Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology



https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb

PayPal https://paypal.me/robbradshaw

A table of contents for the *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal, new series,* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_irish-baptist-historical-society-journal_ns-01.php

JOURNAL

of

The IRISH BAPTIST

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Editor:

Joshua Thompson, B.A., D. Phil. (Oxon.)

Volume One (New Series)

1993/94

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(Founded 1968)

JOURNAL

VOLUME ONE (NEW SERIES) 1993-94

EDITOR: JOSHUA THOMPSON, B.A., D.PHIL.(OXON.)

© Irish Baptist Historical Society

ISSN: 0075-0727

Membership of the Society is open to persons interested in the history of the Baptist Churches in Ireland.

The membership subscription is £5.00 sterling (in the British Isles) and entitles to the Society's Journal, published annually in May.

Overseas members annual subscription is US$10.00.

Subscriptions fall due on January 1.

Cost of Journal to non-members: £6.00 sterling or US$12.00 per issue plus postage & packing

Published by
The Baptist Union of Ireland
117 Lisburn Road
Belfast BT9 7AF,
Northern Ireland
Telephone: Belfast (0232) 663108
Fax No: 0232 663616

CONTENTS

Editorial 5

Authority in the Local Church
Joshua Thompson 7

Hugh and Sadie Mitchell
John McVicker 21

Kilkeel Baptist Church
Sam N. Hamilton 49

Closure of Clough Church
J. R. Grant 64

Annual Report to 1994 Assembly 66

About Our Contributors:

• John McVicker was a missionary with the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission from 1950 to 1970, and pastor of Kilrea Baptist Church, Co. Londonderry 1971-83. He is now retired.

• James Rea Grant is Secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland, and pastor of Donaghadee Baptist Church, Co.Down.

• Samuel N Hamilton was sometime secretary of the Kilkeel Church, and is currently secretary of Newcastle Baptist Church, Co. Down.

Editorial

We have taken the opportunity on the completion of twenty-five years publication to change from our familiar quarto format to the modern A5 format. What would have been Volume Twenty-six becomes Volume One (New Series) 1993/94. We hope members will welcome the new size, which will contain as much reading material as the old size and will help to contain costs and to save paper (a consideration in these environmentally-conscious days).

The paper on "The pastoral office, past and present" was to have been read by J. Rea Grant, but the onset of illness meant that it had to be postponed. Pastor Grant hopes to present his paper at a later meeting of the Society. At short notice, in lieu of Mr. Grant's paper, the honorary secretary read a paper on 'Authority in the Local Church', which appears in this issue. This paper continues our policy of providing a platform and forum for discussion of contemporary topics that will be of historical interest. It was heard by an audience of fifty people.

A similar number listened with deep interest to the account of the lives and labours of Hugh and Sadie Mitchell, veteran missionaries with Baptist Missions in Peru, South America, who were killed in a car accident on 5 June 1989.

We had hoped that the index of articles and writers for the *Journal* published in Volume 17 would have

been updated in this issue, but circumstances frustrated our hope. The revised index is promised for Volume Two (New Series).

We are grateful for our friends in other countries who take the *Journal* each year. There is evidence in recent church history literature that the *Journal* is being used as a resource in scholarly research. We welcome this development.

The work of cataloging photographs which appeared in the Irish Baptist Magazine from 1877 to date continues. During the past year our collection of photographs has again been enhanced by some useful additions.

AUTHORITY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

With special reference to the Relationship between Eldership and Congregational Authority.

by Joshua Thompson

Judging from the conflicts current in our churches in recent times some statement of where the *seat* of authority lies in an Irish Baptist church seems necessary.

Pastors, especially, need to have clear ideas on the matter for it almost goes without saying that authority, wherever it lies, is in constant danger of being reduced, corrupted or usurped.

That threat, and, believe me, it is a *real* threat, needs to be recognized and resisted at all times. Often it comes from a dominant individual or faction within the local church. Or again, it may come from outside the church, sometimes from a pressure group or an organization (often with the best of motives) seeking to manipulate decisions within the local church.

The question is, In whose hands does authority lie in a Baptist church?

The answer is found in two Baptist principles -

> (1) that Baptists have no authorized standard of faith and practice (like the Thirty-Nine Articles or the Westminster Confession). The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are their sole rule of faith and practice;
> (2) that Baptists believe, in the fullest sense, in the independence of every individual church of Christ.

The first principle has a function in producing and preserving doctrinal and practical unity within the local church. The scriptures provide it with the means of rectifying any deviations from the truth as it is in Christ. Furthermore, it is the authority of Christ as revealed in scripture that directs the local church, and it is scripture that will be the test of other sources of guidance, whatever they may be.

The second principle forbids the assumption by any group, or organization, of external ecclesiastical authority over the local church. That is not to say that each local Baptist church is prohibited from associating with other independent Baptist churches in promoting their common aims and principles, or in assisting one another in times of need. The New Testament, as we know, provides examples of co-operation and consultation between churches of Christ. On our principles, however, any Association or Union of Baptist churches can only be 'a voluntary association' and is in no sense 'an ecclesiatical unity'.

This independence of the local church is seen best in the way Baptist churches come into existence.

A Baptist church is formed by any number of believers holding Baptist principles who agree to form one, and they can do this when and where they please. There is no power

which pretends, or is able, to say to them, You may not, or you may; you shall, or you shall not. If the parties like to consult a neighbouring Baptist church or minister, they may do so; but if not, their proceedings are equally valid without such a consultation. In practice, the actual formation of a church is conducted by the pastor of some other church; but even this is a matter of choice, and is sometimes dispensed with. I don't deny that this way of doing things has its disadvantages, but it can be argued that any other system entails greater disadvantages. As a matter of principle, it seems to be the only method consistent with the real independence of the churches. The formation of a local church is clearly a case in which interference has no warrant in the New Testament.

I assume that up to this point I have your *total* agreement? I hope that we all agree on the concept of the local Baptist church, independent under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and competent through the indwelling Holy Spirit to conduct its affairs without outside interference; but free to associate and co-operate with other churches of like faith and order, provided that the 'associated' churches respect each other's independence.

I have stressed the *independence* of the local church for the very good reason that it is the *real key* to understanding the nature and exercise of authority *within* the church. I want to speak specifically on authority in the local church with special reference to the relationship between the eldership and the congregation.

A little history will not come amiss here? During the reign of Elizabeth 1, the English Separatists, who read the New Testament through Calvinist spectacles, filtered out all references to men who had responsibility between local churches or over the officers of local churches. This left the

way open to the discovery that the New Testament church pattern had to be congregationalist - self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. They soon realised, from a study of Matthew 18.15-17, that *the final seat of authority in the church* did not lie with the pope, nor with the Anglican episcopate, nor with the ministers on the Genevan pattern, but *with the church members*. These Separatists rediscovered the church as a community of believers gathered out from the world, seeking the will of God together. They established churches which met, they believed, under the immediate direction of the risen Christ (Matt.18.20). These churches, consequently, required no higher earthly power to justify their activities. Those who became Baptists were those who were convinced from their study of the New Testament that believer's baptism was a necessary condition of church membership. A Baptist confession of 1677 defined a Baptist church as "a society of baptized believers who willingly consent to walk together ... giving themselves up to the Lord and to one another."

Locating the seat of authority in the church meeting raises a number of questions. These concern the authority of the local church over its members, the authority of the pastor and elders, the relationships between local churches, the power of delegates to Association and Union Meetings, the rights of the state, and the responsibilities of the individual member under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is to the first two of these questions that we address ourselves.

1. Congregational Authority.

Membership of an Irish Baptist church depends on the individual application *being accepted by the church meeting*, on the basis of a confession of faith in Christ as Saviour, of baptism by immersion, of a life which squares with his or

her Christian profession, and a willingness to commit himself or herself to the discipline, privileges and responsibilities of membership. Neither the pastor nor the elders and deacons have any power to receive to membership or to exclude from membership.

Once admitted the church member has the right of voice and vote in church meetings. The responsibility and privilege, therefore, of the individual church member is to share in discerning the Lord's will for the church according to the Scriptures and then to obey it. Generally speaking decisions are taken by a majority vote as provided for in the Trust Deed or By-Laws of the church. Consensus means consent, even when as an individual one may not agree.

Obviously, awkward occasions can arise when the views of an individual or group conflict with those of the majority. In such cases the individual or group has the obligation to accept and abide by the mind of the majority. In an extreme case, where dissent from a church decision of first importance would be disruptive, the only honourable course is to resign from membership.

Having made this point, I want to say that the church meeting is not a democratic assembly which seeks a majority vote on all issues that are brought to it. It is the coming together of believers in the presence of Christ to seek a common mind among themselves - a consent about the mind of Christ. This means that the church members will be aware of the spiritual maturity and insight of those speaking on an issue. While each member has a vote of the same numerical value, not all have the same perception or influence.

By joining one of the early churches, in say the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, a man came under

its discipline. If he did not live up to the standards it required he would be rebuked, first in private, then before witnesses, and (if he did not repent) then before the whole congregation. If he remained impenitent he would be excommunicated. Church life and organization, of course, was much simpler in those days and the member's primary responsibility was to be in his place for worship each Lord's Day and especially at the Lord's Supper. Otherwise, provided he was regular in his attendance at the church meeting and proved to be honest and chaste in the relationships of every-day life little more was required of him. While in some cases church discipline was lax,(as, for example, in the Swift's Alley church, Dublin, at the turn of the nineteenth century), on the whole it was used consistently by them. The purpose of discipline was to provoke a higher standard of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ among the members. At its best, the corporate conscience of the church did have this effect, but at other times it lapsed into legalistic backbiting, and sometimes members were disciplined for petty offences. On the whole, nevertheless, it achieved substantially its goal of promoting right belief and right conduct.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, however, our churches have grown more reluctant to discipline erring members; more willing to give due weight to genuine defences and explanations, and less inclined to use their power to excommunicate except in extreme cases. Indeed, on occasions, a few churches have been known to receive into membership some who had left a sister church under a cloud. It is doubtful if many of our churches would consider their authority over their members to be as extensive as in earlier days. Certainly, they would still act in serious cases of sexual misbehaviour, drunkenness, and other overt sins, but such discipline would tend to lead to resignation or

discreet dismissal from membership rather than to public excommunication at a church meeting.

