Antiquarian, anti-dissenting polemicist or pioneering religious sociologist? To do justice to all of these aspects of the Reverend Abraham Hume would be impossible; to deal adequately with even one presents a formidable task. Hume was not only an exceedingly conscientious parish minister in one of the worst parishes in the country, but also an antiquarian of some note, being a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and associated with various learned societies. He was also a joint founder, with Joseph Mayer and H. C. Pidgeon, of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. As a champion of the established church, he became the scourge of the Nonconformists, and his works initiated a vigorous debate concerning the inherent disadvantages of the voluntary system and the extent of Nonconformist migration in industrial cities. His education and career indicate the eclectic nature of his work and interests. He was born in County Down in 1814 into a Presbyterian family that had emigrated from Scotland to Ireland, and was educated at the Royal Belfast College, Glasgow University, where he read mathematics, and Trinity College, Dublin. He taught mathematics in Belfast for four years before moving to Liverpool in 1843, when he was ordained deacon, and
continued to teach while working as an unpaid curate attached to St Augustine’s church. In 1847 he was appointed vicar of the new district of Vauxhall. The combination of being Irish and a non-Oxbridge mathematics graduate was unusual amongst contemporary clergy, and meant that he was always something of a non-establishment figure. During Hume’s lifetime his activities led to the writing of over a hundred books and pamphlets, ranging over antiquarian, mathematical, and religious subjects.¹

We are not concerned here, however, with Hume the antiquarian, or as the critic of Dissent, but with the religious and pastoral concerns which arose from nearly forty years of parish work. Hume’s religious publications show little regard for theological niceties, displaying instead more practical concerns. The emphasis is on pastoral care and the cure of souls rather than theological reflection. From the outset of his ministry his greatest concern was for the welfare of the masses of poor who were crowded into his district but not, unfortunately, into his church. His life’s work became to reclaim them from their state of ‘spiritual destitution’. To this end he worked energetically and continually until his death in 1884 to publicize not only the conditions in which the poor lived but also the problems which faced the established church and which prevented her from ministering to the poor as he thought she should. Hume’s vociferous concern for the social and spiritual conditions which prevailed in Liverpool was not unique; neither was his plan of attack entirely original. It followed a pattern which is recognizable in other cities at that time: the procurement of church reform Acts in order to subdivide unmanageably large parishes, followed by organized visiting schemes, with or without lay involvement. This was the process which W. F. Hook initiated in Leeds, for instance, although similar action was taken elsewhere.²

¹ A large part was on Hume’s antiquarian and mathematical interests, but many appear not to have survived. The best collection is in the William Brown Library (Liverpool City Library), with a smaller number in Liverpool University Library Special Collections.
established in the diocese of Chester by J. B. Sumner, who was bishop between 1828 and 1848. Sumner showed great concern with the social conditions prevailing in the industrial areas of his diocese and had advocated organized visiting schemes to homes and schools, making use of lay help. His active concern in visiting and pastoral aid societies had resulted in a considerable improvement in the standard of pastoral oversight in the diocese. Hume’s work was more unusual in his use of statistics in order to prove scientifically (as he thought) not only the church’s failure to attract the poor but also the desperate physical conditions in which they lived. It is in the same interaction between religious sociology and home missionary activities that Hume’s greatest significance lies, making him ‘outstanding as an original investigator in applying statistics to religious and ecclesiastical phenomena’. Hume’s statistical enquiries were directed partly at social conditions but primarily at the state of religion, and especially of the Anglican church, in Liverpool. One of his first actions in 1847 was to carry out a survey of his new district, seeking both religious and social information: the number of families, accommodation, employment, denominational allegiance and church attendance. His imagination was fired by the national religious census of 1851, although he was critical of certain aspects of Horace Mann’s methodology. His doubts led him to publish his own analysis of the results, with the addition of some new figures, but he was certain enough of the value of such an

6 The results were published in 1848 and again in 1850 in A. Hume, *Missions at home, or a clergyman’s account of a portion of the town of Liverpool* (London, 1850).
7 A. Hume, *Remarks on the census of religious worship for England and Wales, with suggestions for an improved census for 1861 and a map illustrating the religious condition of the country* (London, 1860). See also A. Hume, *Ecclesiastical census of the city and suburbs of Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1882), pp. 4–6, for a further critique of Mann’s figures.
undertaking to press for a repetition the following decade. To his profound disappointment, however, the delegation which urged the government to include a question about religious belief in the 1861 census, of which Hume was a member, was unsuccessful, and the great experiment was never repeated.

Although thwarted in the national arena, Hume retained a keen interest in this particular aspect of statistical enquiry, publishing an analysis of the results of the Irish census of 1861, where there had been no opposition to the inclusion of questions on religious belief. More importantly, he turned his attention to local religious censuses, a number of which were conducted in addition to the national ecclesiastical census of 1851. As far as Hume was concerned, the real point of the surveys was not to find out who was, but rather who was not attending church. Estimating the number from the somewhat inaccurate attendance figures was (and is) problematic; as a consequence, Hume preferred to direct his own statistical enquiries not towards church attendance but to the question of religious profession—although the method was not without its own problems. The more ambitious and larger-scale surveys took place in the early 1880s, although Hume had undertaken nearly twenty enquiries in about seventeen districts of Liverpool before that time. In 1881 and 1882 three religious censuses were carried out in Liverpool. One, in which Hume was not directly involved, was concerned with church and chapel

