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

12

Volume ~~II~~ (New Series)

2004 - 2005

association of

Baptist Churches

in Ireland

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(Founded 1968)

JOURNAL

Volume ~~Eleven~~ 12 (New Series) 2004-2005

© 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 £15.00 (€25.00) and entitles to the Society's Journal, published annually in May.

Overseas members annual subscription is US $30.00.

Subscriptions fall due on January 1st.

Cost of Journal to non-members: £10.00 (€15.00) or US $17.00 per issue plus postage & packing

A husband/wife membership is available at £25.00 (€40.00) with one copy of the Journal.

Published by:

Irish Baptist Historical Society
The Baptist Centre
19 Hillsborough Road
Moira, BT67 0HG
Northern Ireland
Telephone: (028) 9261 9267
Fax No: (028) 9261 0150
E-mail: ibc@thebaptistcentre.org

Contents

Robert Andrew Boggs An Appreciation 5
Winston McLean

The Missionary Spirituality of Samuel Pearce 25
Michael A.G.Haykin

Jonathan Edwards and Revival 47
Harry Dowds

Robert Andrew Boggs

An Appreciation of his life and work

Introduction

It is both humbling and inspiring to look back at the life and work of those of a past generation who served the Lord and the denomination faithfully and well. I propose to-day to give you a sense of Robert Boggs's life and work by considering:-

1. His early life, the influences upon him, his sense of vocation and preparation for the work
2. His Pastorates in Grange, Carndaisy and Tobermore
3. His co-operation with other denominations in the Cause of Christ
4. His interest in denominational affairs
5. His priorities as a pastor

I was privileged to have Robert Boggs both as my pastor and my father in law. Most of the material I have used for this talk draws heavily on his own notes.

The formative years

Robert Andrew Boggs was born on 27th June 1908 in his widowed grandmother's home in Agnes Street, Belfast. Both his parents were Christians. His father, Andrew Boggs, came from a hill farm, between Plumbridge and Strabane in county Tyrone. (The family name 'Boggs' is thought to be a derivative from that of Huguenot settlers in Inishowen.) As a young man his father left home and went to Belfast. There he met a Belfast girl, Margaret McCreight, whom he subsequently married and who became Robert Boggs's mother.

After moving house a few times in the Shankill area, the family set up home in Dover Street where Andrew Boggs had a grocer's shop, having taken over the business from his former employer. However, at the beginning of the second world war they sold the shop, Robert's father

took up employment with the Prudential Insurance Company and the family went to live at Stranmillis. It was there Robert spent most of his childhood and teen years, with his two younger brothers, George and Victor, and his sister Mary. Robert Boggs records that life both at home and at school was happy. The journey to the Model School, which he attended, was often hazardous and exciting at times. Often the young passengers had to get to the floor of the bus for safety, as the vehicle was stoned. This was due to the fact the Home Rule controversy was resurfacing and this state school was situated in a vulnerable area. The school was eventually burnt down and Robert finished his schooldays at Fountainville National School, at the lower end of the Lisburn Road.

In the Boggs home at Stranmillis the things of God were quietly but consistently honoured. Belonging to the Great Victoria Street Baptist Church, the complete family walked to the services there twice each Sunday and the children attended the Sunday school as well. This meant covering a total distance of approximately 12 miles on foot, as it was looked upon as a desecration of the Lord's Day to use the tram, unless the weather was really bad.

During this time, Robert Boggs joined the ranks of 37th Belfast Company of the Boys Brigade, which was linked to Fisherwick Presbyterian Church. He bears record that the activities connected with the BB all contributed in their own way to the enrichment of his life and character - the drill, the first aid classes, the pipe band, the camps and most of all the influence of the Captain and Bible class leader, Mr John N Burton.

Conversion

In 1922, the young teenager Robert Boggs attended the Nicholson United Mission held in St Enoch's Church, Carlisle Circus. He recorded, "I was led by grace God's love to know with such effect as to determine my future direction. This happened on 22nd November, a day and date I shall never forget." He went on, "No matter what criticism may be levelled at this preacher's methods or doctrine, no-one can deny that he was mightily used of God at that particular time. He was, I believe, caught up in a special outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the Province in an hour of great spiritual need."

Growing up.

The next few years found the young teenager serving the Lord in the company of others of his own age in the Great Victoria Street church. He was baptised there in 1926. As is the case often today, there was in the life of the church "the young folk and the others". The CE ran their own gospel service on Thursday evenings in the Sunday school hall, and had their own prayer meeting and open air meeting every Saturday night.

Robert Boggs had a fine bass voice and always enjoyed singing, and he used his talents in this direction also. He became a member of the East Belfast Testimony Choir and was actively engaged travelling throughout the city, presenting the gospel in song and testimony. It was with the choir and in the CE that the future pastor gained his first experiences of speaking in public.

It was in these activities too that he met a young lady, Gwendoline Williamson. She later became his wife and was his dear partner in the work for many years.

Call to full time Gospel work

As he engaged in these areas of service he began to hear the call of God to the work of the gospel. He applied to the Irish Baptist College for a place as a student; however, his application was deferred twelve months because of his inexperience. The uncertainty of those months was to be a real test of faith for him. No longer working in the office of the Advertising Agency where he had been employed for the past five years, he took a matriculation course in the expectation that he would be accepted as a student.

Training

Finally, in September1928, he set foot for the first time in Dublin and made his way in fear and trembling to the College then situated in Harcourt Street.

Here the young Belfast man spent four very happy years, made many friends and benefited much from the training he received. The teaching staff consisted of T. Harold Spurgeon, Principal, and Pastor LE Deens. In addition, a Mr J. W Pearce of Limerick came to lecture on church history for a week each term. Apparently he was rather long winded

and his students did not always share his enthusiasm for his subject. It is reported, that in RAB's time one student turned Mr Pearce's known interest in clocks to his own advantage by doctoring the striking mechanism of the big hall clock. When the clock kept on striking, the lecture came to an abrupt end and the students got out in time. I wonder who altered the clock!

He wrote a paper on what the College meant to him and why it should be supported. It was written the year before he left and contains the following sentiments, which he held throughout his life.

- A college is to a denomination what a wife is to a man, either a great blessing or a great curse...
- The IBC is worthy of the confidence of everyone who is anxious that our ministry be pure...and effective.
- It gives training that is needful.
- It gives training that is useful.
- It gives training that is scriptural

Student days in Dublin gave Robert Boggs a love for the work in the South, which remained with him throughout his life. He treasured the contacts he made in those days and was always delighted to preach there when the opportunity presented itself. He particularly enjoyed preaching at Field Services in Brannockstown and in the Church Mobile in Carlow. One pastor has said that one of the finest sermons he ever heard was from Pastor Boggs as he preached on Psalm 37:23,24 in the Church Mobile in Carlow.

Testing his wings at the Grange

As his days in college were drawing to a close, in 1932 he received a unanimous call to the church at Grange, which he accepted. He was only 24. And so Robert Boggs was inducted to the pastorate in Grange on Thursday 7th July 1932, and preached for the first time as a Pastor on Sunday 10th July 1932, speaking from John 16.

As the manse had not been built at this stage, he lodged initially with the Weir family at Grange and then with the McKillen family in Ballymena. (Interesting that both families had connections with Tobermore). He soon got to know the highways and byways around the Grange on

the BSA bicycle provided by the church!

Shortly after he settled at Grange, plans were made for the erection of a manse. When the building was completed, in 1935, he and Gwendoline Williamson married and set up home in the new manse. It was vastly different from life in Belfast or Dublin. There was no water or gas on tap. Water had to be carried, light came from oil-lamps, heat from turf fires.

The young pastor found ministering to the folk at the Grange a joy. He found his congregation to be very appreciative and understanding of a young man in his first church testing his powers. Visiting the congregation was also a pleasure for him. Rich memories remained with him all his days of being thoughtfully shown into the "room" so that he could kneel upon the hearthrugs when he led the families in prayer.

Pastor Boggs has recorded an incident, which took place while he was at the Grange and which, unknown to him at that stage, would connect him to his future life's work. Pastor Wm. Weir, then in Tobermore, came over to the Grange, and mentioned that they were proposing to put a scripture text around the arch behind the pulpit in Tobermore. Pastor Boggs made the suggestion that the words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" would be very appropriate. He said that these words indicated both the saints' object in worship and the challenge to sinners in the gospel. (Incidentally, these words appeared over the pulpit in his home church, Great Victoria Street). Professor Ivor Beaumont, head of the Art school in Belfast Technical College, and member of the Hamilton Road church, was commissioned to do the job.