In some respects a few of our churches have developed a tendency to "major on minors" in matters of discipline. Female believers are required to wear head coverings on certain occasions. Restrictions, even prohibitions, are applied to the use of up-to-date translations of the Scriptures. Currently, the growing practice of divorce and remarriage among Christians has raised an acute problem of discipline that will test the validity of the church meeting as the seat of authority. One can only pray that in reaching decisions on this and related issues the church meeting will seek a balance of truth that will uphold the sacredness of the marriage relationship, while safeguarding the individual right of private judgment and liberty of conscience.

Given that the *locus* of authority is the church meeting, there remains the question of how congregational authority relates to the pastor, elders and deacons.

2. The Authority of the 'Eldership'

Obviously, the first thing to say is that the authority of the eldership is *a delegated authority*. The pastor, elders and deacons hold their offices by authority of the church meeting, and are directly responsible to the church meeting for the proper discharge of their responsibilities. They have no authority in the church or over its members beyond what is delegated to them by the church in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament. The church retains the power to remove from office any elder, pastor or other official, who is considered to have become unfitted for the office he holds. On reflection it will be seen that the ultimate sanction *must* rest with the church meeting in this as in the reception or exclusion of members. Just as the

church has the sole right to choose its own pastor and to appoint its own elders and deacons in conformity with the qualifications set out in the New Testament, so it alone has the right to remove them from office.

With that in mind, it is clear that the pastor and elders, having been entrusted by the church with a large measure of authority, have a clear duty to use that authority for the benefit, blessing and increase of the church. It is also clear that the members, having appointed brethren to teach and to rule, have recognized their ability and acknowledged their right to do so.

In the second place, it is necessary to define *the nature of the elders' authority*. Perhaps the clearest expression of their authority is found in 1 Timothy 5.17: 'Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in preaching and teaching ...'

Pausing only to say, in passing, that there are not two orders of elders, (as understood, for example, by our Presbyterian friends), it is beyond contradiction that the New Testament describes the elder and his qualifications *without differentiation* - elders are required, without exception, to feed the flock, to 'keep watch over (the) souls of those in their care as men who will have to give account'; all are required to be 'fit to teach' (*didaktikos*).

Alexander Carson in *Reasons for Separating from the Synod of Ulster* argues that according to this passage all elders are worthy of financial support, and if they need it and the church can afford it, it is their right as verse 18 shows. 'The opposition in verses 17-18 is not between ruling and preaching elders but between those who discharge the office of elder well "in general" and those who distinguish themselves by talent and industry in preaching.'

This passage, Carson argues, teaches that *each* elder possessed the pastoral office and character and could be employed in any part of it, but that each was assigned to the function for which he was best qualified. Elders 'who take the lead well' (*proestotes*, a military leader) describes the elder as one who leads by example and exhortation, who trains and disciplines, who organizes supplies and provisions for those whom he leads. Paul pleaded with the Thessalonian believers to respect those who laboured among them and were over them in the Lord and admonished them, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. (1 Thess. 5.12)

I suppose that, apart from some minor points of difference, we would agree substantially on this understanding of the function and authority of the eldership in the *ideal* local church. Often, in real life, churches are not so blessed and there is a painful gap between what ought to be and what is.

In discussing the nature of the elders' authority derived from the church meeting, it is well to look at authority from a different angle. And perhaps it is necessary to state that the authority of the eldership is *never legislative*. This is because *Christ is head over all things to the church, which is His body and its only lawgiver*. Furthermore, elders are specifically warned against adopting a domineering attitude (1 Pet. 5.3).

In the nature of things the pastor particularly has *a certain authority* as normally the one full-time elder active in the local church situation. He probably thinks more, and more continuously, about the work of the church than even the most devoted elders and deacons have opportunity to do.

Furthermore, if he is doing his work properly, he knows his church members and congregation best, and his influence is likely to grow with the years of his pastorate and his experience of life and people and their problems.

Where a pastor has had the advantage of a rigorous theological training, he will have the authority that comes with a disciplined mind and spirit in leading the church in its life and thought to be conformed to the likeness of Christ.

Consequently, in the church meeting his views will acquire the authority, the growing authority, of spiritual maturity as well as of experience.

We need, however, to be careful about the authority that attaches to the pastoral office. Sometimes it can be asserted in ways that must be rejected. For example, I read of a certain pastor (not in Ireland) who, because he had a B.Sc., claimed he could speak with authority on such matters as the early chapters of Genesis! There are others who equate authority in a pastor with a powerful personality. He has *charisma* and people find it easy to follow him and accept his leadership. Such a personality is not necessarily suited to pastoral authority, unless the man speaks under the evident authority of the Scriptures and in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the final analysis, however, the relationship of the pastor to his people, which at its best is one of mutual trust, is itself created and shaped by the Holy Spirit. It is this mutual trust that best enables the pastor to speak and act with authority.

Since, ultimately, authority in the local church belongs to its Spiritual Head alone, it is proper to say that the pastor with the truest authority, the truest discernment of the mind of the Spirit, is the one who is most wholly surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ. The authority of each pastor or elder will be proprtionate to the degree to which his life, like that

of Jesus, is transparently holy and Spirit-controlled. And, of course, the same may be said of every church member whose commitment is visible and practical.

3. The Relation between the Eldership and the Church Meeting

I will deal only briefly with this last section. Nevertheless, there are several important points to be made.

First, the pastor and elders in matters of church policy and procedure cannot do more than recommend a course of action to the church meeting.

Decisions on all matters of importance in the life and witness of the church are properly taken only by the church members acting in the church meeting. In some cases the church may have given the pastor, elders and deacons power to act, but in these instances it is incumbent on the church officers to report their actions to the following or a later church meeting.

Second, in the nature of church life and personal relationships the pastor or an elder may be called on to deal in confidence with some issue or crisis.

A church member, if he or she requests it, has the right to expect the pastor or elder to give and honour an assurance of confidentiality. If such an assurance of confidentiality cannot be given, the church member should be told immediately. Sometimes it helps to suggest that the problem should be shared with the other elders in confidence if the pastor or elder feels such a course is desirable. In no circumstances, however, should a confidence be betrayed. Nothing is more destructive of that mutual trust which is at the heart of true authority than a breach of trust. Assuming, as I must, that we all agree on protecting mutual trust not only between member and member, pastor and congregation, but within the eldership, need I stress the

supreme importance also of resisting any temptation to disclose confidential information, or to press another into a breach of trust.

Third, because of the importance of the church meeting, the pastor and elders share a serious responsibility in arranging for the chairmanship and control of the church meeting.

Incidentally, I'm not sure the assumption that the pastor should preside at church meetings is always warranted. The choice of chairman, of course, must have the approval of the church members, especially in those circumstances where it is deemed wise to to have an independent chairman from outside the church membership. Good relations in any church meeting depend on careful preparation and presentation of business, and in the interests of harmony and unity every effort should be made to avoid misunderstanding through poorly presented, or incomplete, information. Often, relationships between the leadership and the church members, or a section of them, have been strained, even soured, unnecessarily by inefficiency or partiality in handling the church meeting. Perhaps, we do not give sufficient thought and prayer to the choice of the church secretary and treasurer, nor give them the support, sympathy and help they need to discharge their duties efficiently.

Lastly, the pastor and elders should aim to foster among the church members the desire to participate prayerfully and intelligently in the business of the church.

Care should be taken to avoid giving the church members a feeling that the church meeting is no more than a rubber stamp necessary to validate decisions already taken. Free discussion and genuine decisions are vital to healthy relations between the leadership and the members. Whether the issue to be decided is of a spiritual or material nature, or

is of major or minor importance, the members should feel that their views are honestly sought and respected.

As Baptists, we are committed to the congregational principle, and are bound to see that it is honoured.

May I say for your comfort, that in many years experience I've found, almost invariably, that the majority of church members do exercise their voting powers responsibly when called on to do so. Sometimes, the mind of the Spirit is with the minority but only sometimes, all other things being equal.

Relations between the eldership and the church are at their best when the members listen to the views of their leaders with respect and attention, and when the pastor and elders scrupulously observe the same courtesy towards the views of the members. Good relations provoke love and care and mutual support on both sides and that state of affairs glorifies God and commends the Gospel. 'See how they love one another' is a reputation to be coveted.

Conclusion

I've tried to examine our topic with realism and, I hope, simplicity. We don't live in an ideal world but a flawed one, so we don't make the mistake of looking for perfection. *We hold to the supremacy and authority of the Scriptures*, but I trust we've all learned that the New Testament provides broad principles (rather than a blueprint) for our understanding of the nature and function of the church. Let us seek them and, when we understand them, apply them in dependence on the Holy Spirit. *We desire to honour the Lord Jesus Christ our living Head.*

Let us recall His words, 'You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and

their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' (Mk.10.42-45)

'Hugh and Sadie Mitchell'

by John McVicker

I FIRST MADE the acquaintance of Hugh and Sadie Mitchell in 1946. We were students at the Missionary Training School run by the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission and located in 3 Fitzwilliam Street, Belfast.

A quotation from a devotional reading by W P Keller is relevant to what follows:

> " For all of us there have to be new beginnings. There have to be fresh moments when we stand on a new height of land and look with widening eyes upon fresh vistas of our Father's great intentions for us."

Post-War Challenge

The year 1946 was a year of new beginnings for many. The six years of the Second World War had ended. Servicemen and women returned to the homeland, whilst those who had contributed to the war effort in different ways were free to give consideration to the future and to plan for it.

Those of our denomination, interested and engaged in the ongoing Christian warfare in relation to the spread of the gospel and, in particular, the extension of Christ's kingdom in the land of Perú, were facing fresh challenges and giving prayer and thought to the possibility of training new recruits then coming forward for service in the Lord's vineyard overseas.

At the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of Ireland in 1945, Pastor F.W. Gracey, honorary secretary of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission, finished his report by referring to the way in which the war had hindered missionary extension. He stressed the fact that the IBFM had had no new missionaries from Ireland for nine years:

> "The need for more workers is recurring constantly in letters from the field, and is exercising the minds and hearts of the Committee increasingly. The Council of the Baptist Union shares this concern and is exploring the possibility of providing missionary training for such young people of our churches as have heard the call of service and desire such training."