8 Hume, Ecclesiastical census of Liverpool, p. 6.
9 A. Hume, Results of the Irish census of 1861, with a special reference to the Church of Ireland (London, 1864).
10 e.g. Nathaniel Caine’s Census of Religious Attendance, published in Liverpool Mercury, 28 Sept. 1855; below.
12 Inglis, ‘Patterns of religious worship’, p. 74, argues that this line of enquiry was advocated by Anglican members of parliament, since a census of religious profession would show the established church to be stronger, while a census of religious attendance tended to show greater support for the Nonconformists.
13 Hume, Ecclesiastical census of Liverpool, p. 8.
Abraham Hume

attendance and was the first of the three organized and published by the Liverpool Daily Post between 1881 and 1902.\textsuperscript{14} The other two were undertaken by Hume himself. In 1881 he proposed that a census of religious profession should be undertaken in the diocese of Liverpool as a collateral to the government census of that year, the chief aim being to provide information for the bishop of the newly created diocese. The results of the survey and Hume’s analysis of the figures were published the following year,\textsuperscript{15} when a second but more limited census of Anglican church attendance in the diocese was organized by Hume.\textsuperscript{16}

Whilst the validity of Hume’s statistical methods and the accuracy of his figures are undoubtedly questionable, he was nevertheless one of the few people in the country attempting to measure religious phenomena by such methods. In other areas, such as the use of maps, he was an innovator. One of his most complex maps was included in Condition of Liverpool, and attempted to delineate the city street by street according to the different grades of pauperism (deserving, destitute, and vicious, for instance), levels of crime, the presence of disease, and where churches or chapels stood. The original apparently covered 20 sq. ft; in the printed version the different areas and streets, although differentiated by colour, are difficult to distinguish.\textsuperscript{17} He also used maps in his arguments with the Nonconformists to show the comparative absence of dissenting churches from the centre of Liverpool.\textsuperscript{18}

Those aspects of Hume’s work show his interest in the collection and description of social and ‘moral’ as well as religious information. Although his concerns perhaps lay more

\textsuperscript{14} Liverpool Daily Post, 3 and 15 Nov. 1881; 22 Oct. 1891; 12 Nov. 1902; Yates, ‘Urban church attendance’ points out that in 1881 religious censuses were conducted in other towns, for instance Hull, Portsmouth, Sheffield and Southampton.


\textsuperscript{16} The results were published in A. Hume, Census of religious worship for the diocese of Liverpool (Liverpool, 1883).

\textsuperscript{17} Pickering, ‘Abraham Hume’, pp. 44–45.

\textsuperscript{18} A. Hume, The Church of England the home missionary to the poor, especially in our large towns (London, 1862), map.
with the souls rather than the bodies of the poor, he was by no means blind to the appalling nature of their physical situation and was well aware of the effects of it on church attendance. He wrote that when he first came to Liverpool as a curate, social conditions in the city were 'peculiarly' hopeless:

The parish touches at one point the leading artery of crime in the town, and is nowhere distant from it more than a few hundred yards; some of the streets were celebrated as scenes of open profligacy; and of the whole population 75 per cent., or three-fourths, belong to the class of unskilled labourers. The numerous changes and depressions in employment give them all a fluctuating character, so that in many cases one's labours are like writing in water. Even when families are permanent the pressure of the times often deprives them of suitable clothing, and occasionally of sufficient food.¹⁹

Living conditions in Liverpool were notorious throughout the nineteenth century, as the number of parliamentary commissions which took that city as an example demonstrates. Attempts had been made from 1837 to improve accommodation and in particular to remove the cellar dwellings, which in that year were estimated to number 7,682, with over 30,000 inhabitants.²⁰ Although a considerable proportion had been abolished by the 1850s, the problem remained; very often, as Hume commented, 'the letter of the law is evaded; and the cellars are used not only for domestic or mechanical operations, but also as sleeping places'.²¹ Other witnesses confirm the unbelievably squalid conditions which reigned in the town. Charles Grove, a 'reliever of spiritual destitution' from Birkenhead, told the 1857–8 House of Lords

¹⁹ [Hume], 'The parochial system and the clerical year', The Times, 11 Jan. 1858, p. 10. His letters were published under the pseudonym 'A Lancashire Incumbent', but Hume is identified as the author in J. C. Morley, Brief memoir of the Rev. Abraham Hume (Liverpool, 1887), p. 7. The D.N.B. commented 'During 1857 and 1858 he [Hume] sent to the 'Times' newspaper summaries of his previous year's work in his parish. These attracted much attention, and had the effect of modifying public opinion on the alleged idleness of the clergy.'

²⁰ Select Committee on the deficiency of spiritual instruction and places of divine worship in the metropolis and populous districts in England and Wales, P.P. 1857–8, IX, p. 455; A. Hume, Condition of Liverpool, religious and social; including notices of the state of education, morals, pauperism, and crime (Liverpool, 1858), p. 27.

²¹ Hume, Condition of Liverpool, p. 27.
Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction that more than half the population of the St James's district lived in densely populated courts and alleys, and that he doubted whether any part of Liverpool contained more evil in so small a space. A number of the priests completing their returns for the ecclesiastical census in 1851 also tried to draw attention to the quality of life which the populations of their districts endured. The incumbent of St Alban's church, for instance, wrote that he had witnessed two hundred deaths amongst the sick whom he had visited in the previous five years. In 1847 the average life expectancy in Liverpool was only 20 years 5 months. Hume himself was acutely aware of social conditions locally and considered Liverpool to be afflicted with a combination of difficulties without parallel in England. The most pressing he believed to be pauperism (naturally), intemperance, and crime and immorality; there was a clear link in his mind between those problems and non-attendance at church. He attached great importance to the prevalence of 'intemperance', in which he was supported by others. Charles Grove, for instance, said that alcoholism in the St James's district was so widespread that after each weekend the whole district was consigned to the care of local policemen, since the men received their wages on Saturday and remained drunk until Monday morning. Like many others, Hume did not consider it altogether surprising that the poor turned to drink; their houses had few of the characteristics of a home, and they consequently sought comfort and companionship beyond the limits of their families. It was clearly the duty 'of the advocates of morality and order to promote temperance by destroying the inducements to intoxication, as well as by mere abstract argument.