Call to Tobermore

After six years, a deputation arrived from Tobermore, bringing an invitation to take up the pastorate there. He had first preached in Tobermore as a student, on Easter Sunday, 20th April, 1930 and has recorded that since this first visit, Tobermore held a 'strange fascination' for him which he found hard to explain. He relates how he got off the bus on that occasion, and was directed to the church building. When he got there, he saw a man with a big bunch of keys. On confirming that he was at the right place, the man unlocked the door. He and the caretaker (as the man with the keys turned out to be) went inside, and

the door was locked behind them! Apparently the caretaker, Mr Robert Watters, was so keen on keeping the place tidy that he locked the Sunday school children outside until it was time to start! Robert Boggs noted, in typical fashion, that he wondered whether he had arrived at a jail or an asylum!

The call from Tobermore had not been unanimous. However, he was given to understand that the opposition to the call came from a few who had been influenced in their attitude to Baptist Union affairs from without. In addition to the work in Tobermore itself was the responsibility of preaching regularly in the mission hall at Upperlands and attending to the needs of the small Carndaisy Church. His salary was to be £200 per annum. There was to be no regular income from Carndaisy but the pastor would receive the contents of the quarterly freewill envelopes.

Robert Boggs knew there could well be problems ahead for him when he accepted the call. He wrote, "After prayerful consideration, in spite of all the apparent difficulties, I felt my time at the Grange had come to an end and in faith I indicated that I would accept the invitation"

Accordingly, one day early in April 1938 a young man and his wife and little daughter stood in Belle Vue Manse, Tobermore for the first time as its occupants. He wrote, "I was very conscious that I had entered into a rich heritage of a varied nature and faced a very exciting and responsible challenge. How inadequate I felt and how earnestly I prayed that I might know the sufficiency of the Lord's grace in all the coming days."

Pastor RA Boggs was inducted to the pastorate of the Carson Memorial Church, Tobermore and the Carndaisy Church on Monday, 11th April 1938. Pastors Ravey and Forbes were the speakers at the induction, Pastor Ravey having taken the services in both churches the day before.

Initial Problems

Coming to settle in Tobermore the new Pastor found the early days fairly difficult and felt isolated both from his fellow pastors in South Derry and the ministers in the mainstream churches in the locality.

First, he was acutely aware of a few in the church who were unhappy

with having a College graduate as pastor, since there was rumoured to be 'Modernism' in the College. Further, the Union's new scheme of ministerial recognition was not in universal favour. In the South Derry area, the Tobermore and Carndaisy churches were the only ones retaining fellowship with the Union. Indeed there were several attempts early in the pastorate to have the church withdrawn from the Union. Apparently this was largely due to influences from without. The controversy soon died as far as Tobermore was concerned and they were left with a peaceful and united church. Happily almost all concerned began to give the pastor their loyal support. In fact they became and remained his very close friends.

Second, there was a great deal of unrest in the denomination at the time, on matters relating to the Baptist Union of Ireland and the Irish Baptist College. So as a supporter of both the College and the Union, the young Pastor found himself initially shunned by the surrounding churches of his own denomination. An abortive attempt was made by some of the disaffected Pastors to create a fellowship of churches outside the Union. Although this came to nothing, it had a very unsettling effect among South Derry Baptists generally.

Over the years this problem decreased. The local churches gradually changed their attitude to the Union and the College. They also got to know and appreciate Robert Boggs for his godliness, his warm friendliness, and his wise counsel, not to mention his great sense of humour, which he could use to defuse many a difficult situation! Indeed he became affectionately known amongst his brethren as the 'Bishop of South Derry'. Most of them later joined with him monthly in a Pastors' Fraternal, which still meets in Tobermore.

Finally, he was aware of some deadness in the work of Tobermore and Carndaisy at that time, due in part to the discord alluded to previously. The first weekly prayer meeting the new pastor conducted had an attendance of only eight people. How disheartening this must have been.

However, the initial problems of his Tobermore ministry were greatly eased by the leaders in the life of the church. He wrote, "I had around me a number of mature folk. These showed their young pastor much understanding. Their loyal support enabled me to settle down and face the challenge of the work with some heart and hopefulness. Little did I

think at the time that I would spend the greater part of my life and ministry labouring for the Lord among the good folk of South Derry. Good folk indeed they were. Looking back now over the years no one could wish to have had a more happy or fulfilling time as I have enjoyed ministering in the churches at Tobermore and Carndaisy". He and his wife soon settled down in the village and grew to love the people and the district. Three more children were born to them. It is indicative of his appreciation of the history of the work in Tobermore that he called his only son Carson, after Dr Alexander Carson, the founder of the church.

Right from the start Robert Boggs had a talent for "getting through" to the folk among whom he had come to live, as the incident I now relate will show. An elderly deacon volunteered to take the new pastor round the congregation. However, being a very quiet and unassertive type of man, he avoided calling with the awkward and the eccentric. One of these was an old lady who was rumoured to have threatened a previous pastor with the carving knife. It was left to RAB to seek her out on his own and try to find acceptance with her. When he made his first visit, he tried the tactic of talking with her about the old days in the church. She was immediately won over and declared that some ministers didn't seem to know anything about the 'old folk' but he apparently knew all about them. From then on she welcomed him warmly,; in fact on a subsequent visit when the grocer's van arrived she brought in one large Jaffa orange for the pastor.

The people of the congregation and village soon got to know and appreciate the integrity and warm-hearted friendliness of Pastor Boggs. He had a unique way of empathising with people and of coming alongside them. His infectious sense of humour helped to brighten the day for many a hard pressed individual.

Stories abound of Pastor Boggs's ability to think quickly and relate to people of all kinds. He seemed to know instinctively what was appropriate and what was not. It is said that on one occasion when a death had occurred in a family of another persuasion, he went along to offer his sympathy. He was welcomed most warmly and invited kindly by the lady of the house to take a 'glass' with the rest of the company. Knowing the situation and realising that refusal could be misunderstood, he accepted, but asked for a glass of milk, which was readily

supplied. He had neither compromised himself nor caused offence to his well-meaning neighbour at a sensitive time.

The confidant of many, he was called upon to use his skill with words, in many unusual situations, such as composing difficult letters, writing speeches and even drawing up wills. Recently a solicitor saw a will that he had written for an old lady in 1976 and remarked on how professionally it had been done.

Robert Boggs regarded the weekly programme which he had, on coming to Tobermore as a light one. This 'light' programme consisted of two services in Tobermore and one in Carndaisy each Sunday, a prayer meeting on Thursday evenings in Carndaisy, a prayer meeting in Tobermore on Friday evenings, and sporadic meetings in Upperlands as well as taking an interest in the Sunday schools in Tobermore and Carndaisy.

Soon after coming he decided to begin something for the young people of the Tobermore church. This led to the formation of a successful Christian Endeavour Society, on a Friday evening, so the prayer meeting was changed to a Wednesday evening. Moving with the times, the CE became the BYF and is still serving the young people of the church.

A cottage meeting was also opened up, for the war years, in Luney, Desertmartin, in an attempt to reach the soldiers in the near-by American army camp.

With the end of the war came the opportunity to hold Evangelistic Campaigns in the church and tent missions. These proved to be a time of reaping and advancement in the church.

Pastor Boggs introduced an annual convention week into the church. These meetings were a source of inspiration for many as they listened to such speakers as L.E.Deens, T.J.McNabb, Minnis Mills, James Armstrong, Jack Johnston, Hugh Orr and others. The ministry at those convention meetings is still remembered by the older folk in the church.

Robert Boggs was proud of his painting and decorating skills, and they greatly improved by being used both around the manse and at times in the Church premises. He found pleasure in the countryside and the

surroundings of the manse: - the beech trees and the Old World garden. There were gooseberry and blackcurrant bushes, raspberry canes and plenty of good rhubarb. There was also a lawn and space for growing vegetables. In addition, there were 5 apple trees planted for each of the 5 children of the manse's first occupant, Rev George Marshall. Pastor Boggs with his wife and family spent many happy hours enjoying the garden. The passage of time brings inevitable changes and the garden is no longer there.

Carndaisy

The work in the Glen, as it was known, was very dear to his heart. When he came, there were between 30 - 40 folk attending the Sunday Service. He often spoke of the days when few had cars and how he loved seeing the lights coming across the fields as people made their way on foot to the Glen House. It was his joy that in those days every member attended the Prayer Meeting on a regular basis.

Later on when most of the congregation got wheels, they would have to wait outside, in their cars, on a Sunday, until the Sunday school finished, as it was held in the church building. It was Pastor Boggs's custom to arrive early to speak into each car and enquire how everyone was. When he first came to Carndaisy, a Mrs Weir suggested that it would be good if he would close the Sunday school in prayer. He took her advice and throughout his pastorate he continued this practice.