Mr Gracey closed with a fervent appeal that this training scheme should be warmly taken-up and successfully launched. His appeal provoked a fine response.

The Missionary Training Scheme

In the *Irish Baptist* for October 1946, the following report appeared under the heading "The Missionary Training Scheme";

"It was in May last that the Baptist Union Assembly unanimously requested the Foreign Mission committee

to take immediate steps towards the training of missionary candidates. Now in the blessing of God, through the activity of His servants in the Missionary Training Scheme sub-committee, the Baptist Union house in 3 Fitzwilliam Street, Belfast, has been put in readiness for occupation as Union offices as well as rooms for boarding our present missionary candidates. We are looking forward to the opening of these premises on Tuesday, 1st. October.

The following month the IBFM News Bulletin cited Numbers 27:21 "At his word shall they go out and at his word they shall come in", and continued,

> "We wonder if many friends of our Mission are aware of the very great significance of the events at the home end as they are developing these days. The first week of October will be long remembered as marking definite steps of advance, even in our limited extent, in the Master's world-wide missionary interests...there is the historic fact of the commencement of our own Missionary Training School with six students, four men and two women. They are - William McManus (house warden), Great Victoria Street Church, Belfast; Samuel Sloan, Dunseverick Church; Hugh Mitchell, Great Victoria Street Church; John McVicker, Dunseverick; Sadie Porter (nurse), Banbridge Church; and Sadie Cushley, Great Victoria Street Church. We earnestly request a place on the prayer lists of the Missionary circles and Auxiliaries, as well as private intercession for them."

The principal tutors at the School were Pastors S. Ruddock, W. Weir, B.A., B.Sc., and F.W. Rossiter with Mr E.G. Combe. The lectures were supplemented by studies in booklet form from the London Bible College. Certificates were awarded by the L.B.C. at the end of

each term, as were diplomas from the M.T.S. on completion of the two-year course.

During the first year, 1946-47, the students shared in the culinary side of things under the supervision of the house warden. Messrs. McManus and Sloan left for Perú in July 1947. Miss Edith Milford was appointed matron for the next school term in September 1947. She was a godly lady who had the best interests of the students at heart, catering efficiently for their bodily needs and, at the same time, endeavouring to whet their appetite for a spiritual diet. To this end, she would frequently read extracts from the writings of some of her favourite authors dealing with the deeper spiritual life, Such contributions were not always fully appreciated, particularly at meal times, when the students wanted to relax after coming from lectures. Still, Miss Milford's intentions were good and did provide food for serious thought afterwards and spiritual profit in the end.

Another benefit which accrued from the student body being together in "No. 3" was the fact that they were getting to know one another, discovering individual weaknesses, learning to give and take, not always having our own way, exercising personal discipline, and respecting another's point of view different from our own.

All this was important, especially when all six would be serving the Lord in the high Andes at an altitude of 12,500 feet above sea level. Living and working at this height imposes stress and strain on body, mind and soul. Incidents which are nothing more than trifles at coastal level can become issues of importance in the altitude, affecting relationships and making it more difficult to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Hugh and Sadie both testified at their valedictory service to the blessing experienced and the help received during their time at the M.T.S. Both also paid tribute to Miss Milford and her helpful ministry at the school.

Early Years

Sadie was the eldest of a family of four girls reared by her parents, Andrew and Margaret Porter. They lived on a farm at Doughery, one and a half miles south of Banbridge. She received her primary education at Ballydown School and higher education at Banbridge Academy.

She enjoyed the privileges of a Christian home and was taught the Scriptures from an early age, testifying that the way of salvation was not unknown to her when, at the age of fourteen she attended a gospel mission conducted by Mr H.H. Orr in Loughbrickland Mission Hall. One night the preacher was speaking on the subject of judgment for both saint and sinner. Sadie recognised her need as a sinner before God, confessed her sins and trusted Christ as her personal Saviour. Three years later she was baptised and became a member of the Baptist church at Banbridge. She was taking music lessons at the time of her conversion and shortly afterwards was invited to play the organ in the mission hall, something she did later in the church, where she also served as a Sunday school teacher.

Sadie's father died in 1940, just before she commenced her nursing training at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, where she obtained her S.R.N., S.C.M. qualifications.

It was during her time at the RVH that Sadie met Hugh. There are two versions as to how this happened. One is that Hugh was a patient in this hospital, and the other that he had gone there with a friend who required

treatment. While Hugh and his friend were waiting in the Extern Department a staff nurse passed. Hugh was captivated and said to his friend, "That's the girl I'm going to marry." He apparently did not know her, but in keeping with his character, he lost no time in making her acquaintance and discovered she was a Baptist from Banbridge. It was love at first sight, and some years later Sadie became Hugh's wife in Perú. She was a God-given partner, a perfect helpmeet whose gracious manner and godly influence not only enriched Hugh's life but was also a source of inspiration to her colleagues on the field, especially in times of tension and trial.

Hugh was one of the younger members of a family of eight boys in all. They lived at 22 Cumberland Street, Belfast, where Hugh grew up. He was a member of the Boys' Brigade company at Agnes Street Presbyterian church and later, after his conversion, was actively involved with Christian Endeavour in the same church. Still in his teens, Hugh attended a mission in the Y.M.C.A. in September 1936, conducted by a South American evangelist, Mr. Hubbucker. Convicted of his sin, Hugh repented and received Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. At that time he was serving his apprenticeship in Mackie's engineering works on the Springfield road, and was observed reading the Scriptures during the lunch-time break - an evident sign of new life in Christ. Later, he moved to Short Bros. & Harland aircraft factory where he worked until entering the M.T.S. in 1946.

Hugh's association with the Baptist church in Great Victoria Street, Belfast, goes back to the early 'Forties, when he was baptised and became an active member. He was involved with the C.E. society there, participating in all the activities including visitation of the sick and elderly, open-air meetings, evangelistic outreach during the summer and sharing in cottage

meetings during the winter. The leaders of the open-air meetings could always count on his support, as he shared in witnessing to the saving grace of God, holding forth the word of life, and, at the same time, gaining valuable experience for later years when serving the Lord in Perú. It is recorded that one bitterly cold night at Hope Street corner beside the church where the Saturday night open-air meeting was held, a friend was shivering in the cold, not having brought his overcoat. Hugh slipped away and in a short time was back with an overcoat which was more than welcome. Hugh had run on foot all the way to his home on the Shankill road to get the overcoat! This was typical of his helpful nature, evidenced to and experienced by those who shared fellowship with him on the mission field. True it is, that because of his temperament there were problems and difficulties to be overcome when working with Hugh, but such were amply compensated for by his helpfulness in so many ways.

Hugh had a loving concern for his elderly mother who did not enjoy the best of health. Whilst studying at the M.T.S. he would go over on his bicycle during his free time to see her and attend to her needs. His last words, heard by friends who gathered at the Donegal Quay in Belfast to wish him and Sadie Godspeed on their journey to Perú, were shouted to his brother as the ship pulled away, "Look after Mother, Albert." Tears filled the eyes of the friends at the dockside as they reflected on Hugh's concern for his mother.

A weekly pursuit of Hugh was to ride his bicycle early on Friday mornings to the variety market in St. George's Market. He was on first-name terms with a number of the traders. He was frequently buying items that he reckoned would be of service to him in Perú. He scoured the auction marts looking for similar items. One of the bargains he picked up was a kit of dentistry tools. He assured sceptical friends that he would be able to

make good use of them on the field. Sometime later, photo snaps arrived from Perú, and sure enough one of them pictured Hugh extracting a tooth from a poor hapless Peruvian! When Mrs. Hugh Orr saw the snap she is reputed to have said, "Thank God for the N.H.S.!"

Missionary Service 1949-89

At the 1948 Annual Assembly, the Foreign Mission announced that three candidates had been accepted for service in Perú, namely, Hugh Mitchell, Sadie Porter and Sadie Cushley.

Hugh and Sadie had applied in May 1946. Though they had known each other for a number of years, they applied because, independent of one another, they had each heard the Lord's call to Perú.

Their applications were processed when they had almost completed their training at the MTS, and they received the good news of their acceptance for service in the land to which they believed God had called them.

Together, they completed their missionary training, and together they bade farewell to a host of friends who assembled at the Belfast docks to bid them Godspeed as they boarded the Heysham steamer on 3 February 1949. Two days later, sailing down the Thames, Sadie wrote, 'We are aboard the *Losada* , the day is just lovely, the sun is shining brightly. The desire of our hearts is that we may shine as brightly this day and until our life work here is ended. Until this very moment we have experienced God's wonderful way of working out His plan for our lives. Our hearts are full of praise to Him for all His wonderful leading. ... Now we are going down the Thames and HE knows the way we take and HE is with us.' Hugh's comment at the time was, 'The quayside is fast receding into the distance with London sunshine beaming down. As we leave this scene behind us, we cannot but wonder what the future holds. Still, to

be in His blessed mind and will is all that really matters. We are praying that God will continue to help us to make every decision His decision..'

In the third week in March 1949 Hugh and Sadie disembarked at Mollendo where they were met by Mr. William Creighton, a former senior missionary. They travelled by train to Arequipa, where they rested a couple of days to get accustomed to the altitude of 7,000 feet above sea level. They then moved up to Puno.

The ten to twelve hour rail journey from Arequipa to Puno is interesting, especially for the first time, as the train winds up around the mountain peaks climbing to a height of over 14,000 feet and then descending to Puno at the lower altitude of 12,500 feet above sea level.

After several days in Puno, Sadie completed her journey to Ilave where she was welcomed by Nurse Sloan. Hugh continued in Puno for a few weeks until another house was rented in Ilave where Bill Creighton and Sam Sloan joined him.

Bill Creighton had gone to Perú at the end of 1948, having graciously agreed to a request from the Mission to help with staffing arrangements when the new recruits arrived. Mr and Mrs Stanley Reid, senior missionaries, were on furlough in Ireland. Mr and Mrs Creighton and their family had returned to Ireland from Argentina a short earlier. Mrs Creighton and the family remained at home in Ireland until Bill got back from Perú in September 1950.