Physical destitution was combined with spiritual destitution. Few of the churches in Liverpool attracted large attendances from the poor, although there were some notable exceptions, such as St John's church, which had been built from a parish rate with a view principally to the needs of the poor. The main

22 Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction, P.P. 1857–8, IX, p. 466. See also Walker, 'Religious changes in Liverpool', pp. 199–200.
24 Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction, P.P. 1857–8, IX, p. 466.
25 Hume, Condition of Liverpool, p. 29.
body of the church contained free seats, with an additional paying gallery, and, as the minister William Falloon noted in completing his return for the 1851 religious census, it was 'immensely crowded by the poor—and all the aisles are filled with people—in the ordinary course of services as many as two thousand persons have been numbered'.

Archdeacon John Jones's evidence to the Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction also pointed to St John's as the best example of how churches should be run in Liverpool:

> the poor like that church, and the whole body of the church belongs to them, and they go to it, and they do not feel at all degraded; they are all on a level; and I always find that the poor, as I will say the working classes, all like to congregate together; and they do not like to be put in a corner, nor to be mixed up with those who are better dressed, and they keep each other in countenance by coming in masses into the church.

St Alban's church, Limekiln Lane, held similar attractions for the poor. The incumbent, J. A. Power, remarked on his 1851 ecclesiastical census return that 'this church has been very well attended by the poor who occupy the floor of the building in which all the seats (700) are free. The galleries contain pews of which a large number has been let to inhabitants and neighbours disposed to attend the services'. Unfortunately, the excellence of arrangements at St John's and St Alban's only serves to highlight the appalling condition of the other Anglican churches within Liverpool parish. St Matthew's, Scotland Road, was singled out by the Select Committee as a particularly bad case. Others were St Anne's, Richmond, and St Barnabas's district church, the latter being 'one of the poorest and most densely-populated in Liverpool, and there is no doubt that it will go on increasing in poverty as in population; the church is so badly situated [close to the docks] that the more respectable class of people will not take sittings'.

27 Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction, P.P. 1857–8, IX, p. 456.
28 Ecclesiastical Census, 1851.
29 Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction, P.P. 1857–8, IX, pp. 451, 454.
30 Ibid., p. 452.
It is not surprising, in view of this situation, that Hume could write: ‘We are approaching a crisis, therefore, in Church matters—indeed it is already upon us—which our present arrangements are entirely unfitted to deal with’. Everyone concerned agreed with this statement, but few agreed on the nature and causes of the crisis or on any practical solutions to the problem. Attention tended to be focused upon church accommodation, the rented pew system, and church attendance, the assumption apparently being that if more churches were provided and more seats freed, then the attendance of the poor would correct itself of its own accord. The 1857–8 Select Committee, for instance, asked witnesses over and over again about the numbers of churches, the proportions of free seats to appropriated seats, and levels of attendance. In general, however, Hume paid little attention to contemporary debate over those concerns, believing that they obscured the real issue, which was that, regardless of accommodation or the number of free sittings, the majority of the poor simply did not want to come to church. Neither did he attribute the problem entirely to clerical idleness (a common public complaint), although he freely admitted the existence of the clerical malaise which difficult working conditions engendered. When Hume asked himself the question which defeated so many of his contemporaries, he found the immediate answer in prevailing social conditions, together with the financial and administrative difficulties of the parochial system. It was not the parochial system itself that Hume criticized, which he believed could work well in intellectual, spiritual, and moral matters, but rather the financial and administrative flaws which meant that it often worked very ineffectively.

Although Hume perceived the essence of the problem in Liverpool to be the pastoral failure of the clergy, he nevertheless recognized that the question of church income in general and of endowments in particular contributed to their difficulties. Few of the Liverpool churches were able to generate sufficient income from their endowments; many, indeed, were almost entirely dependent on pew rents and fees (usually pitifully

31 Hume, *Condition of Liverpool*, p. 32.
Lucy E. Bosworth

small)\textsuperscript{33} for their total income, including the minister’s stipend and church expenses. A few fortunate churches received a grant from Liverpool corporation or the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, but they were the exception rather than the rule. Four of the churches in the parish of Liverpool, including Hume’s own church of All Souls’ in the district of Vauxhall, had been established following Peel’s New Parishes Act of 1843, which had allowed new districts to be created out of existing ones. In the case of Liverpool, a Church Building Society had been formed to build churches in the new districts which Peel’s Act had created.\textsuperscript{34} Although in theory they should have been endowed through the Ecclesiastical Commissioners,\textsuperscript{35} little seems to have reached the Liverpool ‘Peel’ districts. Hume’s district of Vauxhall, for instance, received half its annual income (\textpounds{}250) from the parish of Liverpool, while relying on pew rents for the other half. Similarly, although All Saints’ new parish church received \textpounds{}150 per annum from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, its only other sources of income were pew rents and the minister’s fees. The natural consequence was that the churches were obliged to let their pews and minimize the number of free sittings, even though they might wish to do otherwise. Nor were the deficiencies met by church rates, which should have been levied locally for the maintenance and repair of church buildings. Unfortunately this was not the case, since in common with other cities the collection of church rates in Liverpool had ceased in 1854, as Hume informed a House of Lords Select Committee enquiring into the matter in 1859, and no attempt had been made to revive it.\textsuperscript{36} The parish churches were supported by a voluntary rate, but in Liverpool that meant only the two churches of St Peter and St Nicholas, and raised a mere \textpounds{}800 per annum.\textsuperscript{37} The only other option (apart from


\textsuperscript{34} A. Hume, \textit{Church extension in Liverpool: remarks on the census of Liverpool for 1861} (Liverpool, 1861), p. 35.

\textsuperscript{35} Chadwick, \textit{Victorian Church}, I, p. 223.

\textsuperscript{36} Select Committee on the operation of the law and practice respecting assessment and levy of church rates, P.P. 1859 (Sess. 2), X, p. 128.

