by this means £16. I have had Ware's

Day Book examined, and only 9 ream in Decr. noticed there; got Mr. Ware junior to write to Mr. Kelly for his account, which I find tallies with that of the paper maker. This omission has vexed me, as I shall have this tale to tell to the Society (I will not pay it out of my own pocket), who will perhaps think we are not the most trusty careful agents.

I have not yet acknowledged the good lady's obliging favour — could wish before I do it, to have not only this cash paid, but likewise to see Mr. Kelly here, that I might gratify her anxious wishes to know what has been done, and what is going forward relative to the Manx impressions.

You have mentioned in your note to Ware the binding of 4 or 5 Bibles elegantly to be presented to the Society and some of your friends in the Island. You may remember it was agreed that the copies for the Society's and the Royal Library were to be sent in sheets in the quarto size, but not till the New Testament was added to it in that size, that the whole Scriptures might be comprized in one volume. You must therefore specify whether you would have the quarto or octavo Bibles bound and neatly decorated for presents, and what number . . .

We long much to see Mr. Kelly to set the press agoing. The last summer was totally lost, to my great mortification. Pray send him to us by the return of the packet. If the correction and revision is finished a copy for the press may at leisure hours be completed here.

My wife joins me in every cordial wish for your health and happiness. I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate humble servant,

Tho. Sewell

Your Lama's countenance, I hope, gradually brightens. He will not surely continue to discourage what his brethren of the Society have so much at heart. Has he no bad counsellors about him? I have heard strange accounts of Christian,²¹ on whom our late dear and worthy friend bestowed uncommon favours.

Copy of a letter from the S.P.C.K. to the Rev. Mr. Sewell. Revd. Sir,

I have now the pleasure to acquaint you that the Society have come to a resolution to print the Manks translation of Bp. Wilson's book on the Sacrament, and for that effect have agreed to purchase the MS. and to request Mr. Moore to revise it. As for the number which will be wanted, I have orders to write to the Bishop and request his sentiments, and those of his clergy

²¹ Probably the Rev. Thomas Christian, vicar of Marown, who is best known for his translation of selections from "Paradise Lost" into Manx.

through him; (we are very much obliged to you for your hint on that subject) and likewise whether it is judged by them *at all expedient* to print the Manks with the English.²² The Board have likewise ordered me to acquaint you that they heartily join with you in thinking it right to allow Mr. Kelly his expenses for diet and lodging while he continues to be employed in the work, and that they should esteem it a favour to have your private sentiments whether (as you hint that another edition of the Common Prayer is much wanted) a duodecimo size would not do for the younger people, by which means the larger impression might be reserved for older eyes. The Society account themselves very much indebted to you for the great attention you have for so long a time bestowed on the Manks impression, and wish it may please God to continue to you the enjoyment of life and health for the furtherance of their charitable designs towards the inhabitants of the Island.

They are likewise much obliged to you for rectifying the errors in the printer's account, on which side soever they have happened to lie, and will trouble you when it is perfectly convenient to send them up two copies of the Manks Scriptures in quarto.

I am, Rev. Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

John Moore, for

Thomas Broughton, Secy.

P.S. Your bill in favour of the printer has been accepted.

Hatton Garden, 19th. October, 1775.

(Note in Thomas Sewell's hand)

Mr. Sewell presents his most cordial compliments to his good friend Mr. Moore, sends him the enclosed letter and copy from the Society, and begs he will excuse this short scrawl, as Mr. Sewell has not time to scribble more. Octr. 27 1775.

Will be glad of a line.

Whitehaven

Augst. 11 1777

Dear Sir,

Much have I wished for the manual ability to convey the dictates of a grateful heart for your friendly concern during my late most dangerous illness, and the pleasure you expressed

²² *A short and plain instruction for the better understanding of the Lord's Supper.* This was printed by Ware, and published in 1777. The text was, in fact, printed in English and Manx in parallel.

in your letters to the Wares for my recovery. With a constitution shattered, with three ruptured arteries, five or six violent fevers, and coughs without number, I have through the all sufficient power and mercy of God, surmounted a dreadful fever of 29 days continuance, attended the last 21 days with a high delirium. Three hours quiet composed sleep brought the fever to a crisis and happily restored my senses. Considering the amazing weakness to which I was reduced, my strength, thro' Heaven's blessing is gradually, yet amazingly recruiting for my years, and I hope the nerves in time will be tolerably braced, and enable me to acknowledge the kind gratulations of my distant friends.