During the five months she spent with Nurse Sloan in Ilave, Sadie's priority was language study, at the same time gaining valuable insights into Nurse Sloan's work and ministry. 'La Señorita Sara' had made many friends in the town and community. Her nursing profession and children's work brought her into contact with numerous families as she ministered to their needs in different ways. She was greatly respected and esteemed, as the illuminated scroll presented to her at an official

ceremony in the Town Hall by the Mayor of Ilave, and now displayed in the Baptist Union office, testifies.

Dottie Sloan's work and witness in the community made it easier for Sadie and Hugh as newcomers to the town. As a qualified nurse Sadie engaged in maternity and nursing care, enjoying the guidance of her experienced colleague at the commencement of her missionary service in Ilave.

"The Big Day"

Hugh and Sadie, having known each other for about ten years, were married on 7 September 1949. Writing after the wedding Mr Creighton spoke first of his own busy schedule, then of his visit to Ilave for the marriage of Hugh and Sadie. 'At midday the civil ceremony was gone through, then, after lunch, the religious ceremony. The latter was held in the Town Hall on the invitation of the Mayor. Mr Alex Jardine of the EUSA was present and gave a very fine gospel message after the ceremony.' Whilst it is not reported, Mr Creighton himself performed the marriage ceremony.

The happy couple, on their honeymoon in Mejia, referred to Mr. Jardine's message at their wedding, 'We truly thank our Heavenly Father, for the place was packed with people who would never come to a gospel meeting, and our earnest prayer is that God will break through and save not a few of them'.

Hugh and Sadie often recalled their first trip together as husband and wife after their wedding in Ilave. They had a frightening experience which, in a measure, foreshadowed their final journey together on that fateful morning almost forty years later. They were on their way to Mejia for their honeymoon, travelling down via Tarata and Tacna.

The distance from Ilave to Tacna is well over 200 miles, and, depending on road conditions usually took

ten to twelve hours in those days. The public means of transport was by lorry (seated in the driver's cab) or in a rickety bus.

En route, after reaching the summit of Mount Libini (at 14,500 feet), the descent to Tarata and on to Tacna is a nerve-racking ride on a winding zig-zag road with scores of hairpin bends, at many of which little wooden crosses have been erected indicating fatal accidents where vehicles have left the road and the number of people killed.

Having reached Tarata safely, Sadie and Hugh were on the final two-hour lap to Tacna. The vehicle in which they were travelling, as it approached a sharp right hand bend, suddenly lurched over the edge instead of going round the corner. To say they were frightened is to put it mildly. It gave them a shock which they never forgot! They did not know (as the driver did) of a short cut at that point down a slipway which was possible to take with a light load and careful driving and which eliminated two sharp bends and shortened the distance by about two hundred yards!

In the years following when the missionaries were provided with vehicles for their work, journeys such as the one described were more comfortable and took less time. Hugh, in particular, was a fast driver, and those of his colleagues who travelled with him uttered many a silent prayer en route and rendered heartfelt praise at the journey's end. Some of Hugh's passengers reacted differently. On one occasion he had been asked by the police authority at a checkpoint, if he would oblige them by taking a policeman with his prisoner handcuffed to him to the next town. Hugh agreed, and as he drove at speed down the twisty road the prisoner tapped him on the shoulder and in a serious tone asked, 'Padre, could you take a confession now?' The fear of God had apparently gripped the poor man as the vehicle travelled

at speed on a dangerous road. Undoubtedly, Hugh had been witnessing to both men, embracing the God-given opportunity to share the gospel with them.

Hugh seldom missed an opportunity to bear testimony to the grace of God in Christ, right from the day of his conversion, testifying to all classes and conditions of people. The humble Indian labouring on the 'campo', the Army captain, those in positions of authority and others heard the way of salvation explained by Hugh. He had friends in high places to whom he could appeal when experiencing difficulties of one sort or another with some of the authorities.

Areas of Service

Their forty years serving the Lord in Perú (apart from periods of furlough) were equally divided between the sierra and the coastal region - twenty years at Ilave and Puno (1949-1969) and twenty based at Moquegua (1969-1989).

The Mitchells began their ministry in Ilave at a challenging time in the history of IBFM work in Perú.

The work had begun some twenty-five years earlier, when the pioneer missionaries had to contend with poor lines of communication, hazardous travel over often non-existent 'roads' and on highways in the sierra that became impassable during the rainy season, and opposition fostered by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, who prejudiced the inhabitants against 'the foreign devils'.

The Reids and the Creightons had laboured faithfully in the Department of Puno for many years. Nurse Sloan had sustained a medical and spiritual ministry among women and children for a decade. Local Baptist churches had been constituted at Juliaca and Puno, with another at Tacna on the coast. Meetings were regularly held in other centres like Chinchera (between

Puno and Ilave), Corpa (beyond Ilave) and Tarata (between Ilave and Tacna). The missionaries worked energetically, reaching out to fairs and markets with the gospel, and making occasional visits to the heavily-populated plains of Ilave, where many thousands of Aymara Indians lived.

Mr Creighton's report from Perú during his return visit mentioned above, underlined the great need for evangelism in rural areas among the Indians. At the IBFM annual meeting in 1948 the need for a couple to engage in this work was stressed. While it is not recorded, it may be safely assumed that Hugh and Sadie who were present were inwardly constrained to contemplate Ilave as their base for service on reaching Perú. It is on record that during their early days on the field Hugh expressed time and again his sense of call to Ilave.

Shortly before their arrival in Ilave, Nurse Sloan had begun an evening gospel service in addition to the Sunday school which she had successfully carried on for years. Hugh and Sadie built on this foundation, and had the joy of seeing a small local church constituted three months after their marriage and settling in Ilave.

Ilave was an important market town serving the needs of the large Aymara Indian community in that region. The weekly market was a hive of industry. The people from the town and the surrounding area packed the town square, displaying their merchandise for sale. Indian women squatted on the ground looking customers for their knitted and woven garments of all descriptions, vegetables from their 'chacras' (small holdings), and herbal remedies for every ailment.

The crowded weekly market provided an excellent opportunity for a gospel witness. The missionaries set up a stall for displaying Bibles, Testaments, Scripture portions and an assortment of evangelical literature, some of it bi-lingual. Gospel tracts were distributed

freely, gospel records were played, and when possible the Word was preached. Hugh took full advantage of the weekly market, and was encouraged from time to time hearing of those who were finding Christ as a result.

One story worth preserving is that of a merchant from Puno, who traded weekly in Ilave. One evening when leaving the 'plaza'. he bought a Bible from Hugh as it seemed good value for the price asked. José Villafuerte took his Bible with him next morning down to his stall in the Puno market and began to read it. As the days passed an adjacent trader noticed him reading the Bible constantly, and suggested to José that he should go along to the meeting room in the town where the Bible was read and explained.. Following the advice of his unsaved friend José located the meeting room and began to attend. He showed interest in the exposition of Scripture, attended every meeting, and in a short time trusted Christ as his Saviour. Later, he was baptised and became an active and dedicated member of the Puno Baptist church. José always had a high regard for Señor Mitchell from whom he received his first copy of the Bible.

In addition to the weekly markets in the sierra towns, there were the annual fairs or fiestas (so-called religious feasts) which usually lasted for a week. During the period of the fairs, the missionaries resident in Puno, Ilave and Yunguyo co-operated with one another in maintaining a gospel witness during the week the fair was in progress. In September the feast of San Juan (St. John) was celebrated in Juliaca on the 24th., the fair continuing until the 29th. when the merchants (and missionaries) moved to Ilave for the San Miguel (St. Michael) fair commencing on the 29th.

San Miguel was a massive fiesta commencing with a special mass in the Roman Catholic church, followed by a large religious procession when the patron saint, San Miguel, was carried round the town, accompanied by

music and dancing. Further celebrations followed with Indian bands providing music, day and night, as the crowds indulged in drinking and debauchery.

A similar fiesta in honour of San Francisco (St. Francis) followed in Yunguyo.

Hugh was in his element on these occasions, and made many contacts among the crowds. National workers and brethren from the local churches shared in this gospel witness, speaking and preaching in Aymara to their fellow-countrymen and women. The lady missionaries used the time providing meals for the men, enjoying fellowship together, sharing problems, and supporting their partners at the throne of grace.

Entering into Other's Labours

The Mitchells began to reap where others had sown the life-giving Word of God. As noted above, a local church was formed in Ilave shortly after they settled there. Nurse Sloan shared in their joy of seeing answers to prayer after her years of diligent service.

In the late 'Forties the towns of Corpa and Paque-paque were visited by Stanley Reid and Bill Creighton with much blessing following the preaching the gospel. Hugh and Sadie shared in the reward of their labours when in March 1951, Hugh reported that he had had the joy of baptising six believers at Corpa and receiving them into the fellowship of the Ilave church. 'Our reason for doing so', Hugh commented, 'is that they might first learn something about church government and then under the guidance of the Holy Spirit see another little church formed at Corpa...' Later, in July 1951, he refers to the earlier baptisms at Corpa and mentions the foundation of a church at Corpa 'on New Testament lines'.

In November 1953 Sadie wrote, 'On Friday, Hugh had the joy of baptising twenty people out at Corpa. there had been a revival and Hugh had the joy of pointing many to the Lord. After the baptismal service ... the father and mother of one of the believers, who has been saved for a long time, accepted the Lord. With a view to furlough next year, Hugh is now preparing three of the male believers to take responsibility for the meetings in his absence...'

The previous year, in his September report Hugh wrote, 'You will be glad to know that recently I had three baptisms at Paque-paque and later the joy of forming a little church there. Valentin Cruz was appointed an elder so that in my absence he can take charge of the meeting. I do believe there is much blessing in store for Paque-paque. A man called Faustino Cotrado, a member of the Corpa church, lives there. he has been working as a colporteur with the Union of Baptist Churches for over a year. He has been doing a great work. He has achieved some remarkable sales of Bibles and other Christian literature...'

The Union of Baptist Churches in South Perú was organised and constituted in 1950, mainly under the capable guidance of Mr. McManus in fellowship with the national brethren.