\textsuperscript{37} The other churches in the parish had been built under Act of Parliament and did not have the power to levy church rates: Hume, \textit{Condition of Liverpool}, pp. 11–12.
renting out pews, which Hume considered to be a moral as well as a practical impossibility in districts as poor as his own) was to ask for subscriptions towards church maintenance; but churches in poorer districts naturally raised very little income in this manner. Hume, for instance, stated that he had ‘only received from church collections £18 and about eight guineas in private subscriptions; the rest I was obliged to pay myself’. He saw clearly that inadequate provision for church expenses, coupled with a clergyman who was inadequately paid (or not paid at all in some cases), meant that ministers could not fulfil even their most basic duties, let alone engage in the kind of pastoral care that he was urging. Most Anglican clergy in Liverpool were of the same opinion. Here again we encounter Hume’s pastoral concerns: endowments were important not simply to boost clerical living standards but because a lack of them hindered the ‘home missionary’ in his task of reclaiming the heathen masses of the poor.

The problem of endowments was further compounded by the desertion of the richer classes from the city centre to the outskirts of Liverpool, a process which was almost complete by the 1850s. The Nonconformist churches, being organized on a voluntary basis, had of necessity followed the congregations which could support them, and so had also migrated away from the centre. For that reason Hume was highly critical of what he saw as the ‘Insufficiency of the Voluntary System’, and his attempts to prove statistically the comparative absence of dissenting chapels from the poorer areas of large cities provoked a fierce response from the Nonconformists. He argued that the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, since they were organized on a parochial basis, had no such option and consequently found themselves left with a section of the population to which they were ill-equipped to minister. The

38 Select Committee on Church Rates, P.P. 1859 (Sess. 2), V, p. 133.
39 Before giving evidence to the Select Committee, Archdeacon Jones had sent out articles of enquiry to his clergy. Out of forty-four returns, thirty-three stated that endowments were needed far more urgently than extra church accommodation: Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction, P.P. 1857–8, IX, pp. 612–613.
40 The title of a lecture which he delivered in Manchester on 20 December 1860.
majority of churches, being dependent on pew rents for their expenses, found that their income decreased as the poverty of their districts increased. In many cases payment was made by a ground-rent reserved on the pews, which went to the minister, with the owners often sub-letting the pews in the process. This worked well until the rich moved away from the church, when the opportunities for evading payment became numerous. In such a situation, the minister lost part of his income, but was legally unable to extinguish the ground-rent and either let the pews to someone who would make the payments or convert them to free sittings. The result was that the pews were not free, but neither were they occupied. In addition, in those areas where the rich did remain they refused to take sittings in churches which were attended by the poor, so that ‘just in proportion as a church is missionary in its character, and in proportion to the strength of its claims on the community, those claims are neglected, and its wants unsupplied’.

All these factors combined to create what was, according to Hume, the fundamental problem: the pastoral failure of the church’s ministers. That this failure had been, in Hume’s eyes, on a spectacular scale, was not always the fault of the Liverpool incumbents, who worked under the most difficult of conditions in a town where ‘there is no artificial stimulant whatever, but there is the presence of discouragements such as few of the clergy know’. Curates, in particular, were overworked and underpaid: Hume had worked as a curate without a stipend in Liverpool for four years before being appointed to the district of Vauxhall. Some districts, particularly the newer ones, did not even possess a church building. Hume himself was appointed vicar of the new parish of Vauxhall in 1847, but had to wait for the consecration of his church until 1856. During those nine years

41 In particular from Herbert S. Skeats of the Non-conformist. For Hume’s reply: The Church of England the home missionary to the poor, esp. introduction and map showing sites of fifty deserted chapels in Liverpool. See also A. Hume, The Church of England the best home missionary (part of Birmingham Church of England Defence Association, Defence not defiance) (London, [1862]), p. 18, note at end.
42 Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction, P.P. 1857–8, IX, p. 453.
43 Hume, Condition of Liverpool, p. 31.
44 The Times, 11 Jan. 1858, p. 10.
years he held services in a school room, the only place of worship in the district connected with the established church, and the licence of which was revocable at the pleasure of the bishop. It was by no means an exceptional situation, as Charles Grove testified: ‘As there is no large room in the [St James’s] district obtainable to assemble the people for public worship, Mr. Postance preaches to them in the open air on Sundays; and he showed me three different places where he stands and addresses them, after a short prayer and reading a chapter from the Bible. Some months ago, while preaching, he was pelted with stones, and driven away. The only room he has hitherto obtained for a week-day cottage lecture is where not more than about 25 can stand, and so close, that a gentleman who was lecturing for him fainted from the oppressive atmosphere’. 46 Anglican priests, faced with appalling social and ecclesiastical conditions, either struggled on heroically, or despaired and limited themselves to the minimum of duties. Hume’s own predecessor in office, ‘having inspected the locality, resigned his connexion with it, without making a single effort’. 47

Hume was no mere theorist; he wanted action, and the solutions which he put forward were characteristically practical. While urging the clergy to redouble their pastoral efforts, he also realized that for many individuals, however conscientious, the difficulties inherent in the ecclesiastical structure were virtually insuperable. His proposals had little point if both existing and new churches were not provided with a sufficient and assured income; so the financial difficulties of the clergy had to be relieved before Hume’s pastoral objectives could even begin to be achieved. Realizing that his ideal of each church being endowed with a small sum, along the lines of Peel’s scheme, was unlikely to be attained, Hume advocated instead the setting up of an endowment fund for ministers, to be raised by annual subscriptions from individual members of congregations. It would initially cover the borough of Liverpool and its environs, but he saw no reason why it should not eventually become a national fund. He pointed to several examples of such methods, the Scottish ‘Sustentation Fund’, for

46 Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction, P.P. 1857–8, IX, p. 466.
47 The Times, 11 Jan. 1858, p. 10.
instance, the London City Mission, and a Methodist organization within Liverpool itself. Such a fund would be in addition to the funds already raised by each church, and so should more than adequately provide for ministers’ stipends and church expenses. Interestingly, Hume did not advocate fixed stipends for ministers, favouring instead a version of payment by results. As he told the 1857–8 Select Committee, ‘It is not found that those who are paid by fixed salaries are always the most efficient’, and incumbents working in poorer districts might be tempted to give up battling against difficult conditions if they were secure in the knowledge that their salary would continue to be paid. 48 To prevent ministers from falling off in this way, Hume wanted to see the establishment of a Liverpool Church Aid Society, a support group which would help ministers in their home missionary work and help ‘the strong congregations within the borough to assist the weak, and to keep constantly before the public the wants of the whole town’. 49 Such a society would not only help individual ministers, but alleviate the isolation from which many Liverpool churches suffered. The society should be large and capable of expansion according to future requirements. Again he believed that such a body could eventually become a national society.