Soon after his induction, Robert Boggs discovered that the Carndaisy building was not insured. He advised that insurance should be taken out at once. That his advice was followed proved to be most fortunate, for on the morning of the 12th July 1939 the new building, which had opened only 2 years previously, was completely destroyed by fire. However, with the co-operation of the Baptist Insurance Company, the church was worshipping in their restored building by Christmas of the same year.

The Lord blessed the work at Carndaisy to the extent that some of the foundation members of the Cookstown church came from the Glen.

His denominational work

In the Forties he became involved in the work of the Baptist Union and remained a staunch supporter throughout his life. He had a logical

mind and enjoyed debate. These skills he employed in the various committees to which he was elected.

His first venture was on the Total Abstinence society, later known as the Social Questions Committee, where he served as secretary from 1940 to1950

For many years he was the minute secretary at the Assembly meetings, where his ready wit and sharp mind turned what might have been a dull formal report into a feature of the proceedings.

He served as Hon Secretary to the Northern Baptist Association from 1941 to 1973, assisted in the last two years by Pastor JR Grant.

The work as secretary not only meant writing up minutes, but also gathering subscriptions from the churches, registering delegates for the Annual Meetings and arranging hospitality for delegates. He was also responsible for getting supplies for seaside services for the summer months at Portstewart and sometimes also Donaghadee and Newcastle. On one occasion, they were transporting the tent and seating to a venue where it was required. Mr Stanley Henderson, one of the Tobermore deacons, was seated on top of the load. All was going well until they approached a low bridge at Desertmartin. This required a very rapid descent before the inevitable collision! Fortunately in those days speeds were low as well as safety precautions.

With his grand voice and his ability to think on his feet, Pastor Boggs enjoyed speaking in the Open Air, with other Pastors, especially during the Gospel Van era. Together with Pastor Jack Johnston, Pastor W. Rowell and Mr J Walker, to name a few, the local fairs were regularly visited, e.g. Kilrea and Claudy. He was often to be heard as well speaking at the Saturday Night Open Air meeting in Magherafelt, organised by the late Mr Samuel Rainey.

The Lamas Fair at Ballycastle was also a regular venue, where some half dozen stalwarts were to be found on the Green beside the beach, preaching and singing. A typical example of his humour and ability with words is illustrated by the following extract from the report he delivered to the NBA delegates, in Hamilton Road, Bangor, in 1971. He reported-

"This year once again a very fine opportunity was provided by the Bal-

lycastle Lamas Fair.... The wind gave a hand in the distribution of literature, but in a rather indiscriminate fashion. The strong breeze sometimes affected the clarity of the amplifier but in spite of all this there was a good hearing. Mr Walker's items on the gramophone were executed in his own expert fashion. The sweetness of the whole performance was evidenced, by the large number of wasps around. For a change the only man who had nothing to say was JA Smyth of Knockconny."

He was also the northern representative for the College. This involved sending circulars to the churches to arrange for deputation visits.

These activities meant he had to attend the Executive Committee meetings, Northern Association Committees and meetings of the College Committee, which were sometimes held in Dublin. Fortunately these were normally held in the daytime and so did not interfere with the church programme.

He was President of the Baptist Union of Ireland for 2 years, during 1955 and 1956.

He also served on:

- Council from 1946 - 1982
- General Purposes committee 1954 -1982.
- Foreign Mission executive committee 1946, 1957 -1963
- Home Mission committee 1951 - 1967
- College committee 1945 -1975

On his retirement, the office staff composed the following ditty, to be read at the service. It arrived too late to be used, but he treasured it, and it encapsulates their affection and regard for a remarkable man:

Sermons long and sermons short
You've heard your Pastor preaching.
And those of us who have not heard
Have missed out on his teaching.

He got the name of 'Rebel'
But we know that's not true.

For he's as loyal as anyone
In fact, a real 'true blue'.

Some folk know him better as 'Roamer'
For his humour and wit in the "Mag",
This page was the first that we turned to
For our Robert was a bit of a wag.

Retirement now has come to you,
And we wish you God's richest blessing.
We hope the days that lie ahead
Will be healthy, happy and refreshing.

Interdenominational Fellowship

RAB always was a firm believer in ecumenism with a small e - having fellowship with others where one can agree and by such contacts having the opportunity to present one's own beliefs and points of view. However, as we have stated previously, when he came to Tobermore, fellowship between Baptists and other denominations was practically unknown. At that time, the main stream churches did not want to have any dealings with minorities. In fact, in those days Baptists were not just ignored but often actively opposed by the churches of other denominations in the district. RAB was of the opinion that this was partly the fault of Baptists themselves, as they were reluctant to take any part in interests affecting the community. He therefore set about looking for opportunities to make Baptist witness more widely known, and if possible, appreciated in society generally. For example, he became a member of the management committee of the local school, he lobbied for a Baptist Chaplain in the local hospital, and he contacted the relevant authorities about any matters of concern to his congregations or the villagers such as public transport and street lighting. He was successful in getting the local Council to make the public road into Carndaisy. He also sought all possible contacts with the Presbyterian Church and Church of Ireland in the village.

For some years there was not any hope of real fellowship, as the professed evangelical believers in these congregations were few. However, changes in the education system, bringing free higher education, opened up the opportunity for evangelical men in the ministry of the main stream churches. The evangelical message began to be pro-

claimed in the other churches in the village and where previously only a formal recognition of each other's position existed, there developed a warm fellowship. United services became a feature of Tobermore church life, for example on special occasions such as Harvest Services and Remembrance Sunday etc. Then Presbyterians and Baptists began to unite for Christmas Day and Watch-night Services. This still continues.

Next, a united prayer meeting with the Presbyterians was introduced on the first Wednesday of each month and proved to be a rich source of fellowship.

As the gospel came to be preached from nearly every pulpit in the district, it was RAB's delight to meet regularly with the other evangelical ministers for prayer and encouragement in the work of the Lord. This fraternal consisted of 4 Church of Ireland Rectors, 4 or 5 Presbyterians, 3 Baptists and a Methodist all meeting together in the interests of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God.

These good inter-church relationships did not mean that there were no differences among them. Robert Boggs was not a man to sacrifice any of his strongly held principles or convictions and could 'fight his corner' when the occasion arose.

Call to Windsor

At the end of May 1956, the Windsor church issued a very attractive invitation for RAB to take up the pastorate there. A move to the city would have brought him near both his own parents who were still living at Stranmillis, and those of Mrs Boggs, at Ravenhill. This was particularly tempting as his father was suffering with cancer. However, after a lot of prayer and soul searching, he felt that his work in South Derry was not finished and it was the Lord's will for him to remain where he was. Accordingly he took the decision that was to mean he would spend the rest of his days there.

The Boys Brigade

From his youth Robert Boggs had always had an interest in BB. In the late fifties he found a kindred spirit when Rev JJ Neilly (father of the late Paul Neilly) came to be minister to the Presbyterian congregation. He was well known in BB circles, keen to found a new company and

capable and willing to act as captain. So in 1958 the 1st Tobermore Company of the Boys Brigade was formed, with an enrolment of 32 boys. This company is unique in that all three churches in the village sponsor it. On its formation, it had the Church of Ireland Rector as President, the Presbyterian minister as Captain and the Baptist Pastor as Chaplain. When the Rev. Neilly left in 1962 to go to Sloan Street Church in Lisburn, Pastor Boggs took over as captain for some 16 years until his retirement when he became Hon. Captain. In the various departments there were between 70-80 boys and young men. How he loved those boys. How delighted he was to hear of those who were led to faith in Christ in the Bible class under the leadership of Lieut. (later Captain) RA Frazer, or in the Camps. Even after his retirement, he often delighted to 'visit' the drill sessions on a Tuesday night and was always most warmly welcomed. Right up until his death he received letters from boys who had come up through the ranks and were now far from Tobermore. One of his proudest moments occurred when he was asked to take the salute at a drumhead service and parade to celebrate its 21st anniversary. Following this, he preached at an open-air service in Tobermore Park.

He also encouraged the formation of a Girls' Brigade company, jointly between the Baptist and Presbyterian churches, which is still a thriving concern.

Death of his wife.

At the beginning of 1972, a shadow fell over Belle Vue Manse. His dear wife who had been such a help and support to him for so long became terminally ill. Quiet, cheerful and unassuming, she had always been there in the background to encourage, a loved partner on whom he depended in the busy sphere of his labours. It was her custom to listen for the car or watch for the headlights when he was due home, so that she could have his 'cuppa' already on the table. After some months of intense suffering, she passed into the presence of her Saviour on May 22nd 1972.