These reports give some insight into those early years in Ilave when the Lord's servants were greatly encouraged in their ministry and had much joy in serving Him. Sadie, during the same period, wrote about her involvement in maternity work, mentioning some of the emergency cases she dealt with out in the 'campo'. Not blessed with a great reserve of physical strength, Sadie never lacked the desire to help anyone in need. She was always willing and ready to do all she could to the limit of her strength and beyond.

The two national brethren, Faustino Cotrado and Valentin Cruz, working with the Union of Churches in the sierra region, were a great help to both Hugh Mitchell and Sam Sloan. Sam went to Yunguyo on the Bolivian frontier in 1950 for a six-month trial period, and remained working in that area for almost twenty-five years. The Lord blessed his labours in fellowship with the national brethren, and many local churches were formed all over that region among the Aymara Indians.

Faustino and Valentin were the missionaries' right-hand men during that period. Both workers covered a wide area, made many useful contacts and opened doors for further church-planting operations.

Valentin had an army career behind him when he was gloriously saved through contact with Stanley Reid. Stanley encouraged and helped Valentin as a young convert. Valentin spoke Spanish fluently, besides being eloquent in his native tongue, Aymara. He held gospel meetings in his own home in Paque-paque, where later Hugh saw a church formed. Hugh and Valentin maintained a close relationship for a number of years until problems arose in some of the churches when some of the members became antagonistic towards the missionaries. Regretfully this led to the point where Valentin acted in an unchristlike way in his attitude towards Hugh and Sam with whom he had worked so closely and harmoniously in earlier years.

On one occasion Valentin's little girl, Julia, aged about 8 or 9 years old at the time, got lost among the large crowd at a fair in Kasani on the borders of Bolivia. Hugh joined in the search for Julia, going round the 'camions' (trucks) which were loading up with passengers prior to crossing the border into Bolivia. Hugh kept calling, 'Julia! Julia!'. Suddenly he heard the child crying, 'Señor Hugo! Señor Hugo!' Immediately Hugh jumped up on the lorry and rescued Julia from

being taken to Bolivia to become a slave to her abductor, who had picked her up in the crowded fair.

On a happier note there is one incident worthy of putting on record relating to Hugh, Sam and Valentin. In September 1986, the Mitchells and the Sloans were staying at the Mission flat in Lima. Valentin was also in the capital city visiting his daughter, Julia, who was working there. On learning that the Sloans and he Mitchells were in Lima, he sent a message indicating that he would like to come and see them. He was invited to come to the flat. After exchanging greetings, Valentin said he had come to apologise to both families for the hard things said and the wrong attitudes adopted towards them in earlier years. This was something that had been on his mind and heart for some time. It was a precious time during those moments of reconciliation as fellowship was restored with one another. How thankful Valentin must have been, when he heard the news of the fatal accident to Hugh and Sadie less than three years later, that he had taken the opportunity to put things right.

On September 17, 1952 Sadie and Hugh welcomed their first son, David. He was born in the Seventh Day Adventist Clinic in Juliaca. Sadie had been rushed from Puno early that morning, arriving just in time to give birth to their baby son. Hugh, reporting the arrival of David to the Home Committee, described it as 'una cosa de importancia' (something of importance). As a learner-driver, I was obliged to take the wheel and drive the pick-up with Hugh alongside me supporting Sadie in his arms. The twenty-five mile run on a rough road with a washboard surface had to be done as quickly as possible. Considering this, and other details of that memorable morning, I also would use three Spanish words to describe it as 'un evento inolvidable' (an unforgettable event)!

The Ilave Clinic

Over a period of years a proposal to build a medical clinic at Ilave had been under prayerful and careful consideration. Several adjoining plots of ground were purchased as a site for it. It was not until 1953 that actual construction began. The IBFM news bulletin in the March issue of the Irish Baptist ran the following statement:

> 'The first stage of the Ilave Clinic plans has been sent to Mr. Mitchell, who has been entrusted with the supervision of the work. Tenders will be sought, and it is hoped that a start will be made once the heavy seasonal rains are over. It is our intention to erect one block, comprising a prayer room, a meeting room and garage for the "Pick-up". The second block will comprise two missionary flats, dispensary, store room and examination room. Information is being gathered regarding the lay-out of wards and ancillary rooms suited to the peculiar circumstances in this area. Our great need is for a doctor, who would be on the spot to advise on (and devise) the lay-out of the Clinic. The Lord will provide for this need we are sure, but once again we appeal for prayer remembrance of this special need.'

Another decade elapsed before the envisaged plan with a doctor on the site was realised. A medical sub-committee was appointed in 1961 to make a detailed survey of the Clinic project. The report giving this information went on:

> 'Mr. Peter Hughes will graduate in 1962 (D.V.) and will then do the normal houseman's year followed by some specialized studies. On this basis the medical sub-committee will seek to

> complete detailed plans by early 1964 in the will of God.'

At this stage of development in the clinic project, Hugh and Sadie had returned to Perú after their second furlough.

The many delays in the project were frustrating to Hugh who had to contend with some of the original landowners who threatened to take their land back because nothing positive was happening.

In the early summer of 1954 they returned to Ireland on their first furlough. In August it was reported in the News Bulletin that,

> 'Mr Mitchell contracted an unusual type of fever while on holiday in Banbridge, running a high temperature and suffering body-pains. He was taken to Banbridge District Hospital towards the end of July. Hospital treatment has proved efficacious and at the time of writing he is on the way to recovery.'

A bulletin six months later stated,

> 'We are happy to inform many interested friends that, following a further medical examination, Mr Mitchell has been given permission to speak at two meetings each week. His condition continues to improve and each reader is invited to pray earnestly for such a measure of recovery as will ensure Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell's return to the Field in June (D.V.)'

At the May Meetings in 1955 Hugh publicly expressed thanks to God for his recovery and to those whose prayers had meant so much to him during his illness. He was advised on medical grounds to take it easy for the first two years after his return to Perú. Dr. Hugh Montgomery, EUSA, kept a check on Hugh during this period, something greatly appreciated by the IBFM committee.

Hugh, Sadie and David were due to sail on 10th June 1955. A dock strike delayed their departure until 29th June, but at the last moment it was reported that

> 'Mrs. Mitchell was too ill to travel and she and their son David had to remain in Ireland until Mrs. Mitchell's doctor is satisfied that she is fit to travel.'

Hugh had to travel alone to Perú. It was hoped that Sadie would have been able to travel by ship some weeks later, but no passages were available. The Committee was anxious that Sadie should join Hugh as soon as possible and decided to send her and David to Perú by air. They arrived safely on 10th December, six months later than anticipated. In March 1956, Andrew was born. Pastor Lyttle reporting Andrew's arrival, commented, 'May our Andrew prove in later years to be, like his namesake in the New Testament, a great personal worker and a mighty winner of souls.'

The Mitchells continued to live in Ilave until December 1956 when they moved to Puno, although Hugh still had responsibility for the Ilave region. An encouraging report sent home by Hugh in 1957 told of a visit to the Ilave region, and how the Lord was working among the young churches. in Ilave, Corpa and Paque-paque. The same letter contained news of his visit to the coastal area and a trip to the Quechua district north of Juliaca. The miles travelled and the centres visited in that one report indicate that Hugh had recovered well from his illness.

Missionaries' Children

During their second furlough in 1960, our friends faced the issue of David's education - whether they should take him back to Perú or try to arrange for his education at home. After enquiries and prayer they decided to send David to a school for missionaries'

children in Wales. A report in the Irish Baptist read, 'The parting with David was difficult.' Hugh and Sadie at the time felt they had made the right decision. Since David was still four months short of his ninth birthday, one can feel and appreciate the pain in parting from David. The period David spent at school in Wales was a severe trial both for him and his parents. David's letters to his mother and father conveyed his feelings clearly enough for them to sense how he felt.

What a blessing is the new School at Moquegua erected in memory of David and Andrew's parents. The Mitchell Memorial School relieves missionaries with young children of the pain and sacrifice involved in being separated from them in those tender years of childhood.

Thankfully, notwithstanding the difficulties during his primary education, David progressed academically and went on to higher education and university where he obtained his teaching qualifications. It was a joy to his parents when he obtained a teaching appointment at Markham College in Lima. David and his wife, Marie, have two children of their own, Peter aged seven and four year old Sara named for her grandmother whom she never saw. They moved to Chile for two years, but returned recently to Lima, where David is head of studies at Newton College, a new school in the capital city.

Andrew, who also taught in Arequipa and Lima for a time, is unmarried and lives in the Moquegua valley, where he has his own business.

As we recount a little of the life and labours of Hugh and Sadie, there is no greater service we can render to their memory than to continue praying for their sons that they may experience the peace and joy their parents had in following the Lord and serving Him.

An Unusual Honour

In Spring 1963 Hugh was invited to act as interpreter for the Duke of Edinburgh, during the visit of His Royal Highness to Puno. Prince Philip delivered a speech in the Municipal Building, where he had been presented with a Scroll of Honour. Hugh interpreted the Mayor's speech to the Duke and the Duke's response to the Mayor.

Developing Opportunities

During the 'Sixties the Lord encouraged his servants with new opportunities for gospel witness. One area was in hospital and prison visitation. After months of patient sowing of the Seed of the Word, there followed a time of reaping. In a lengthy report in September 1962, Sadie told of this response:

> 'When this work commenced I used to enter hospital wards in fear and trembling. This was after distributing tracts in the prison where the prisoners would jeer at the message. On my appearance in the ward, patients walking about vanished, those in bed covered their faces with the bed-clothes, and an attendant or patient would light a candle and place it in front of a statue of the Virgin Mary on a small altar in the ward.
> Then, one Sunday afternoon, a patient who had been reading the New Testament asked to hear more, and readily professed faith in Christ.'

This man was the first of many who, in the weeks that followed, gathered round the missionary and listened intently to the explanation of the gospel. Week by week patients trusted the Saviour, despite the opposition of the nuns and priests, and some of the nurses. Sadie told her fellow-missionaries that on one occasion she was

confronted by a priest who told her she had no right to distribute literature in the hospital or to speak to the patients. She felt weak and frightened, but suddenly there flashed into her mind the words of Isaiah 41: 10. She had memorised this verse twenty years earlier when she had met Pastor David Henderson one day in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. He asked her if she knew the verse which he himself often quoted. She had to admit that she did not know it, and he told her to be sure to learn it by heart. The verse came to her mind with real assurance face to face with the priest that day:

> 'Fear thou not for I am with thee; be not dismayed for I am your God; I will strengthen thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.'