Not only the financial but also the administrative problems of the parish needed to be addressed. For that reason Hume maintained that a radical reorganization of the parish of Liverpool was urgently needed, partly because it would eliminate some of Liverpool’s structural anomalies but primarily because it would enable clergy to act more effectively as home missionaries. Initially he proposed that a church reform Act should be secured for Liverpool, so that some at least of the city’s peculiarities could be amended. The position of the corporation churches, for instance, was precarious: although in theory maintained by the corporation of Liverpool, in practice payments tended to be somewhat erratic. An Act of Parliament would give the necessary authority for an endowment to be raised, thus making permanent provision for the corporation churches. 50 It could also be used to extinguish

48 Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction, P.P. 1857–8, IX, pp. 462–463.
49 Ibid., p. 462.
50 A. Hume, State and prospects of the church in Liverpool (Liverpool, 1869), pp. 43–44.
those ground-rents which no longer provided any income, by commuting the payments to fixed endowments.

The formation of a diocese of Liverpool was, in Hume’s opinion, crucial to church reform in the city. Within the existing diocese of Chester, Liverpool clergy were not only personally isolated from their bishop, but lacked an office capable of co-ordinating the kind of projects which Hume was advocating. The formation of a separate diocese and the consequent conversion of districts into parishes would also pave the way for a further proposal: that of splitting up the larger and more unmanageable districts into smaller units. Much could be achieved, Hume thought, by simply altering the boundaries of districts so as to redistribute the population. He calculated, for instance, that the incumbent of St Philip’s district was responsible for 590 people, while those of St Mark’s and St Catherine’s for 10,065 and 9,679 respectively. Similarly, in the Toxteth area St Thomas’s-in-the-Fields was responsible for 20,362 souls, compared to the adjoining districts of St Matthew’s (5,336) and Holy Trinity (4,112). The larger populations were, he felt, clearly unacceptable, and he suggested that the nearer district populations could be kept to the Liverpool average (about 8,500), the better. In addition to shifting district boundaries, Hume advocated the subdivision of districts in line with action being pursued in other cities, most notably by Hook in Leeds.

It was not, however, only that the size of districts was unmanageable, but that existing churches were in general too large, as well as too costly. Hume argued, and tried to demonstrate statistically, that churches were attended by the population of only a limited area, so that increasing the size of a church did not increase its congregation. An average size of 850 sittings would be ideal, although he argued, perhaps more

51 An object achieved within Hume’s lifetime, and in which he took an extensive part, acting as secretary of the Liverpool Bishopric Committee 1873–80, and designing the episcopal seal of the new see.
52 Hume, Church extension in Liverpool, p. 30; Condition of Liverpool, pp. 16–18; Ecclesiastical census of Liverpool, p. 21.
53 Hume, State and prospects, p. 32.
55 Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction, P.P. 1857–8, IX, p. 462.
realistically, that the thirty-three largest Anglican churches in Liverpool should be reduced in size to a thousand seats each. But while the adjustment of such inequalities would undoubtedly relieve many clergy, and could be achieved with comparative ease, this would not be enough in itself to provide for the spiritual needs of the poor. Even with the district boundaries adjusted and the church-going population redistributed, new churches were still urgently needed. But how were they to be built and paid for? A permanent church building society, Hume suggested, was the answer, along the lines of the temporary society which had been formed to build churches in the Peel parishes in the 1840s, but on a larger scale and with more varied objects. Similar societies, maintained by subscriptions and donations, had existed in Liverpool, but although their practical achievements had been substantial, they had been terminated after fixed periods. All that was needed was for the principles on which they were based to be made permanent.\(^56\)

The difficulties created by the lack of endowments and consequent reliance on pew rents were not the essence of the problem, whatever some of Hume’s contemporaries might have thought. They were, however, a problem in that they severely obstructed the work of conscientious pastors and encouraged the less persistent to abandon their efforts through sheer frustration. As Hume noted, home visitations were of little effect, since both parties knew that the church was in practice inaccessible to the poor.\(^57\) Once, however, the crucial problems of church accommodation and income had been addressed, he believed that many of the difficulties facing the churches in Liverpool would solve themselves. The establishment of endowments would, Hume reasoned, free pews as a matter of course; and if the rich did leave the churches because of large congregations of the poor it would not present a problem, since the churches would no longer be reliant on rents from the richer members of their congregations. With a reduction in the size of their districts and congregations, and freed from worry about their income, clergy would be able to concentrate on

\(^56\) Hume, *State and prospects*, p. 43.

\(^57\) Hume, *Condition of Liverpool*, p. 33.
their proper task, which was the pastoral care of their districts. The monumental task of financial and administrative reform was, therefore, no more than a necessary preliminary to the fundamental objective of spiritual renewal amongst the clergy and laity.

Hume’s conception of the church focused on two characteristics: the ‘ministerial’ and the ‘missionary’. In her ministerial role the church cared for those who were already attenders and accepted her doctrines. In addition to this, however, the church should occupy the position of missionary to those people who had fallen away and were outside her normal sphere of influence:

So long as a man is a paying member, or even an unremunerative ‘hearer’, he is known and attended to; but below that point he is lost sight of. To the *residuum* of practical heathenism which both Protestants and Roman Catholics leave behind them, the parochial clergy of the National Church address themselves, with strong faith but with differing degrees of zeal.