You have, I suppose, learned from the Wares my intercourse with the Society about a gratuity for my Manks labours, as I had never dropped the least hint of any such expectation. I *never had* any such, having engaged in the work with no other view but a desire to do good and oblige my friend, your late most worthy Bishop. However, unwilling to offend the Society by too refined a delicacy in refusing absolutely any pecuniary gratuity, I offered to accept anything in the book way, that might be a permanent testimony of their approbation, and named the poor unhappy Dr. Dodd's Bible, if that was not thought too expensive a compliment. They sent me Dodd, the late Bishop Pearce's Annotations, and Dr. Horne on the Psalms, all superbly bound, and offered any other I pleased to name. I hope they have made you a genteel gratuity, tho' no way adequate to your extraordinary labours — but what signify any of our labours? Your strange Diocesan will defeat and frustrate them all. I have complained heavily to the Society of his shameful disregard and unconcern about the Manks Scriptures, in giving no orders for a whole year, either to you, Mr. Crellin, or some other clergyman, to send for the Bibles and Testaments here; which are indeed a great inconvenience to the Wares, and lumber up all their bed chambers, and are in danger of suffering from mice &c. But the right Revd. has not, I am assured, vouchsafed to have the box opened and the quartos distributed amongst you, which were directed last year to himself at Peele.

The Society has promised to make the Wares a reasonable recompense for their store rooms. Pray, is the Bishop yet arrived amongst you, or is he waiting to escort the Duke of Athol? You have been long without overseer or ruler, doing each what seemed right in his own eyes — a happy clergy! Who is to be Vicar-General? Not, I hope, the *ungrateful Christian*. Have you heard lately from Mrs. Hildesley? She has our sincere wishes for health, as likewise have you, and we promise ourselves a favourable account of you both. What accounts have you of Mr. Kelly? If

he intends to offer himself for priest's orders at Rose the 31 of this month, he should have a testimonium signed here for the two years previous to his leaving us the 1st. of last September, and one from the Principal of his flock from that time, together with a title from the same, both which papers ought to be countersigned by the chief magistrate of Air with the seal of his office, testifying that the said Principals are persons worthy of credit. The testimonium signed here will, I believe, pass at Rose, as the Bishop has some knowledge of us and will not require it to be countersigned or authenticated by our Bishop of Chester, who knows none of us . . .

My wife, who was thrown down the 1st. of March in a violent inflammatory fever, happily thro' God's blessing recovered it, and has been hitherto enabled to nurse up her feeble husband. She joins in best wishes for your health and happiness with, my dear friend,

Your affectionate humble servant
Tho. Sewell

Whitehaven

Sepr. 6th. 1777

Dear Sir,

Very unwilling I am to let your agreeable niece return without my thankful acknowledgments for your obliging favour, if the hand will vouchsafe to execute the dictates of the heart, but it often refuses to handle a pen; at present it is in tolerable humour.

I greatly lament your slavish veneration for, let me without offence say, a strange, if not unworthy Bishop. It has deprived my wife and me of a real pleasure which we may not now very probably live to enjoy — another year is looking further forward than perhaps is reasonable and right for such infirm mortals as we are. If business or health called a clergyman here to your Isle, or even to Ireland, he would provide for the care of his flock and go on board without one thought of humbly supplicating his Diocesan for leave of absence; and if you had put your intentions in practice after waiting a reasonable time for an answer, no Bishop in the world could have had the least pretence to find fault, surely not yours in his present situation. Have you not a law, that makes an absence from duty beyond a limited time, a forfeiture of half the income both in ecclesiastical and civil promotions? The late worthy Bishop was, I remember, uneasy on that score when once detained by the winds here a fortnight beyond his time. The law is now, I suppose, repealed, or your Diocesan would have been with you long ere this. Like

a good man, you make all the apology for him that his case will admit of. Tho' I have a due veneration for dignitaries, yet if dignitaries show themselves totally regardless of duty, and sink themselves below the level of us ordinary mortals, nor you, nor I, can praise or esteem them . . .

Mr. Kelly, who is here, came off with flying colours from Rose; his Scotch method of preaching was new there; I blame him as an enemy to himself for ever beginning in that style — two sermons writ and got off every week can allow no time for any tolerable correctness of composition. He read prayers yesterday extremely well, only too slow in his emphasis, tho' very proper yet rather too laboured. I have named it to him; I shall have the pleasure of hearing him in the pulpit tomorrow.