Robert Boggs was now alone, the family having all married and left home previously. He was devastated. The manse had always been a cheerful and happy home, but now it seemed so cold, so very empty. At this time he often described himself as being like Noah's dove, going to and fro in the earth and not finding a place to rest.

When late Rev R Dickinson came to the Presbyterian Church in the village, he became a true brother in Christ to him. He found a special welcome from Rev and Mrs Dickinson in their manse where he was treated like one of the family.

Move To Magherafelt

As time went on, retirement and its implications both for himself and the church had to be thought about. He would have to find somewhere to live and the church would have to carry out extensive renovation and modernisation for the next occupant of the manse. In 1976, he found a small bungalow in Coolshinney, Magherafelt and vacated the manse and village where he had so many happy years. As you can imagine after so long, this proved to be a very difficult task both physically and emotionally. He continued in his role as Pastor after the move to Magherafelt for 2 years, until his retirement in 1978. By this time, he had completed 40 years as Pastor in Tobermore and Carndaisy. Before his retirement two elders, Mr Wm. McKee and Mr Harry Davidson were appointed in Tobermore.

The Retirement Years

On retirement, Robert Boggs was appointed Pastor Emeritus for Tobermore. This was an honorary title. He still led a busy life, preaching for other churches when required, and was always willing to advise if asked.

In 1982 he married again. His second wife, Dorothy, was a widow from Coleraine. Her family were originally from the Tobermore area. Together they had 7 happy years. Mrs Boggs is now living in the Fold Sheltered Accommodation in Portstewart.

They frequently worshipped in other Baptist churches in the area as well as in Tobermore. Pastor Boggs was aware of the love and respect that the Tobermore and Carndaisy congregations had for him and retained an intense desire to assist the churches in any way he could. However apart from being asked to preach in Tobermore on a few occasions, no role was found for him. With hindsight he sometimes felt he might have been better to move out of the district altogether when he retired. However his heart was in South Derry and he simply could not bear to leave the people he loved so deeply.

His Death

In 1989 he became ill and in August of that year was diagnosed with the disease that had claimed both his father and his first wife. As he had always been blessed with good health he found increasing weakness and suffering hard to come to terms with. During his illness he was very touched by the many visits and messages he received from a wide spectrum of people. The regular pastoral visits of Dr Hamilton Moore, Pastor Gerald Rodgers and the late Mr Harry Davidson, Tobermore Elder, meant a lot to him, to Mrs Boggs and the family in those last days.

Then on Sunday 5th November 1989, he passed into the presence of the Lord. After a service in the church, the interment took place in the Parish Churchyard at Tobermore, a fitting resting-place, near the manse and church where he had spent so many happy years.

Some time later, both the Carndaisy and Tobermore churches erected plaques to his memory in their respective buildings. The Tobermore one has the words "Keep in mind what I preached unto you" (1 Cor. 15:2)

His Pastoral priorities

Robert Boggs regarded being entrusted with the task of bringing the good news of salvation to needy men and women as the most important task any one could be given - that of an ambassador for the King of Kings. Everything must therefore be done to the highest possible standard as it was for the Lord. This was reflected in all that he did as a pastor. He loved his Lord and he loved the people.

In spite of all his activities both denominationally and locally, RAB always made it a point never to neglect regular pastoral visitation. He regarded this as a most important and essential part of his role. Towards the end of his life he wrote, "How good it is to call to mind all the way the Lord has led us...A lengthy ministry has provided the opportunity of standing beside folk in a very intimate way. What a sacred privilege it is as pastor to be with folk when trouble or sorrow has crossed the threshold. - To be there when an aged loved one 'crosses the bar' - To give support when an accident has interrupted a peaceful path" He knew his people, he listened to his people and this enabled him to minister effectively to them and to address the questions they were

asking in clear, unambiguous language.

Sunday lunch gave an opportunity for a 'post mortem' on the attendance of the congregation. Those who were absent were noted and if the reason for their absence was not obvious, a visit, if possible, would be on the agenda for the next morning, or even a telephone call before going to Carndaisy on the Sunday afternoon.

Despite being such a lively outgoing character, he had also a very private side, a very cautious side and would sometimes feel anxious or even 'down'. He always leaned heavily on his God and on His Word and on prayer. His attitude is well summarised in the last paragraph of his NBA report in 1959, in which he wrote:

'Thus year by year it is our delight to toil for the Master, to hold forth the word of life, to see here and there His blessing on the work and to look for our Lord's return to his vineyard. We endeavour to 'occupy till he come'.'

Conclusion

In conclusion, I can do no better than repeat some of Robert Dunlop's comments in his tribute in the Irish Baptist Magazine in December 1989.

He says, we remember

- A man of dignified bearing
- A man of warm humanity
- A man of broad sympathies
- A man of intellectual ability
- A man of profound spirituality

What more can be said?

Sources:

Robert Boggs's Notes, Papers & Mementoes

The Irish Baptist, May 1960, Dec 1989

Annual Assembly Reports

NBA minute Book

1st Tobermore BB 25th Anniversary Programme

The Missionary Spirituality of Samuel Pearce

Ecclesial reformation and renewal are rarely the work of one individual, contrary to the impression given by some popular church histories. Collegiality is central to such times of spiritual blessing. Thus, for example, after the theological and spiritual devastation wrought by Arianism in the eastern Mediterranean, it was the writing and preaching of the fourth-century Cappadocian Fathers Basil of Caesarea, his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, and his close friends Gregory of Nazianzus and Amphilochius of Iconium that was central in refructifying the churches of the East. Again, during the time of the French Reformation, the friendship and theological collaboration of John Calvin, Guillaume Farel, and Pierre Viret played a vital role in the advance of evangelical truth that by 1572 saw some two million individuals in evangelical congregations in France alone.[1]

Yet a third example can be found in the revival of the Calvinistic Baptist community in England during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. For most of that century, far too many Baptist churches were moribund and without vision for the future or passion for the salvation of the lost at home or abroad. Definite tendencies towards "hyper-Calvinism," an introspective piety, and an inability to discern God's hand at work in the Calvinistic Methodist revivals of their day, as well as various social and political factors were central in their decline.[2] By the first decade of the next century, however, the low-burning embers in their churches had been fanned into white-hot flame as this Baptist community became a world leader in the foreign missionary enterprise. The man whose writings, above all others, provided the theological underpinnings for this revival was Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), pastor of the Baptist work in Kettering, Northamptonshire, who, because of the weightiness of his theological influence and acumen, has been rightly called "the elephant of Kettering."[3] But, and this is vital to recognize, he did not accomplish this alone.

There is little doubt in the mind of this author that Fuller's friendship

with a number of like-minded Baptist pastors from the Midlands, - in particular the elder Robert Hall of Arnesby (1728 1791), John Sutcliff (1752-1814) of Olney, John Ryland Jr. (1753-1825) of Northampton, William Carey (1761-1834), and Samuel Pearce (1766-1799) of Birmingham-was indispensable to the transformative impact of his theology.[4] These men took the time to think and reflect together, as well as to encourage one another and pray together. They shared a strong attachment to the same theological and spiritual principles, an aversion to the same theological errors, and a love for the same authors, in particular Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758).

Now, Edwards has been rightly described by Miklos Veto as "the greatest Christian theologian of the eighteenth century."[5] His writings were especially helpful in the reinvigoration of transatlantic Calvinism, which had been a house under siege since the late seventeenth century. In particular, he gave Calvinists an answer to the Enlightenment critique that divine sovereignty and human freedom are incompatible. Human beings, he argued, refused to obey God not because of any natural inability. Rather, it was their affections that were enslaved and needed to be re-oriented in godly directions. He also maintained that the duty incumbent upon all who heard the gospel was immediate repentance. As a Calvinist, Edwards upheld the utter necessity of grace in conversion. But he moved away from the passive understanding of conversion that had prevailed in some seventeenth-century Calvinist quarters, and argued sinners must respond to the gospel summons without delay.