He accepted that the balance between the ministerial and the missionary activities of the clergy would vary depending on situation and environment, and looked forward to a time when the field of missionary work would no longer be necessary. He felt, however, that in the larger towns an imbalance had very often been struck between the two aspects of clergy work and that a large proportion of the urban population had, to all intents and purposes, been abandoned by the church and consigned to practical heathenism. Here we come to the point upon which the whole of Hume’s work turned: that of ‘penetrating the masses of heathenism in the town’. The vision which he constantly held before himself and urged upon others was that of the ‘home missionary’, a concept which recurs over and over again in his writings. In tones reminiscent of Dickens’s portrait of the Jellybys in *Bleak House*, Hume criticized his contemporaries: ‘The Society at home provides the means and

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58 On the basis of the 1851 census figures Hume calculated that the church was ministerial to 42% and missionary to 25% of the population: *Ecclesiastical census of Liverpool*, p. 6.
60 Ibid.
appliances of public worship for the Maori of New Zealand, the Zulu of Caffreland, or the Dyak of Borneo; but for the heathen of our great towns and cities at home no provision is made'.

Clergymen should not confine their attention to their own congregations; their ministerial work should also be directed at the wider community. The objective is clear: a greater emphasis on the pastoral duties of the clergy, aimed ultimately at bringing the poor back to the church. Such views indicate the value which Hume placed upon the parochial system, a system which, while recognizing its defects, he considered vastly superior to the voluntary system of the Nonconformist churches. A territorial arrangement meant that everyone, regardless of social position, who lived within a particular parish or district had the right to attend their local church and to claim the performance of religious offices. For this reason, wrote Hume, 'the parish Minister is very different from a mere preacher. He is the Pastor to all within his limits, not the mere Minister to those who attend his Church'. ‘Home missionary’ activities, therefore, were a fundamental part of the duties of the Anglican clergy, in a way that they were not a part of the duties of Nonconformist clergy. Furthermore, the territorial arrangement ensured that parish churches were unable to follow the migration of the richer classes, and were consequently much more fitted to ministering to the poor. It was on those grounds that Hume maintained:

that the Established Church of England is not only the best Home Missionary, but, in some respects, the only one. The Roman Catholic Church, whatever she may be in other lands, exists here only in name; and the various Dissenting bodies, either singly or united, are powerless to perform the great task.

The twin activities which underpinned Hume’s concept of pastoral care were visitation and education, the practical outworking of mission to the community. Certainly one of the main duties of the clergy was to minister to their congregations, but they should not neglect to ‘cultivate the desert’—one of Hume’s most frequently used images—which existed outside

61 Ibid., p. 31.
62 Hume, Church of England the best home missionary, p. 5.
63 Ibid., p. 18.
their own church doors. Hume himself wrote that he had undertaken the incumbency of the district of Vauxhall:

partly with the view of trying a great experiment—viz., whether the most abandoned among our poorer population could be restored to the church of our fathers by a much larger amount of clerical attention at their homes than is usual in any grade of society.64

'A parlour-going minister makes a church-going people', quoted Hume, and his primary aim was to increase church attendance in his district:

Thus, those who have never heard a sermon should be induced to come to church once or twice; those who merely know what a church is, would perhaps come occasionally; casual worshippers might be induced to become regular; and those who are regular to increase the degree of frequency.65

The main purpose of visitation was, therefore, essentially spiritual rather than material.66 Hume was not blind to social conditions in Liverpool, as we have seen, and recognized the effect that such squalor could have on church attendance; and so in such a city visitation could not but involve a certain amount of material relief. He often deprecated, however, the fact that the poor were usually much more eager for any alleviation in their physical conditions which he could provide than they were for spiritual comfort—although he felt this to be an indictment more of the church than his parishioners.

If the purpose of visitation was spiritual, the method was simple. The home missionary should carry out regular house-to-house visitations, not only to those families which habitually attended his church but to every family within his district. Regular attenders would fall naturally within the scope of clergy ministrations, but to attempt to reform the poor by the same means was, in Hume’s words, ‘like waiting till the river flows by’. To attempt to attract the poor by ‘popular and peculiar’

64 The Times, 11 Jan. 1858, p. 10.
65 Hume, Missions at home, p. 22.
Lucy E. Bosworth

sermons, as many clergy did, was a futile exercise, since it merely redistributed the existing church-going population, and 'the desert is uncultivated as before'.

Hume's own visitations were organized with characteristic efficiency and zeal. On taking up his incumbency in 1847 he conducted an exhaustive survey of all the families, 2,894 in all, in Vauxhall district, of which he calculated that 1,752 were wholly or partly Protestant. Of these, only 57 families attended his church at all and only 16 were regular attenders. His first action was to obtain promises from as many families as possible that they would attend his church, and then to concentrate his visits on those families. The pattern was continued throughout his ministry, backed up by the two scripture readers assisting Hume in the parish, who were required to make ninety home visits a week. The records of Hume's visits were also meticulous. He not only maintained the registers of attendance but compiled an extraordinarily detailed 'visiting book', in which he recorded facts about each family: names, the occupation of the head of the household, the number of children, and so on. The seriousness with which Hume took his pastoral duties is obvious from the detailed descriptions of his work in his letter to The Times:

During 15 days of the year [1856] I was unwell, I was absent on public business 30, kept within doors by stress of weather 4, and took 20 holydays, single and consecutive . . . I was in the parish and engaged in general clerical duty 251 times on 182 separate days . . . I have made 1,200 visits at the houses of the inhabitants, independently of attending to occasional and special calls . . . Besides taking part in several church services when others preached, I have preached 122 sermons—101 in my own parish, and 21 elsewhere.

When it is remembered that from 1848 onwards Hume also acted as the officiating minister at another Liverpool church, St Stephen's, Byrom Street, his sheer industry and hard work is quite astonishing. But even these persistent efforts did not

67 Hume, Missions at home, p. 22.
68 Ibid., p. 29, table 10.
always meet the success they deserved. In 1857, despairing of the broken promises and with little visible sign of improvement, Hume decided to begin a register of attendance of every family in the parish who had promised to attend, and this measure did, according to Hume’s records, result in increased attendance.\(^{71}\) It was always, however, a constant struggle to maintain such improvements, and it is interesting to note that the *Daily Post* censuses show attendance at the morning service in Vauxhall district, given as 906 in 1881, dropping sharply to 54 in 1891, seven years after Hume’s death, and 65 in 1902 (although evening figures for the same years do show a slight increase).