Hugh had been responsible for supervising the buildings in Ilave. Now in Puno in 1963, he oversaw the erection and opening of a new church building. He had secured the site, organised the supply of materials, and supervised the construction. Again, in Moquegua during the final decade of his ministry his experience came in useful in the construction of a fine building on a site purchased twenty years earlier, when the church was formed.

Whilst Hugh gave himself unsparingly and joyfully to the erection of earthly temples for the worship of God, nothing gave Hugh and Sadie greater satisfaction and joy than having a share in seeing living stones added to the Lord' temple, and His great name glorified as He completes the work of building His church.

The Fourth Term

On 4 September 1967 the Mitchells left Belfast to return to Perú for their fourth term of service.

> 'Our friends', ran the report, 'are heavily loaded as they return to their work in Puno. They carry with them not only the good wishes of a host of friends, but also excess baggage in the form of medical instruments for Dr. Peter Hughes, and six new tents for use in camp ministry amongst the young.'

Hugh and Sadie were very glad when Dr. Hughes successfully completed the revalidation of his medical degrees in Lima and travelled to the sierra around the time the Mitchells arrived back from Ireland. Both of them had been loyal supporters of the Clinic project. Now after almost twenty years they, with their colleagues, saw in Dr. Hughes the answer to their prayers.

The Evangelism in Depth programme was running when the Mitchells arrived in Puno. Hugh wrote:

> 'What a thrill it was to be here in Puno for the campaign with open-air meetings for most of the week, and a final rally on Sunday with several hundred believers from all over our district taking part in a march through the town. I can tell you Puno has never seen the like of this in its history. I can well imagine how the old bishop felt.'

Hugh continued, 'I had just made friends with the major of police (a gift Hugh had par excellence), and when he heard what we wanted to do, he immediately gave us permission to have the procession through the town. What a sight it was to see all the brothers and sisters and to hear them singing "Perú for Christ".'

A further development of the late 'Sixties was the establishment of a Bible School in Ilave under the direction of Mr. Ken Needham with Mr Mitchell and Mr

Sloan as tutors. Six national brethren enrolled for the first course. The Bible Institute continued in Ilave until 1986 when it was transferred to Puno.

Hugh had helped in EUSA youth camps for several years, a work he greatly enjoyed, having been involved in the Great Victoria Street SS boys' camp in Ireland before going to Perú. He was thrilled when the first Baptist youth camp took place in Ilo in 1968.

> 'The opening day', he wrote, 'I shall always remember. We thought for a time that we would have to close the camp because of the conduct of some of the boys, but their conduct improved after the first day or two and in the end six professed faith in Christ, including one of the troublemakers. Next year things will be different. We propose to complete a set of rules which it will be necessary not only for the campers to sign, but also their parents. We are planning, God willing, to have several camps - one for children, one for young people, and one for families.'

To the Coast

In 1969 Hugh and Sadie left their base in Puno after twenty years of faithful ministry and fruitful service in the sierra. They moved to Moquegua and continued with the Lord's work, serving Him a further twenty years in the coastal region. They continued to manifest the same dedication and devotion to their Master which had marked their earlier years. The churches at Moquegua and Ilo benefited from their ministry as did the outreach at the mining camps of Toquepala and Cuajones.

This paper has concentrated on a summary of their service during two decades in the Department of Puno. Time and space do not allow for a similar account of

their labours in the Department of Moquegua. Youth camps were high on Hugh's agenda and a detailed account of this aspect of IBFM work in Perú is to be published by Baptist Missions.

The work in Moquegua grew from a small nucleus of believers in 1969 to become a thriving church now involved in gospel outreach in the town and surrounding region. Many young people were won for Christ through camp and church work, some of them now active members in the Moquegua church.

The Final Journey

Our beloved friends and the Lord's faithful servants, Hugh and Sadie Mitchell, who trained together, travelled together, and triumphed together in the Master's service, were called together to higher service on the morning of 5th June 1989 as they returned from a visit to the mining camp at Cuajones. Their car went out of control, fell off the road, and rolled down the mountainside, hurling them out as it bounced from point to point. Sadie was thrown out first, then Hugh further down. In his dying moments, it seems, Hugh was given sufficient strength to crawl up to Sadie's side. Together they passed into the presence of their Lord and Master, and doubtless heard Him say, 'Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of the Lord.'

They were buried together after a funeral service in the Moquegua Church on 8th June, attended by Pastor Trevor Brock (chairman) and Pastor Derek Baxter (secretary) representing Baptist Missions. A full report by Pastor Brock was published in the September issue of the *Irish Baptist.* Here are some extracts:

> 'For two nights the church had been visited by Christian and non-Christian alike paying their

> respects to two Ulster missionaries who were honoured and loved by the whole community. As the service began the building was full and crowds filled the streets outside, gathering around the windows to listen. Sharing the grief of Andrew and David ... were the members and friends of the Moquegua church, our own missionary family, a number of missionaries from other societies, representatives of the Mining Corporation and many townspeople ... The final part of the brief service was in the hands of the church's young people. Few eyes were dry as they sang "Because He lives" and focussed on the certainty of death and the assurance of eternal life that belongs to the believer ... The funeral procession ... was a conscious effort of the believers to combine public testimony with their respect, love and emotion. Rows of children and women carrying flowers preceded the coffins and raised a constant anthem of praise, thanksgiving and victory. Behind them was an ever-growing crowd that filled the whole width of the streets as they passed through the town ... Moon and stars provided the only light to fall on two simple white crosses that marked the spot where Peruvian Baptists had joined with a stunned family to lay to rest the first Irish Baptist missionaries to go straight from service in Perú to Higher Service above,'

A suitable and fitting epitaph to be inscribed on a tablet between the crosses would be, 'Hugh and Sadie were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death they were not divided.'

Kilkeel Baptist Church

in the Kingdom of Mourne

by S.N. Hamilton

Every historian is restricted by the lack of information kept by past generations. However, we must feel grateful to those who have recorded and preserved information that allows us to draw upon their records. I am indebted to Dr. Thompson for his valuable help with information about the oldest records about Kilkeel.

Earlier Days

In the mid-nineteenth century, the *Baptist Magazine*, a publication of English Baptists, carried a insert called *The Irish Chronicle* which reported on the work of the Baptist Irish Society. The Chronicle for August 1863 records the baptism of a member of the Covenanter Church who had changed his views on the ordinance of baptism. This Robert William Ramsey was baptised by the Rev. John Brown, then pastor of the Conlig Church (lying between Newtownards and Bangor, Co.Down). Mr Brown was formerly pastor of the Coleraine Church.

In 1866, Kilkeel was designated a new station by the Baptist Irish Society committee and William Ramsey was sent to work in the town and to evangelise in the general neighbourhood.

First reports from Mr. Ramsey speak of opposition from the local ministers, but in 1868 a large house was acquired and altered to form a commodious meeting place. This work continued through these early years with difficulty and in face of opposition. Pastor Ramsey was able to open two outstations at Newcastle and Warrenpoint. The minute book of the Irish Baptist Association records the proceedings of the annual meetings held in Carrickfergus in 1867, and has a minute noting the reception of the Kilkeel Church and Pastor William Ramsey into membership of the Association. The church statistics of that year show five baptisms at Kilkeel, with a membership of sixteen, and a Sunday school with fifteen scholars taught by two teachers. A year later, 1868, the membership was twenty-one, seven having been baptised and added to the church. The Sunday school consisted of sixteen scholars and two teachers. There is no record of Association meetings in 1869 and 1870, but the 1871 minutes show that Pastor Ramsey had moved from Kilkeel to Ballymoney. The next statistics available are for 1877, and they make no reference to Kilkeel. These data would suggest that the Kilkeel Church had ceased to exist around 1871 after a brief life of five years.

A New Beginning

The next chapter in the history of Baptist work in Kilkeel opens some sixty years later. Pastor James Shields, who was minister of the Milltown Church on the outskirts of Belfast, caught the vision of a new work in Kilkeel. He was a man of the day in which he lived. His tall, gaunt figure, dressed uniformly in a black suit with a white shirt and black tie was a familiar sight in Irish Baptist circles. Mr Shields was a careful expositor of the Word of God and a fearless gospel preacher.

Mr Shields secured a prominent site on the Newcastle Road in Kilkeel in 1932. A plan for a church building was drawn up, which in many respects followed the style of the building at Milltown. It was opened as Kilkeel Baptist Tabernacle. Many aspects of this Baptist witness bore some imprint of Brethren thinking and terminology.

The building was opened formally on Easter Saturday 1933 at 4.00 p.m. The opening services lasted over the week-end - Saturday, Sunday and Monday. A number of visiting speakers took part, including Pastors John Ravey, Louis E Deens, Frank H. Forbes and A. McDowell. Mr H.A. Johnston of Newcastle was in charge of the musical programme.

The premises were built by Mr. John Graham who became a foundation member of the Church. His name still heads the firm of building contractors in Kilkeel. A contemporary description of the building runs:

> 'The building has a splendid appearance from the outside and the interior is beautifully furnished throughout, having ladies' and gentlemen's rooms to the right and left of the entrance. At the rear of the main building there are fairly large rooms with good accommodation for prayer meetings etc. The pulpit is very artistic. Behind it there is an arch around which are the words, Behold the Lamb of God. Above the door as you leave the building are the words, Redemption through His Blood. The electric light was installed by Mr Bolton of Kilkeel ... and the shades supplied add much to the beauty and appearance of the whole.'

This building, which still houses Kilkeel Baptist church, for several years served initially as a preaching centre for Pastor Shields. The Church was not formed immediately since there were as yet no Baptists in the Kilkeel district. Mr. Shields by then had charge of the

work in Milltown, Warrenpoint and Kilkeel, the two latter mirroring the order of service used at Milltown.

Mr Shields proceeded to develop an extensive programme of evangelism around the Kilkeel area. This took the form of tent missions, open-air meetings, meetings in Orange Halls and cottage meetings. He met with much opposition and had little to encourage him initially in much the same way as Pastor Ramsey had before him.