The upshot of Edwardsean Calvinism was a dual commitment to revival at home and strenuous missionary endeavours abroad.[6]

The impact of Edwardseanism upon the English Calvinistic Baptist community can be well seen in some remarks of John Ryland, Jr. who spoke for all of these men when he stated in the sermon he preached at Fuller's funeral: "If I knew I should be with... Fuller tomorrow, instead of regretting that I had endeavoured to promote that religion delineated by Jonathan Edwards in his Treatise on Religious Affections and in his Life of David Brainerd, I would recommend his writings... with the last effort I could make to guide a pen.[7]

Edwards' influence can also be powerfully seen in the life and spirituality of another of Fuller's friends, Samuel Pearce. Fuller in turn was

deeply impacted by Pearce's spirituality and he drew up a highly influential biographical study of Pearce shortly after the latter's death. The biography, though not mere hagiography, is nonetheless a glowing study of one who for some decades after his death was called the "seraphic Pearce.,,[8] Fuller likened Pearce's decease to Elijah's ascent in a chariot of fire and prayed that a "double portion" of Pearce's "eminently Christian spirit" might rest upon both him and his readers.[9] A pre-eminent part of Pearce's "eminently Christian spirit" was his missionary spirituality. In what follows the content of this mission-minded spirituality is delineated in order to understand what was a vital aspect of the revival that took place among the English Calvinistic Baptists at the end of the eighteenth century. But this lecture also contains a challenge for us at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Formative Years, 1766-1789

Though scarcely known today, Samuel Pearce was in his own day well known for the anointing that attended his preaching and for the depth of his spirituality. It was said of him that "his ardour...gave him a kind of ubiquity; as a man and a preacher, he was known, he was felt everywhere."[10] William Jay (1769-1853), who exercised an influential ministry in Bath for the first half of the 19th century, said of his contemporary's preaching: "When I have endeavoured to form an image of our Lord as a preacher, Pearce has oftener presented himself to my mind than any other I have been acquainted with." He had, Jay went on, a "mildness and tenderness" in his style of preaching, and a "peculiar unction." When Jay wrote these words it was many years after Pearce's death, but still, he said, he could see his appearance in his mind's eye and feel the impression that he made upon his hearers as he preached. Ever one to appreciate the importance of having spiritual individuals as one's friends, Jay has this comment about the last time that he saw Pearce alive: "What a savour does communion with such a man leave upon the spirit." [11]

David Bogue and James Bennett, in their history of the Dissenting interest in England up to the early 19th century, have similar remarks about Pearce. When he preached, they said, "the most careless were attentive, the most prejudiced became favourable, and the coldest felt that, in spite of themselves, they began to kindle." But it was when he prayed in public, they remarked, that Pearce's spiritual ardour was

most apparent. Then the "most devout were so elevated beyond their former heights, that they said, 'We scarcely ever seemed to pray before'."[12] In fact, for some decades after his death it was not uncommon to hear him referred to as the "seraphic Pearce." [13]

The youngest of two sons, Pearce was born in Plymouth on July 20, 1766, to devout Baptist parents.[14] His mother died when he was but an infant, and so he was raised by his godly father, William Pearce (d.1805) and an equally pious grandfather. He would also have known the nurturing influence of the "sturdy Baptist community" of Plymouth, whose history reached back well into the 17th century.[15] The heritage of these Baptists is well seen in the character of one of their early ministers, Abraham Cheare (d.1668).[16] During the time of the great persecution from 1660 to 1688 of all those Christian bodies outside of the Church of England, Cheare was arrested, cruelly treated and imprisoned on Drake's Island, a small island in Plymouth Sound. Fearful that some of his flock might compromise their Baptist convictions to avoid persecution, he wrote a number of letters to his church during the course of his imprisonment. In one of them he cites with approval a statement from the *Irenicum* (1646) of "holy Burroughs," that is, the Puritan author Jeremiah Burroughs (*c.*1599-1646). "I desire to be a faithful Minister of Christ and his Church, if I cannot be a Prudent one," Cheare quotes from Burroughs' "Epistle to the Reader," "standing in the gap is more dangerous and troubelsom [*sic*] than getting behind the hedge, there you may be more secure and under the wind; but it's best to be there where God looks for a man."[17] Cheare himself was one who "stood in the gap," for he died in 1668 while a prisoner for his Baptist convictions.

As Pearce came into his teen years, however, he consciously spurned the rich heritage of his godly home and the Plymouth Baptist community. According to his own testimony, "several vicious school-fellows" became his closest friends and he set his heart on what he would later describe as "evil" and "wicked inclinations."[18] But God had better plans for his life. In the summer of 1782, a young preacher by the name of Isaiah Birt (1758-1837) came to preach for a few Sundays in the Plymouth meeting-house.[19] The Spirit of God drove home Birt's words to Pearce's heart. The change in Pearce from what he later called "a state of death in trespasses and sins" to a "life in a dear dying Redeemer" was sudden but genuine and lasting.[20] After his conversion

Pearce was especially conscious of the Spirit's witness within his heart that he was a child of God and of being "filled with peace and joy unspeakable."[21] A year or so later, on the day when he celebrated his seventeenth birthday, he was baptized and joined the Plymouth congregation in which he had been raised.

It was not long after his baptism that the church perceived that Pearce had been endowed with definite gifts that marked him out as one called to pastoral ministry. So, in November of 1785, when he was only nineteen years of age and serving as an apprentice to his father who was a silversmith, Pearce received a call from the church to engage in the ministry of the Word. The church recommended that Pearce first pursue a course of study at the Bristol Baptist Academy. From August, 1786 to May, 1789 Pearce thus studied at what was then the sole Baptist institution in Great Britain for the training of ministers for the Calvinistic Baptist denomination. The benefits afforded by this period of study were ones for which Pearce was ever grateful. There was, for example, the privilege of studying under Caleb Evans (1737-1791), the Principal of the Academy, and Robert Hall, Jr. (1764-1831)—the former a key figure in the late 18th century Calvinistic Baptist community and the latter a reputed genius and one who was destined to become one of the great preachers of the early decades of the next century.[22]

Then there were the opportunities for the students to preach and try their wings, as it were. A number of years later Pearce recalled one occasion when he went to preach among the colliers of Coleford, Gloucestershire, the town in which his father in the faith, Isaiah Birt, had grown up. Standing on a three-legged stool in a hut, he directed thirty or forty of these miners to "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "Such an unction from above" attended his preaching that day that the entirety of his hearers were "melted into tears" and he too, "weeping among them, could scarcely speak...for interrupting sighs and sobs."

Finally, there was the rich fellowship to be enjoyed with fellow students. Among the latter, one in particular became a very close friend, William Steadman (1764-1837), later to play a central role in Baptist renewal in the North of England.[23]

Cannon Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, 1789-1799

Early in 1789 Pearce received and accepted a call to serve for a year's probation as the pastor of Cannon Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. He had supplied the Birmingham pulpit the previous summer as well as over the Christmas vacation. Impressed by Pearce's evangelistic zeal—a number were saved on both occasions—along with his ability to edify God's people, the church sent their request to him in early February 1789. Five weeks later Pearce wrote back consenting to their request, and by June, his studies finished, he was with them.[24] The following year he was formally called to be the pastor of what would turn out to be his only pastoral charge. In his letter of acceptance, written on July 18, 1790, he told the Birmingham Baptists that he hoped the union between pastor and church would "be for God's glory, for the good of precious souls, for your prosperity as a Church, and for my prosperity as your minister."[25] It is noteworthy that he placed "God's glory" in first place. If there was any concern that set the fundamental tone for his ministry it was this desire to see God glorified in his life and labours. It is also noteworthy that he asked to be given a yearly holiday of six weeks so that he could visit his father in Plymouth.[26]

His ministry at Cannon Street occupied ten all-too-brief years. Yet they were ones of great fruitfulness. No less than 335 individuals were baptized during his ministry and received into the membership of Cannon Street. This figure does not include those converted under his preaching who, for one reason or another, did not join themselves to the Birmingham cause. A Sunday school was started in 1795 and within a very short period of time grew to the point that some 1200 scholars were enrolled in it.[27]

At the heart of his preaching and spirituality was that key-note of evangelicalism, the mercy of God displayed in the cross of Christ. Writing one Sunday afternoon to William Summers, a friend then residing in London, Pearce told him that he had for his sermon that evening "the best subject of all in the Bible. Eph. i.7—Redemption! how welcome to the captive! Forgiveness! how delightful to the guilty! Grace! how pleasant to the heart of a saved sinner!" Christ's atoning death for sinners, he went on to say, is "the leading truth in the N.T., ...a doctrine I

cannot but venerate; and to the Author of such a redemption my whole soul labours to exhaust itself in praise."[28] And in his final letter to his congregation, written on 31 May 1799, he reminded them that the gospel which he had preached among them for ten years and in which he urged them to stand fast was "the gospel of the grace of God; the gospel of free, full, everlasting salvation, founded on the sufferings and death of God manifest in the flesh."[29]

Men and women called him the "silver-tongued" because of the intensity and power of his preaching.[30] But there were times when preaching was a real struggle for him. Writing to William Carey (1761-1834) in 1796, for example, he told the Baptist missionary who at that time was living in Mudnabati, West Bengal:

> *At some times, I question whether I ever knew the grace of God in truth; and at others I hesitate on the most important points of Christian faith. I have lately had peculiar struggles of this kind with my own heart, and have often half concluded to speak no more in the name of the Lord. When I am preparing for the pulpit, I fear I am going to avow fables for facts and doctrines of men for the truths of God. In conversation I am obliged to be silent, lest my tongue should belie my heart. In prayer I know not what to say, and at times think prayer altogether useless. Yet I cannot wholly surrender my hope, or my profession.—Three things I find, above all others, tend to my preservation:—First, a recollection of time when, at once, I was brought to abandon the practice of sins which the fear of damnation could never bring me to relinquish before. Surely, I say, this must be the finger of God, according to the Scripture doctrine of regeneration:—Second, I feel such a consciousness of guilt that nothing but the gospel scheme can satisfy my mind respecting the hope of salvation: and, Thirdly, I see that what true devotion does appear in the world, seems only to be found among those to whom Christ is precious.*[31]

A handful of his sermons were published, as well as the circular letter for the Midland Baptist Association that he drew up in 1795 and that was entitled *Doctrine of Salvation by Free Grace Alone*. A good perspective on his thought may be found in the following extract from this circular letter:

> *The point of difference between us and many other professing Christians lies in the doctrine of salvation entirely by grace. For whilst some assert that good works are the cause of justification; some that good works are united with the merits of Christ and so both contribute to our justification; and others that good works neither in whole nor in part justify, but the act of faith; we re-*

nounce everything in point of our acceptance with God, but his free Grace alone which justifies the ungodly, still treading in the steps of our venerable forefathers, the compilers of the Baptist Confession of Faith, who thus express themselves respecting the doctrine of justification: "Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth, ...for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness; but by imputing Christ's active obedience unto the whole law, and passive obedience in his death for their whole and sole righteousness, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith" which "is the alone instrument of justification."

In this point do all the other lines of our confession meet. For if it be admitted that justification is an act of free grace in God without any respect to the merit or demerit of the person justified, then the doctrines of Jehovah's sovereign love in choosing to himself a people from before the foundation of the world, his sending his Son to expiate their guilt, his effectual operations upon their hearts, and his perfecting the work he has begun in them until those whom he justifies he also glorifies, will be embraced as necessary parts of the glorious scheme of our salvation.[33]

Sarah Pearce

A vital support to Pearce throughout his pastorate at Cannon Street was his closest friend, his wife Sarah. A third-generation Baptist,[34] Sarah Hopkins had met Pearce soon after his arrival in Birmingham. Pearce was soon deeply in love with Sarah and she with him. As he wrote to her on December 24, 1790, about the impact her letters had on him:

Were I averse to writing, ...one of your dear Epistles could not fail of conquering the antipathy and transforming it into desire. The moment I peruse a line from my Sarah, I am inspired at the propensity which never leaves me, till I have thrown open my whole heart, and returned a copy of it to the dear being who long since compelled it to a voluntary surrender, and whose claims have never since been disputed.[35]

They were married on February 2, 1791. Pearce's understanding of what should lie at the heart of their marriage finds expression in a letter that he wrote to his future wife a little over two months before their wedding: "may my dear Sarah & myself be made the means of leading each other on in the way to the heavenly kingdom & at last there meet to know what even temporary separation means no more." [37]

Pearce's love for his wife clearly deepened with the passing of the years. Three and a half years after their marriage, he wrote to her from Plymouth: "O, my Sarah, had I as much proof of my love to Christ as I have of my love to you, I should prize it above rubies."[37] And when Pearce was away from his wife the following year, 1795, on a preaching trip in London, he wrote to tell her that "every day improves not only my tenderness but my *esteem* for you." On the same trip he called her "the dearest of women—my invaluable Sarah."[38] In another letter written about the same time he informed the one whom he called the "partner of my heart" that his letter was a "forerunner of her impatient husband who weary with so long an absence"—he had obviously been away from home for a few weeks—"[longs] again to embrace his dearest friend."[39]

The following year, when he was involved in an extensive preaching trip in Ireland, he wrote to his wife from Dublin on June 24, 1796: "last evening ...were my eyes delighted at the sight of a letter from my dear Sarah...I rejoice that you, as well as myself, find that "absence diminishes not affection." For my part I compare our present correspondence to a kind of courtship, rendered sweeter than what usually bears that name by a *certainty of success* ...Not less than when I sought your hand [in marriage], do I *now* court your heart, nor doth the *security* of possessing you at all lessen my pleasure at the prospect of calling you my own, when we meet again." And then towards the end of the letter he added: "O our dear fireside! When shall we sit down toe to toe, and tete á [*sic*] tete again—Not a long time I hope will elapse ere I re-enjoy that felicity."[40]

That Sarah felt the same towards Samuel is seen in a letter she wrote after her husband's death to her sister Rebecca. Rebecca had just been married to a Mr. Harris and Sarah prayed that she might "enjoy the most uninterrupted Happiness...(for indeed I can scarce form an idia [*sic*]...this side of Heaven of greater) equal to what *I have* enjoyed."[41]

One final word about Samuel and Sarah's marriage needs to be said. What especially delighted Pearce about his wife was her passion for God. As he told her in the summer of 1793 in response to a letter he had received from her: "I cannot convey to you an Idea of the holy rap-

ture I felt at the account you gave me of your soul prosperity."[42]

A missionary spirituality

One leading characteristic of Pearce's spirituality has already been noted, namely, its crucicentrism. "Christ crucified," his good friend Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) wrote of him, "was his darling theme, from first to last." [43]

A second prominent feature of his spirituality was a passion for the salvation of his fellow human beings. On a preaching trip to Wales, for instance, he wrote to Sarah about the lovely countryside that he was passing through: "every pleasant scene which opened to us on our way (& they were very numerous) lost half its beauty because my lovely Sarah was not present to partake its pleasures with me." But, he added, "to see the Country was not the immediate object of my visiting Wales—I came to preach the gospel—to tell poor Sinners of the dear Lord Jesus—to endeavour to restore the children of misery to the pious pleasures of divine enjoyment."[44]

This passion is strikingly revealed in four events.

Preaching at Guilsborough

The first that took place when he was asked to preach at the opening of a Baptist meeting-house in Guilsborough, Northamptonshire, in May, 1794. The previous meeting-house had been burnt down at Christmas, 1792, by a mob that was hostile to Baptists. Pearce had spoken in the morning on Psalm 76:10 ("Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain"). Later that day, during the midday meal, it was quite evident from the conversation that was going at the dinner tables that Pearce's sermon had been warmly appreciated. It was thus no surprise when Pearce was asked if he would be willing to preach again the following morning. "If you will find a congregation," Pearce responded, "I will find a sermon." It was agreed to have the sermon at 5 a.m. so that a number of farm labourers could come who wanted to hear Pearce preach and who would have to be at their tasks early in the morning.

After Pearce had preached the second time, and that to a congregation of more than 200 people, and he was sitting at breakfast with a

few others, including Andrew Fuller, the latter remarked to Pearce how pleased he had been with the content of his friend's sermon. But, he went on to say, it seemed to him that Pearce's sermon was poorly structured. "I thought," Fuller told his friend, "you did not seem to close when you had really finished. I wondered that, contrary to what is usual with you, you seemed, as it were, to begin again at the end—how was it?" Pearce's response was terse: "It was so; but I had my reason." "Well then, come, let us have it," Fuller jovially responded. Pearce was quite reluctant to divulge the reason, but after a further entreaty from Fuller, he consented and said:

> *Well, my brother, you shall have the secret, if it must be so. Just at the moment I was about to resume my seat, thinking I had finished, the door opened, and I saw a poor man enter, of the working class; and from the sweat on his brow, and the symptoms of his fatigue, I conjectured that he had walked some miles to this early service, but that he had been unable to reach the place till the close. A momentary thought glanced through my mind—here may be a man who never heard the gospel, or it may be he is one that regards it as a feast of fat things; in either case, the effort on his part demands one on mine. So with the hope of doing him good, I resolved at once to forget all else, and, in despite of criticism, and the apprehension of being thought tedious, to give him a quarter of an hour.*[45]

As Fuller and the others present at the breakfast table listened to this simple explanation, they were deeply impressed by Pearce's evident love for souls. Not afraid to appear as one lacking in homiletical skill, especially in the eyes of his fellow pastors, Pearce's zeal for the spiritual health of *all* his hearers had led him to minister as best he could to this "poor man" who had arrived late.