Home visitations in themselves, however, were not enough to coax the poor to return to the churches. Hume felt it was unrealistic to expect people who had disregarded the church for perhaps most of their lives to start attending the large and intimidating district churches immediately. Some kind of mediator was necessary, through which people could become accustomed to regular worship again without being made to feel humiliated, and where it would not matter that their clothes were shabby.\(^{72}\) Hume’s final proposal concerning church extension, therefore, was that each district should establish a number of small chapels for gathered congregations from among the poor. They would be more appropriate for those who had been outside the church for some time, the ‘lost portion of our population’, being both less formal and less public. These chapels would be nothing more than small licensed buildings, erected on waste ground, each holding 120–150 people, and costing not more than about £200 each. They could be made of whitewashed iron, wood, or plain brick, and would ideally be portable, so that they could be moved around the district in order to influence the maximum number of people. Services would be taken by existing incumbents and their curates in addition to their present work, and services

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 10 Jan. 1858, p. 10.

\(^{72}\) Hume recognized that the problem of clothing did contribute to non-attendance; he was later to say that the line when church attendance stopped was when a person did not have a second suit of clothes: letter to *Liverpool Daily Post*, 25 Oct. 1881, cited in Walker, *Religious changes in Liverpool*, p. 208.
should become more frequent, particularly during the week. Such chapels would be more suited to the objectives of the home missionary, and so ‘these little churches would be the natural feeders of the more important ones in the various districts’. In this way the poor could be brought by gradual stages back into the fold of the church. That this idea of Hume’s was taken up in at least one instance is indicated by the censuses of church and chapel attendances taken by the Liverpool Daily Post in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The 1881 census refers to ‘All Saint’s Iron Church, Kingsley-road’, with accommodation for three hundred people (slightly larger than Hume had envisaged) and an attendance of 199 in the morning and 238 in the evening on the census day. This church appears to have acquired a certain degree of permanence; by the next Daily Post census in 1891 it was included in the table with the other district churches, rather than being put at the end of the list, and was described as being previously an ‘iron mission’. By this time the iron church had moved to Bentley Road, a site which it still occupied by the final Daily Post census in 1902, and was able to seat 779 persons.

Hume was, however, conscious of the fact that, even if willing, clergymen could not realistically be expected to carry out such pastoral duties without a great deal of extra support, not least because of the sheer numbers of people in some districts. Traditionally, additional help had been given by curates, but in fact many districts were run single-handed. Whilst bodies such as the Additional Curates Society were attempting to remedy the deficiencies, Hume deplored the small number of permanent curates in Liverpool. Although he managed to secure the services of visiting and temporary curates for short periods in the two districts for which he was responsible, during the greater part of his incumbency

73 Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction, P.P. 1857–8, IX, p. 463.
74 Liverpool Daily Post, 3 and 15 Nov. 1881; 22 Oct. 1891; 12 Nov. 1902. The Revd Dr Ian Sellers informs me that the idea of a ‘portable iron church’ was also taken up at St George’s, Everton.
75 The rise in seating capacity may perhaps be accounted for by the acquisition of a permanent site; there may well have been an extension to the original iron church.
76 Hume, State and prospects, p. 31.
Hume’s was the only established office. Under such circumstances he was prepared to take advantage of any help, whether lay or ministerial, which he was offered. Hume therefore advocated following the example of both Catholic and dissenting circles in harnessing lay energies in the fight against spiritual destitution. He wanted to see not only an expansion in the numbers of lay helpers but more importantly the establishment of a recognized lay agency, as was already the case in the other denominations, in place of the existing unofficial pockets of lay participation. Although this was at a time when the use even of scripture readers and catechists was seen by some portions of the Anglican church as a dangerous innovation, Hume was not unique in this respect and was merely following the general trend throughout the nineteenth century which favoured the establishment of visiting societies. Where he was more original, however, was in suggesting that lay helpers should live in community in the districts where they worked, in specially provided ‘clerical houses’ or ‘parsonages’, in order to secure the ‘advantages of union, frequent intercourse, and proximity to duty’, and to ensure that their official character did not prevent them from being a part of the communities which they served. Not content with this, he further proposed the employment of ‘godly women as well as godly men’, again following the practice of Catholic and dissenting churches. Unfortunately, Hume did not enlarge on this proposition, realizing, perhaps, that while it was one thing to support scripture readers and catechists it was quite another to advocate the creation of an official female agency within the Anglican church, and that the time of this idea had not yet come. Yet he could still, in 1869, write that while ‘It would be too much to say that the battle of the Deaconess has been won; yet it assuredly will be so, and Protestantism will be strengthened, not weakened’.  

77 Rack, ‘Domestic visitation’, p. 365, points out that nineteenth-century Anglicans had always been more cautious than Nonconformists in the use made of lay agencies, and placed greater restrictions on their activities.
78 Hume, State and prospects, p. 46.
79 Ibid., p. 45.
80 Ibid., p. 46.
Although the primary aims of visitation were spiritual, their achievement inevitably involved some practical measures; and so the necessary corollary of visitation was education. The object of house-to-house visitation was not only eventually to secure church attendance but to distribute Bibles, prayer books, and tracts. If the poor would not come to church, then Hume would take the church's teaching into their homes. He even went so far as to obtain portions of the New Testament in Irish for Irish-speaking members of his district, and began to teach himself the language so that he could hold Irish language services. All this, however, was in the face of the fact that large numbers of his parishioners could not read in the first place. Although two scripture readers were employed to read to the illiterate, their efforts were hardly sufficient to cope with the problem. Tract and Bible distribution was all very well, but it was a largely ineffective practice unless backed up by educational programmes. It was natural, therefore, that education should be the second, but equally important, weapon in the armoury of the home missionary, and the indispensable ally in the fight to reclaim the masses from their state of 'practical heathenism'. Hume was firmly convinced not only of the practical necessity of teaching people to read but also of the moral capacity of education to improve people's characters and to transform a bad neighbourhood. Most people over the age of forty, he feared, were confirmed in their 'evil habits' and beyond any hope of practical change; with the young, however, 'good habits can be instilled and bad ones guarded against; a love of knowledge can be imparted, a desire for order, a respect for the laws of man, and a reverence for those of God'.