However, brighter times lay ahead. In the January 1934 issue of the *Irish Baptist Magazine* Mr Shields reported:

> 'Since the opening of the new building in the month of April last, services have been held every Lord's Day with an increasing attendance which reveals an ear for the Word in this town and district. The work among the young people in the Sunday school is also most encouraging. We believe the Lord has used, and will continue to use this building as a centre for Gospel work in the salvation of souls, and a place where the people of God can learn the precious lessons of the Word and be built up in their most holy faith. For the short time we have laboured in these parts, souls have been baptised, the Lord thus putting His seal upon the work. We are encouraged to go on in faith. A little company gathers every Lord's Day for the ministry of the Word and to remember our soon-coming Lord in His own appointed way.'

In July 1934 the following Notice was published in the *Irish Baptist Magazine*:

Pastor Shields' Testimonial

> As was explained at the business session of the Annual Assembly, a movement is on foot to raise above. It is unnecessary to go into details of the

great work done by our loved brother for over 30 years, for the Baptist denomination in Ireland. It is well-known to every Baptist. And now in spite of advancing years, his work is greater than ever. He has the care of three churches, viz., Milltown, Warrenpoint and Kilkeel.

When approached regarding the nature of a testimonial Pastor Shields, in his usual unselfish manner, suggested that he would highly honoured if the denomination would raise the half of the debt on the Kilkeel church building, the Church undertaking to raise the other half. And so the proposal is to raise a sum of £200 as follows:

20 persons giving £5 each	£100
50 persons giving £1 each	£ 50
100 persons giving 10s. each	£ 50
	Total £200

Any sum subscribed over this amount shall be presented to Pastor Shields as a personal gift. We appeal to the Baptist denomination to support this proposal heartily, as no worthier object has ever been placed before it. We propose to keep this fund open until December 1st. next. Promises and subscriptions will be gratefully received by the treasurer of the Fund, Mr. Robert Arnold.

[Editor's Note: The Assembly minute reveals that Mr Arnold had brought the matter of the adverse balance on the Kilkeel Church before the Assembly, and 'spoke of the admirable and unremitting service rendered to the denomination as a whole by Pastor Shield, and suggested that the balance be reduced by £200 as a standing testimony to his work, and forthwith defined his scheme.' The Union Council did not take up the matter subsequently, and it may be assumed that the appeal in the *Irish Baptist Magazine* was Mr Arnold's

way of making his suggestion public. Some research is needed to ascertain the response to Arnold's appeal.]

Outreach at the Silent Valley

In 1938, the NBA agreed to rent their portable hall for use in the Carginagh area, close to the gates into the Silent Valley Reservoir where a weekly open-air service was held. The Hall was erected on a site donated by Mr. Alec Spiers. The Carginagh folk became the mainstay of Baptist work in the Kilkeel neighbourhood - so much so that many of them were of the opinion that the main building should have been put up there and not in Kilkeel town.

Services in the Carginagh Hall consisted of a Tuesday evening meeting each week and an afternoon Sunday school. All the meetings in Carginagh were well-attended, and there are many who attended the Sunday school there who are now members of the Kilkeel and other Baptist churches.

A note in the November issue of the *Irish Baptist Magazine* reads,

> 'The first Sunday school excursion was held some weeks ago, when the children, parents and friends assembled at the Tabernacle and were then taken by private cars, provided by some of the friends to one of the beauty spots near Kilkeel called Derryogue Beach, otherwise known as Nicholson's Sands. It was a day of most glorious sunshine, and amidst the beautiful surroundings, the children and older people enjoyed a splendid tea, after which games were commenced. Great interest was shown in the racing, in which old and young took part. Prizes were awarded to all successful competitors. Indeed each child received a prize, and most of the older people too. The afternoon passed all too quickly, and after the

second tea was served the children sang hymns and choruses learned in the school. Then, after a word from the pastor and prayer, the hymn "What can wash away my sin" was sung by all. When the time came to leave for home we all felt sorry, but pleased and satisfied with our first excursion from this promising school. May these young lives be won early in life for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To God be the glory great things He has done.'

After a few years, the NBA decided that rent had been paid long enough and the Hall was given to the church. Pastor Shields, in those early days, did all of the preaching himself except when relieved by a visiting speaker. He had a somewhat peremptory manner, and was known to speak down from the pulpit to correct anyone whispering or passing notes across the pews. On one occasion, a young lady who had been a faithful attender at all the meetings started to keep company with an unconverted boy-friend. Indeed she was seen to have accompanied him to the local cinema. The pastor, on next meeting this sister, spoke of his concern for her, and told her she would have to choose between the cinema and the Lord's Table. Sadly, she chose the cinema. In those days the lines between the church and the world were drawn very straight and standards were kept very high. One reflects on those times when Mr. Shields preached earnestly the truth of the Lord's second coming, and earnestly looked forward to that event with expectation. Sadly, I have to say that the hope of the Lord's return was a brighter hope then than in these affluent days of the 1990s.

The pastor's wife was a gracious lady, and dutifully took her place in the very back pew at each service.

Indeed I don't think I ever saw Mrs. Shields at the front of the church or taking any prominent part whatsoever.

Saturday Night's at 'The Corner'

Saturday night was 'open-air night at the Corner' in Kilkeel town. There were steps on both sides of the thoroughfare. It was the custom for men to sit on the steps and talk on a Saturday evening especially. The Protestants sat on one side of the 'Corner' and the Catholics on the other. The whole formed a real live lecture theatre! The gospel was customarily preached there week by week. A loud speaker was mounted on the roof of George Annett's van so all could hear. The 'Corner' was a great place at which to start life as a gospel preacher.

Occasionally, one of Mr Shield's grandsons, Norman or his cousin Samuel, would come from Belfast and be introduced to preaching the Word of God under the scrutiny of a grandfather who would freely express his opinion, and correct what he considered to be inappropriate. In the 'Forties John Gardiner was brought to Kilkeel to help the ageing pastor. I remember one Sunday Mr Gardiner made reference to a Sunday afternoon programme on the radio. After he finished, the pastor explained that they were not to understand from Mr Gardiner's remarks that Christians could listen to the radio on Sundays. Poor Mr Gardiner was so embarrassed, he failed to go to the door to greet the congregation leaving!

Reaping Time

There was a refreshing and fruitful time when the pastor invited a young man, who had just left the police service to engage in evangelistic work, to come and have a series of Gospel missions in Kilkeel and around the

district. This was Mr. James Armstrong whose forth-right preaching of the Gospel was instrumental in leading many to the Lord at that period.

Alongside the work of preaching in the late 'Forties the church had the services of Mr Walter Jackson as a colporteur and personal evangelist. Walter travelled all over the Mourne area distributing Christian literature.

In the early 'Fifties the church bought a portion of land as a burying ground from George Annett, who was Pastor Shields' son-in-law.

The first organist in the church was one of the pastor's daughters, Miss Martha Shields. The organ was a Mason & Hamlyn Stop Organ which was pumped with two foot pedals. This was before the days of electric organs. One had to pedal vigorously to get sufficient volume. I remember on one occasion trying to patch the leather of the bellows inside the organ where a fold in the bellows had broken. Playing one of these instruments was hard work, and one felt quite exhausted after a period of hymn-singing. Miss Shields is probably the only foundation member still alive. Pastor Shields to my knowledge never drove his car himself, but was always driven around by his daughter Martha. Although it is fifty years ago, I distinctly remember the car. It was black (the commonest colour in those days) and had been patched with heavy fabric in various places and painted over. The repairs must have been a DIY job. It was a luxury for a pastor to have a car then.

Barn Meetings

The Kilkeel church opened another outstation at Ballymageogh. There a monthly meeting was held in a barn owned by two elderly ladies by the name of Moore. These two extremely-modestly dressed ladies walked to

and from the church services twice each Sunday - a distance of about 16 miles in all. The Misses Moore's barn was lit with paraffin oil lamps for the meeting and was seated with benches without backs. The walls were thoroughly white-washed and the floor scrupulously clean. I recall preaching in the barn myself on a number of occasions.

Missionaries-in-waiting

During the late 'Forties Mr Sam Sloan was waiting clearance to proceed to Peru with the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission. In the interim period he spent much time touring the Mourne district on a bicycle, and talking to people about the gospel. This was a favourite topic among Mourne people at that time, and Mr Sloan made many friends. The Kilkeel people of all denominations were a committed church-going people, and in the 'Forties and 'Fifties they went twice on Sundays as if it was the law of the Medes and Persians.

In the closing days of Pastor Shields' ministry, he was assisted by Mr. John McVicker who was about to go to Peru with the IBFM, and who was waiting for his visa to come through. Mr McVicker was highly esteemed by the Kilkeel people, and had a farming background and a personality that suited the Mourne people.

During the days he was in Kilkeel Mr McVicker often spent time with me and other boys as we helped George Annett to pick strawberries in season. One 12th July Mr McVicker took a few of us to climb Slieve Bignion, the second highest peak in the Morne mountains. We climbed right to the summit and spent a great day in glorious sunshine. We watched from our lofty perch a trickle of Orangemen with their banners, marching down the coastline, seemingly right at the water's edge.

Boyhood Memories

I joined the Sunday school as a boy in 1937. I remember that at the time the Superintendent (though he was not known by that grand title) was Mr J.C. Graham. His wife used to make miniature books from coloured wallpaper and probably sweet papers for the scholars. Inside these attractive covers were printed verses of Scripture. As children we were always pleased to learn the verses, they were so colourfully presented.

On one occasion Pastor David Burrows, a long-time friend of Pastor Shields, was in Kilkeel on Mr Shields' invitation to hold a Bible study mid-week. The aged Pastor Burrows was at this time blind, so he sat on a high chair (used normally by the church organist) and gave his exposition. During the course of his message Mr Burrows asked a question of the group. I remember the answer to the question was, 'Mary, the mother of Christ'. So I spoke up and answered, "Mary". I was in my early teens at the time and my voice was beginning to break. The blind pastor replied, 'That's good. It takes Mary to make the ladies speak up!'