"An Instrument of establishing the empire of my dear Lord"

Given his ardour for the advance of the gospel it is only to be expected that Pearce would be vitally involved in the formation in October, 1792, of what would eventually be termed the Baptist Missionary Society, the womb of the modern missionary movement. In fact, by 1794 Pearce was so deeply gripped by the cause of missions that he had arrived at the conviction that he should offer his services to the Society and go out to India to join the first missionary team the Society had sent out, namely, William Carey, John Thomas (1757-1801), and their respective families. He began to study Bengali on his own.[46] And for the en-

tire month of October, 1794, which preceded the early November meeting of the Society's administrative committee where Pearce's offer would be evaluated, Pearce set apart "one day in every week to secret prayer and fasting" for direction.[47] He also kept a diary of his experiences during this period, much which Fuller later inserted verbatim into his *Memoirs* of Pearce and which admirably diplays what Fuller described as his friend's "singular submissiveness to the will of God."[48]

During one of these days of prayer, fasting, and seeking God's face, Pearce recorded how God met with him in a remarkable way. Pearce had begun the day with "solemn prayer for the assistance of the Holy Spirit" so that he might "enjoy the spirit and power of prayer," have his "personal religion improved," and his "public steps directed." He proceeded to read a portion of Jonathan Edwards' life of the American missionary David Brainerd (1718-1747), a book that quickened the zeal of many of Pearce's generation, and to peruse 2 Corinthians 2-6. Afterwards he went to prayer, but, he recorded, his heart was hard and "all was dullness," and he feared that somehow he had offended God.

Suddenly, Pearce wrote, "it pleased God to smite the rock with the rod of his Spirit, and immediately the waters began to flow." Likening the frame of his heart to the rock in the desert that Moses struck with his rod in order to bring forth water from it (see Exodus 17:1-6), Pearce had found himself unable to generate any profound warmth for God and his dear cause. God, as it were, had to come by his Spirit, "touch" Pearce's heart and so quicken his affections. He was overwhelmed, he wrote, by "a heavenly glorious melting power." He saw afresh "the love of a crucified Redeemer" and "the attractions of his cross." He felt "like Mary [Madgalene] at the master's feet weeping, for tenderness of soul; like a little child, for submission to my heavenly father's will." The need to take the gospel to those who had never heard it gripped him anew "with an irresistible drawing of soul" and, in his own words, "compelled me to vow that I would, by his leave, serve him among the heathen." As he wrote later in his diary:

> *If ever in my life I knew any thing of the influences of the Holy Spirit, I did at this time. I was swallowed up in God. Hunger, fulness, cold, heat, friends and enemies, all seemed nothing before God. I was in a new world. All was delightful; for Christ was all, and in all. Many times I con-*

cluded prayer, but when rising from my knees, communion with God was so desirable, that I was sweetly drawn to it again and again, till my... strength was almost exhausted.[49]

The decision of the Society as to Pearce's status was ultimately a negative one. When the executive committee of the Society met at Roade, Northamptonshire, on 12 November, it was of the opinion that Pearce could best serve the cause of missions at home in England. Pearce's response to this decision is best seen in extracts from two letters. The first, written to his wife Sarah the day after he received the decision, stated: "I am disappointed, but not dismayed. I ever wish to make my Saviour's will my own."[50] The second, sent to William Carey over four months later, contains a similar desire to submit to the perfectly good and sovereign will of God.

Instead of a letter, you perhaps expected to have seen the writer; and had the will of God been so, he would by this time have been on his way to Mudnabatty: but it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Full of hope and expectation as I was, when I wrote you last, that I should be honoured with a mission to the poor heathen, and be an instrument of establishing the empire of my dear Lord in India, I must submit now to stand still, and see the salvation of God.

Pearce then told Carey some of the details of the November meeting at which the Society executive had made their decision regarding his going overseas.

I shall ever love my dear brethren the more for the tenderness with which they treated me, and the solemn prayer they repeatedly put up to God for me. At last, I withdrew for them to decide, and whilst I was apart from them, and engaged in prayer for divine direction, I felt all anxiety forsake me, and an entire resignation of will to the will of God, be it what it would. together with a satisfaction that so much praying breath would not be lost: but that He who hath promised to be found of all that seek him, would assuredly direct the hearts of my brethren to that which was most pleasing to himself, and most suitable to the interests of his kingdom in the world. Between two and three hours were they deliberating after which time a paper was put into my hands, of which the following is a copy.

"The brethren at this meeting are fully satisfied of the fitness of brother P [earce]'s qualifications, and greatly approve of the disinterestedness of his motives and the ardour of his mind. But another Missionary not having been requested, and not being in our view immediately necessary. and

brother P[earce] occupying already a post very important to the prosperity of the Mission itself, we are unanimously of opinion that at present, however, he should continue in the situation which he now occupies."

In response to this decision, which dashed some of Pearce's deepest longings, he was, he said, "enabled cheerfully to reply, "The will of the Lord be done;" and receiving this answer as the voice of God, I have, for the most part, been easy since, though not without occasional pantings of spirit after the publishing of the gospel to the Pagans."[51]

From the vantage-point of the highly individualistic spirit of 21st century Western Christianity, Pearce's friends seem to have been quite wrong in refusing to send him to India. If, during his month of fasting and prayer, he had felt he knew God's will for his life, was not the Baptist Missionary Society executive wrong in the decision they made? And should not Pearce have persisted in pressing his case for going? While these questions may seem natural ones to ask given the cultural matrix of contemporary Western Christianity, Pearce knew himself to be part of a team and he was more interested in the triumph of that team's strategy than the fulfillment of his own personal desires.[52]

"Surely *Irish* Zion demands our prayers"

Pearce's passion for the lost found outlet in other ways, though. In July of 1795 he received an invitation from the General Evangelical Society in Dublin to come over to Dublin and preach at a number of venues. He was not able to go until the following year, when he left Birmingham at 8 a.m. on May 31. After travelling through Wales and taking passage on a ship from Holyhead, he landed in Dublin on Saturday afternoon, June 4.[53]

Pearce stayed with a Presbyterian elder by the name of Hutton while in Dublin who was a member of a congregation pastored by a Dr. McDowell.[55] Pearce preached for this congregation on a number of occasions, as well as for other congregations in the city, including the Baptists.

Baptist witness in Dublin went back to the Cromwellian era to 1653 when through the ministry of Thomas Patient (d.1666), the first Calvinistic Baptist meeting-house was built in Swift's Alley.[56] The church grew rapidly at first, and by 1725 this church had between 150 and

200 members. A new meeting-house was put up in the 1730s.

By the time that Pearce came to Ireland in 1796, though, the membership had declined to roughly forty members. Pearce's impressions of the congregation were not too positive. In a letter he wrote to William Carey in August, 1796, the month after his return to England, he told the missionary:

> *There were 10 Baptist societies in Ireland.—They are now reduced to 6 & bid fair soon to be perfectly extinct.*
>
> *When I came to Dublin they had no meeting of any kind for religious purposes... Indeed they were so dead to piety that, tho' of their own denomination, I saw & knew less of them than of every other professors in the place.*[57]

This opinion does not appear to have dampened his zeal in preaching. A Dublin deacon wrote to a friend: "We have had a Jubilee for weeks. That blessed man of God, Samuel Pearce, has preached amongst us with great sweetness and much power."[58] And in a letter to his close friend Summers, Pearce acknowledged:

> *Never have I been more deeply taught my own nothingness; never has the power of God more evidently rested upon me. The harvest here is great indeed; and the Lord of the harvest has enabled me to labor in it with delight.*[59]

This passionate concern for the advance of the gospel in Ireland is well caught in a sentence from one of his letters to his wife Sarah. "Surely," he wrote to her on June 24, "*Irish* Zion demands our prayers."[60]

Final days

In the three remaining years of Pearce's earthly life, he expended much of his energy in raising support for the cause of foreign missions. As he informed Carey in the fall of 1797:

> *I can hardly refrain from repeating what I have so often told you before, that I long to meet you on earth and to join you in your labours of love among the poor dear heathens. Yes, would my Lord bid me so, I should with transport obey the summons and take a joyful farewell of the land that bare me. though it were for ever. But I must confess that the path of duty appears to me clearer than before to be at home, at least for the present. Not that I think my*

connexions in England a sufficient argument, but that I am somewhat necessary to the Mission itself, and shall be as long as money is wanted and our number of active friends does not increase. Brother Fuller and myself have the whole of the collecting business on our hands, and though there are many others about us who exceed me in grace and gifts, yet their other engagements forbid or their peculiar turn of mind disqualifies them for that kind of service. I wish, however, to be thankful if our dear Lord will but employ me as a foot in the body. I consider myself as united to the hands and eyes, and mouth, and heart, and all; and when the body rejoices, I have my share of gladness with the other members.[61]

One of the meetings at which Pearce preached was the one that saw William Ward (1769-1823)—later to be one of the most invaluable of Carey's co-workers in India—accepted as a missionary with the Baptist Missionary Society. Those attending the meeting, which took place at Kettering on 16 October 1798, were deeply stirred by Pearce's passion and concern for the advance of the gospel. He preached "like an Apostle," Fuller later wrote to Carey. And when Ward wrote to Carey, he told his future colleague that Pearce "set the whole meeting in a flame. Had missionaries been needed, we might have had a cargo immediately."[62]

Returning back to Birmingham from this meeting Pearce was caught in a heavy downpour of rain, drenched to the skin, and subsequently developed a severe chill. Neglecting to rest and foolishly thinking what he called "pulpit sweats" would effect a cure, he continued a rigorous schedule of preaching at Cannon Street as well as in outlying villages around Birmingham. His lungs became so inflamed that Pearce was necessitated to ask Ward to supply the Cannon Street pulpit for a few months during the winter of 1798-1799.