I thank you for your friendly notice of me to the Society. I bless God I want none of their cash, and therefore put in caveat against it, and named Dodd; but I think the £50 to you is a mere trifle, after it had been so often repeated that you were the life and soul of the work; they should never have thought of less than 100, and even that no way adequate to your labours. But I trust your circumstances in life are, like my own, easy to a contented mind looking and longing for infinitely more valuable treasures than this world has to give.

I have told the Society that I purposed (with their permission) to have 24 of the quarto Prayer Books immediately bound for the use of your churches, if they could manage the Bishop and get his orders for their regular and speedy distribution. Had he vouchsafed to have taken this town in his way to the Island, I should have taken the liberty to have spoken very freely about the Manks Bibles &c. His conduct has been the very reverse of what he gave me to expect from his declarations when here. Whatever his opinion of the undertaking may be, he ought in duty to have given orders for their reception and dispersion in the Island. But I will leave this disagreeable subject . . .

My wife joins me in every cordial wish for your health and happiness, with, dear Sir,

Your very affectionate

Tho. Sewell

P.S. Sept. 7 Sunday eveng.

I have heard Mr. Kelly with great pleasure. He writes himself, if time permits him not to wait on you.

At this point the correspondence ends: if there were other letters they have not survived, nor is it known

whether Sewell's hope of receiving a visit from his friend was realised. He died in December 1780.

However, since the foregoing article went to press, two references have come to light which serve to augment the scanty biographical information on Thomas Sewell.²³ The first is to the correspondence of the Fothergill family of Lockholme Hall, published in *The Fothergills of Ravenstonedale* (Heinemann, 1905). There, Richard Fothergill, writing in 1749 from Wharton Hall to his brother Henry, rector of Cheriton Bishop in Devonshire, mentions a meeting in Whitehaven with "your old friend and schoolfellow, Mr Sewel." As Henry went to Appleby school, it seems that Thomas Sewell must also have done so. Richard recounts amusingly how Mr Sewell introduced him with some caution to his wife "a very genteel, majestic, elderly sort of gentlewoman", evidently of an intellectual turn, and only when the guest's literary perceptions had received the lady's approbation did his host "condescend to treat me on a level with himself." He continues — "But not to dwell too much on the weak side of this really worthy couple, they are, I believe, in the highest reputation for piety and charity in their own parish. He is reckoned there one of the finest preachers of the age, and what they spare, after living very handsomely, tho' rather privately than otherwise, out of an income of £200 a year, is mostly applied to the relief of the poor, which in that neighbourhood are very numerous."

This verdict, given within four years of his coming to Holy Trinity, is upheld by that of the second reference, given thirty-two years later in the *Cumberland Pacquet* of the 5 December 1780, which spoke of Thomas Sewell these concluding words:

"Wednesday evening, at his house in Howgill Street, the Rev. Mr Sewell in the 69th year of his age, 36 years minister of Trinity Chapel in this town, which function he exercised in

²³ For these the author is indebted to Mr C. Roy Hudleston, and to Mr Daniel Hay, F.R.S.A., A.L.A., Borough Librarian of Whitehaven.

the most conscientious and exemplary manner. Not content with performing the public offices of his station with that firmness and dignity which are the result of sound judgement and intuitive piety, he made the discharge of all its relative duties the business of his private life and conversation. These made languor smile, and seemed to support a weak constitution for a series of years, nor was their divine influence on the mind less felt at the close of life; his departure from it appearing like an agreeable visit to that Almighty Power with whom he was holding devout converse a few minutes before the certain symptoms of an approaching dissolution opened the passage to that eternity for which he had been so long and so assiduously preparing himself and others. Thus ended a life, the best eulogiums on which are written in indelible characters on the hearts of numbers whose situation rendered them the objects of his acquaintance, his friendship, or his charity. On Saturday his remains were interred with suitable solemnity at the Trinity Church, a great concourse of people attending. The pall was supported by the following gentlemen, viz. Charles Lutwidge, Esq., John Dixon, Esq., Mr Isaac Littledale, Mr John Ponsonby, Mr Beck, Mr Shaw, and Mr Bowman. An excellent sermon was preached by the Rev. Hudleston."