Pastor John McCrea

After his retirement, Pastor Shields was succeeded by Pastor John McCrea in 1950. Mr McCrea had been an evangelist with the Irish Baptist Home Mission and found it difficult to fit into a settled ministry. Also, it was hard for Pastor Shields to relinquish completely his contact with the Kilkeel pulpit and people. These circumstances combined to make the second pastorate a short one. Mr. McCrea had a successful ministry in the Lisburn church before emigrating to Canada to take up a pastorate there.

A Temporary Appointment

Subsequently, I remember the Baptist Union being invited to arbitrate in an internal problem affecting the church. The representatives of the Union were Pastors F.H. Forbes (secretary) and J. Thompson (assistant secretary) with Mr J.H. Corbett of Portadown, the Union treasurer. This matter like so many church differences was over a less-than-fundamental issue. On their advice a temporary arrangement was put in place. A young College student, Mr Bill Scott of the Milltown church, was given a temporary assignment which lasted over a year. During this time Mr Scott started a Youth Fellowship group to whom he enjoyed airing his newly acquired 'doctrine of God'!

The First Church Secretary

It was at this time that the church appointed its first church secretary, Pastor Shields having fulfilled that role from its formation. The step was taken in an effort to relieve the pastor of part of his workload. The new secretary was Mr. H.A. Johnston, an able and long-time member of the church who travelled from Newcastle to worship every Sunday. It was a sensible step, and Mr Johnston filled the post and discharged its responsibilities efficiently.

Pastor Silas Henry (1955-60)

In 1955 the church called a young man from the Dungannon church, Mr Silas Henry, to be its pastor. This young man, who was unmarried at the time, was a great bridge-builder and attentive to his pastoral duties. So much so, that when he announced his forthcoming marriage a dear, elderly lady, who had been the recipient of much kindness from Pastor Henry said to him, 'Sure,

you don't need to get married, Mr Henry, could you not just buy a pressure cooker?' Mr Henry did not take this original, unsought advice from the lady! He was pastor of the church for five years until he accepted a call to the Killicomaine church in Portadown.

The only elder of the Kilkeel church at the present is Lewis Scott. He recalls how in 1958 he had occasion to attend the Keswick Convention. On his return home he was asked to give a report on his experience. This was a highlight in Mourne since it was seldom anyone from this part was able to go to Keswick for the famous Convention.

Pastor Victor McWilliams (1960-75)

After a short vacancy Mr Victor McWilliams was appointed pastor and led the church for 15 years before emigrating to Canada where he still exercises a useful ministry. During Mr McWilliams' pastorate a portable hall was purchased for evangelistic work around the whole Mourne area. Much valuable work was done in this way. The hall was well-used. One mission was held in it at Garvagh in Co. Londonderry, and at the end of the mission, it was dismantled the next day in torrential rain and re-erected the same day in Rathfriland in Co. Down!

Pastor McWilliams during his pastorate organised an annual missionary convention, lasting for one week. This year the thirty-second convention will be held. Over these years many thousands of pounds have been contributed towards missionary work through the convention services.

In the late 'Seventies the first couple left Kilkeel church to engage in missionary service. They were Mr and Mrs W.J. McConnell. Today there are twelve

members serving or preparing to serve God in a full-time capacity.

Pastor Clifford Morrison (1976-84)

From 1976 for eight years Pastor Clifford Morrison served the church. He built up a very strong relationship with the young people of the area. A church bus was bought for use in youth work. The Thursday Adventurers was formed for boys and girls, and an after-church 'Teens 'n' 'Twenties meeting. A Youth Choir was recruited and trained with success. These all continue to this day.

During his pastorate the building was extended at the rear, and a balcony was added in the main church building to seat the increased numbers attending the services. Further improvements included a new vestry, kitchen, boiler house and upstairs prayer-room added at the rear.

The church purchased a piece of land directly across the main road and uses it as a car park.

Pastor Geoffrey Ward (1988-)

The most recent chapter in Baptist witness in Kilkeel began five years ago with the induction of Pastor Geoffrey Ward. Mr Ward has preached faithfully the message of the gospel, and is a good expositor of the Scriptures.

The church has now purchased additional land alongside the car park, and plans in 1994 to erect a new church building. The new site, unlike the original one, is level and the Kilkeel folk will no longer, like Peter and John in Acts 3, have to go up to the place of prayer.

In this first week of December 1993, six new members will be added to the church, bringing the current membership to 114.

Conclusion

From hesitant and humble beginnings the Baptist tesimony in the Mourne district has spread from Kilkeel with viable local churches in Newcastle, Rathfriland and Warrenpoint in addition to the Kilkeel church.

Clough Baptist Church, Co. Antrim

Sunday 28th. March 1993 was a bitter-sweet day for the five surviving members of Clough Baptist Church. It witnessed the dissolution of the membership and the closure of the building for public worship.

It was in January 1993 that the members made the difficult decision to take these steps which concluded many years input to the work on their part. For several of them it ended a connection they had had since childhood. An extract from the Resolution passed at the special church meeting reads:

> "THAT we record our gratitude to God for His faithfulness to those who maintained a Baptist witness in this village for over one hundred and twenty years;
> THAT we record our regret that a small and ageing membership and declining numbers at the services of the church make [these] decisions necessary""

The closing service was conducted by Pastor J.R. Grant (Secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland) and the preacher was Pastor Robert Hodgen (Belfast). Miss Winnie Gibson was organist. There were twenty-one people present. These included four of the five members, three local people and fourteen visitors.

Pastor Grant gave an account of the history of the church,[1] and explained the reasons for the decision to dissolve the church.

The building was opened debt-free in 1872 with forty-three foundation members. The manse was built immediately afterwards. The first pastor called to the young church was the Rev. Wm. Ramsey.

For more than one hundred and twenty years - possibly since the "1859 Revival" Baptists in the area

had known a succession of pastors and others who ministered the Word of God. They included Wm. Ramsey, Wm. C. Cowden, Matthew Simpson, Reid McCullough, W.J. Thomson, Thos. Whiteside, T. J. Harvey, David Burrows, Richard Hodgett, J. Kyle Paisley, Frank H. Forbes, Jack Johnston, George F. Blayney, George Thomas, Trevor Brock, Jim Morrison (Baptist Missions), Edward Rea, Brian Cargin together with a long list of local preachers to numerous to mention.

Clough had a resident pastor from 1872 until 1913 when Pastor Thomson left due to declining numbers and the withdrawal of the Home Mission annual grant. Thereafter, the church came under the care of the Hill Street Church, Ballymena until about 1979.

Pastor Hodgen's text for the final sermon was Psalm 31: 15, "My times are in the hand" - an appropriate and heart-warming theme for the occasion. Mr. Brian Cargin (Portstewart), who as a local preacher had given considerable help to the church and had preached at the last morning service, concluded the service with prayer and the Benediction. Supper was served by the ladies and so a significant chapter of local church history closed with a cup of tea, and not a little regret.

The future of the building and the possibility of forming another Baptist church are the responsibility of the Trustee, the Baptist Union of Ireland (Northern) Corporation Ltd.[2] The Directors of the Corporation are seeking the Lord's guidance in these important matters.

J.R. Grant.

---

[1] A more detailed account by Pastor Geroge Thomas may be found in the Irish Baptist Magazine for May, 1964.

[2] Editor's Note: In March 1994 the Directors put the building up for sale, after extensive enquiries into the possibility of continuing the Baptist witness in the village had produced no viable solution.

Irish Baptist Historical Society

Report to Annual Assembly 1994

In retrospect 1993 was innovative. A small committee of three was appointed to assist the President and Secretary in the work of the Society. This arrangement simplifies proceedings at the regular meetings. The format of the Society's *Journal* which has been quarto size since its first issue will be changed from Volume 26 due in 1994 to a more modern A5 size. Consideration is being given to the production of a popular history of Irish Baptists.

In connection with the Baptist Union centenary celebrations, the Society will benefit from the sales of a history of the Union entitled *Century of Grace* to be published during 1995.

Four meetings were held during 1993 and were well-supported. In March Pastor Steven Curry (Ballymoney) read a paper on "Charles Haddon Spurgeon" to mark the centenary of Spurgeon's death in 1892. The annual meeting was held, as usual, during the Baptist Union Assembly in May. It was well-attended and the audience listened with close attention to a paper by Pastor David McMillan (Newry) entitled "Evangelical Catholicism". This was one of the opportunities members of the Society have had in recent years to consider a contemporary issue. This careful and thought-provoking paper was published in Volume 25 of the Society's *Journal*. In September, Pastor John McVicker, a former missionary with Baptist Missions (Peru), read a paper on two of his

colleagues, Hugh and Sadie Mitchell, who died in a car accident in June 1989. This sensitive account of the lives and labours of two esteemed colleagues was heard with appreciation. The year closed with a local church history, "Kilkeel Baptist Church in the Kingdom of Mourne", written and read by Mr. Sam Hamilton, a former secretary of this church.

A varied programme has been brought together for 1994. Topics include "The Pastoral Office - past and present", "Recent Experiences in Church Planting in Ireland"; "Extinct Churches of the Nineteenth Century". The local church history will focus on the Banbridge Church, Co. Down.

The Society continues to build archives of importance and relevance to Irish Baptist history, and welcomes deposits of correspondence, minute books, photographs and other literature. Publications by Irish Baptist writers and histories of local churches are also welcome.

Irish Baptist Historical Society

(Formed 1968)

President: Dr H.D. Gribbon
Secretary: Dr J. Thompson

117 Lisburn Road
Belfast BT9 7AF
Telephone: (0232) 663108/9
Fax 0232 663616

Membership Renewal

Please renew my Membership of the Historical Society. I enclose my subscription of
☐£5.00 ☐ US$10

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Postcode_____

Office Use
Membership No. ____
Membership card written ☐
Journal sent ☐ collected ☐

Irish Baptist Historical Society

(Formed 1968)

President: Dr H.D. Gribbon
Secretary: Dr J. Thompson

117 Lisburn Road
Belfast BT9 7AF
Telephone: (0232) 663108/9
Fax: 0232 663616

Application for Membership

Please enrol me as a Member of the Historical Society. I enclose my subscription of
☐ £5.00 sterling, ☐ US$10

Name_____

Address_____

_____

Postcode_____

Office Use
Membership No. ____
Membership card written ☐
Journal sent ☐ collected ☐