This could be achieved not only by teaching reading and writing but also by establishing industrial schools, which would teach more practical skills. He was quite prepared to take firm measures in order to enforce attendance at his schools. In 1858 he decided to apply the parochial system to education, determining that 'Every family of the whole 1,976 will be called upon to send their children to our schools unless they already send them to some other schools, or to assign a reason for not doing so.'

81 Hume, Missions at home, p. 21.
82 The Times, 11 Jan. 1858, p. 10.
Schools for the poor, however, through a combination of difficulties, were few and far between, and the marked lack of uniformity amongst educational arrangements meant that ‘the schools of the town are supplied in districts where they are less necessary, and withheld from districts to which they are more necessary’. Hume’s district was not the only one in Liverpool to experience such difficulties, as he pointed out in a letter to *The Times*:

There are five ecclesiastical districts surrounding my parish. In two of them, one better and the other worse than my own, schools are supported by a society in the town, without any effort on the part of the incumbents. In two others, from the peculiar character of the congregations, the schools are virtually supported by the town; and in the fifth schools have been abandoned for years, the clergyman having found them to be an intolerable millstone about his neck.

The obstacles which hindered the establishment of schools were numerous; it was years before Hume was able to establish any schools in his own district of Vauxhall, although by 1869 he had managed to establish two day schools, two free evening schools, and two Sunday schools. The financial problem was uppermost; few were willing to subscribe to schools for districts in which they themselves did not live, even if they had business connections in those areas, and so ‘our merchants and manufacturers subscribe for the support of education near their suburban residences, where aid is scarcely at all required, and withhold the intellectual bread from the lips of the poor man’s children who surround the doors of their offices’. Hume had tried organizing a committee to raise subscriptions, ‘but of 11 selected gentlemen, nearly all of whom are connected with the neighbourhood in business hours, only one attended our meetings’. Voluntary aid was limited; there was a Church of

83 Hume, *Condition of Liverpool*, p. 19. Charles Grove told the House of Lords Select Committee that he knew of eight districts with only one school, one of those containing more than twenty thousand souls, and five districts with no schools at all: *Select Committee on Spiritual Instruction*, P.P. 1857–8, IX, p. 465.
87 Ibid.
England School Society in Liverpool but its effectiveness was hampered by a lack of income, whilst plans for a school union, which Hume had devised with the dean of Chester, had foundered. If the income of the Anglican School Society was doubled, Hume thought, and more substantial aid given to the very poorest areas where it was virtually impossible to raise private subscriptions, something might be done to remedy the deficiencies. Even where the establishment of schools had been achieved, further complications arose from the difficulty of finding teachers who were able to cope with the rigours of working in such areas. As Hume wrote, most of the teachers in the Vauxhall schools, 'though certificated, were fresh from the training college, and therefore inexperienced. They could teach a class when it was put before them, but they knew nothing of organization, of anticipating difficulties which were inevitable, or of diminishing others which were incurable', a situation which necessitated the writing of an elaborate book of instructions for teachers on school organization and discipline.

Together, visitation and education formed the bedrock of Hume's plan for spiritual revival amongst the poor. Securing adequate endowments, redistributing district populations, and building new churches, whilst necessary, were not the ultimate objective. In this Hume perhaps showed more perception than some of his contemporaries, who believed the problem to be almost entirely a matter of church accommodation. His aim was quite simply to reverse the tide of spiritual destitution and encourage people to attend their parish church. Responsibility for the problem lay in the pastoral failure of the church, not in a lack of buildings, and the solution was in the hands of the clergy, rather than church architects. However, whilst Hume may have been able to analyse the situation more clearly than others, his solutions were not unique. He was not alone in calling for 'home missionary' activities, and the pattern of parish restructuring, followed by organized schemes for improving pastoral care, was not, as we have seen, original. It is impossible to suppose that he was not influenced to some extent at least by Thomas Chalmers's system of parish visiting, but it is

88 Hume, State and prospects, pp. 44-45.
89 The Times, 11 Jan. 1858, p. 10.
probable that his greatest source of influence lay much closer to home in the work of Bishop Sumner.

How successful Hume was in solving the problems his work highlighted is debatable. There is no doubt that the improvements in pastoral care in his own districts and his influence in encouraging colleagues to do the same were enormous, but although innovative in this area, he does not seem to have encouraged others to apply such methods, and there seems very little evidence to support Pickering’s contention that the work Hume carried out to some extent prepared the way for the 1851 national religious census. His attempts to raise concern at a national level met with little success, and the copious statistics, maps, and personal evidence which Hume submitted to two parliamentary select committees did not stimulate any nationally co-ordinated efforts to improve the defects in parish structure or financial arrangements. Similarly, by the time of his death in 1884 there was little, if any, change in the physical conditions of the poor, as the series of ‘Squalid Liverpool’ reports published by the Liverpool Daily Post in the previous year shows. The significance of his work lies in the attempt rather than in the accuracy or success of the results. As this article has argued it was in using statistical enquiry to discover why the church’s greatest failures had occurred and how pastoral care should be implemented that Hume’s greatest claim to originality lies. His written works are the product of an ability to move between and combine the different spheres in which he operated: as statistician, as urban sociologist, and as Anglican loyalist; and it is above all for this rare talent that Abraham Hume deserves to be remembered.

91 Liverpool Daily Post, 5–10 Nov. 1883.