By mid-December, 1798, Pearce could not converse for more than a few minutes without losing his breath. Yet still he was thinking of the salvation of the lost. Writing to Carey around this time, he told him of a plan to take the gospel to France that he had been mulling over in his mind. At that time Great Britain and France were locked in a titanic war, the Napoleonic War, that would last into the middle of the second decade of the next century. This war was the final and climactic episode in a struggle that had dominated the 18th century. Not surprisingly, there was little love lost between the British and the French. But

Pearce was gripped by a far different passion than those that gripped many in Britain and France—his was the priority of the kingdom of Christ. In one of the last sermons that he ever preached, on a day of public thanksgiving for Horatio Nelson's victory annihilation of the French Fleet at the Battle of the Nile (1798) and the repulse of a French invasion fleet off the coast of Ireland in the fall of 1799, Pearce pointedly said:

> *Should any one expect that I shall introduce the destruction of our foes, by the late victories gained off the coasts of Egypt and Ireland, as the object of pleasure and gratitude, he will be disappointed. The man who can take pleasure at the destruction of his fellow men, is a cannibal at heart;... but to the heart of him who calls himself a disciple of the merciful Jesus, let such pleasure be an everlasting stranger. Since in that sacred volume, which I revere as the fair gift of heaven to man, I am taught, that "of one blood God hath made all nations," [Acts 17:26] it is impossible for me not to regard every man as my brother, and to consider, that national differences ought not to excite personal animosities.*[63]

A few months later—when he was desperately ill—he wrote a letter to Carey telling him of his plans for a missionary journey to France. "I have been endeavouring for some years," he told Carey, "to get five of our Ministers to agree that they will apply themselves to the French language, ... then we [for he was obviously intending to be one of the five] might spend two months annually in that Country, and at least satisfy ourselves that Christianity was not lost in France for want of a fair experiment in its favour: and who can tell what God might do!"[64] God would use British evangelicals, notably Pearce's Baptist contemporary Robert Haldane (1764-1842), to take the gospel to Francophones on the Continent when peace eventually came, but Pearce's anointed preaching would play no part in that great work. Yet his ardent prayers on behalf of the French could not have been without some effect. As Pearce had noted in 1794 "praying breath" is never lost.[65]

By the spring of 1799 Pearce was desperately ill with pulmonary tuberculosis. Leaving his wife and family—he and Sarah had five children by this time—he went to the south of England from April to July in the hope that rest there might effect a cure. Being away from his wife and children, though, only aggravated his suffering. Writing to Sarah—"the

dear object of my tenderest, my warmest love"—from Plymouth, he requested her to "write me as soon as you receive this" and signed it "ever, ever, ever, wholly yours." Three weeks later when he wrote, he sent Sarah "a thousand & 10 thousand thousand embraces," and then poignantly added, "may the Lord hear our daily prayers for each other!"

Sarah and the children had gone to stay with her family in Alcester, twenty or miles or so from Birmingham. But by mid-May Sarah could no longer bear being absent from her beloved. Leaving their children with Birmingham friends, she headed south in mid-May, where she stayed with her husband until the couple slowly made their way home to Birmingham in mid-July.[66] By his time Samuel's voice was so far gone that he could not even whisper without pain in his lungs. His suffering, though, seemed to act like a refiner's fire to draw him closer to Christ. "Blessed be his dear name," he said not long before his death, "who shed his blood for me. ...Now I see the value of the religion of the cross. It is a religion for a dying sinner. ...Yes, I taste its sweetness, and enjoy its fulness, with all the gloom of a dying-bed before me; and far rather would I be the poor emaciated and emaciating creature that I am, than be an emperor with every earthly good about him, but without a God."[67] Some of his final words were for Sarah: "I trust our separation will not be forever...we shall meet again."[68]

He fell asleep in Christ on Thursday, 10 October 1799. William Ward, who had been profoundly influenced by Pearce's zeal and spirituality, well summed up his character when he wrote not long before the latter's death: "Oh, how does personal religion shine in Pearce! What a soul! What ardour for the glory of God! ...you see in him a mind wholly given up to God; a sacred lustre shines in his conversation: always tranquil, always cheerful. ...I have seen more of God in him than in any other person I ever met."[69]

At the heart of Pearce's spirituality, both lived and taught, was the theological conviction that, as he once put it, "real religion consists in supreme love to God and disinterested [i.e. impartial] love to man."[70] Measured by this standard there seems little doubt about the reality of Pearce's Christian faith and spirituality, and also little question of the challenge it poses to Christians at the beginning of the 21st century.

Footnotes

1. Mark Greengrass, The French Reformation (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1987), 43.
2. For further details, see Michael A. G. Haykin, One Heart and one soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, his friends and his times (Darlington, Co. Durham: Evangelical Press, 1995), 15-24.
3. David Phillips, Memoir of the Life, Labors, and Extensive Usefulness of the Rev. Christmas Evans (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1843), 74.
4. For the story of this friendship and the revival of the eighteenth-century English Baptists, see Haykin, One Heart and one soul, passim.
5. "Book Reviews: America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards. By Robert W. Jenson", Church History, 58 (1989), 522.
6. Extremely helpful in summarizing Edwards' thought in this paragraph has been David W. Kling, "The New Divinity and the Origins of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions", Church History, 72 (2003), 799-807.
7. The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ no Security against Corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life (London: W. Button & Son, 1815), 47.
8. See, for example, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, ed. R. W. Dale (3rd. ed.; London: James Nisbet and Co., 1861), 67; John Angell James, An Earnest Ministry the Want of the Times (4th. ed.; London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1848), 272. The phrase appears to have originated with Pearce's friend, John Ryland, Jr.: see Ernest A. Payne, "Samuel Pearce" in his The First Generation: Early Leaders of the Baptist Missionary Society in England and America (London: Carey Press, [1936]), 46.
9. Andrew Fuller and W.H. Pearce, Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Pearce, A.M. (London: G. Wightman, 1831), xii. Andrew Fuller's original 1801 edition was reprinted numerous times over the next thirty years. The definitive edition, as it were, was this one in which Pearce's son expanded the Fuller edition with what the title-page called "considerable additions."
10 F. A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society, from 1792 to 1842* (London: T. Ward & Co./G. J. Dyer, 1842), I, 54.
11. The Autobiography of William Jay, eds. George Redford and John Angell James (1854 ed.; repr. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 372, 373.
12. The History of Dissenters (2nd. ed.; London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1833), II, 653.
13. See, for example, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, ed. R. W. Dale (3rd. ed.; London: James Nisbet and Co., 1861), 67; John Angell James, An Earnest Ministry the Want of the Times (4th. ed.; London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1848), 272. The phrase appears to have originated with Pearce's friend, John Ryland, Jr.: see Ernest A. Payne, "Samuel Pearce" in his The First Generation: Early Leaders of the Baptist Missionary Society in England and America (London: Carey Press, [1936]), 46.
14. "Memoir of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce, A.M.", The Evangelical Magazine, 8 (1800), 177.
15. Payne, "Samuel Pearce", 47.

16. On Cheare, see Joseph Ivimey, A History of the English Baptists (London, 1814), II, 103-116.

17. Words in Season (London: Nathan Brookes, 1668), 250.

18. Andrew Fuller, Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce, A. M. (2nd. ed.; Clipstone: J. W. Morris, 1801), 1-2. Henceforth cited as Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce (2nd. ed.).

19. For the life of Birt, see the memoir by his son: John Birt, "Memoir of the Late Rev. Isaiah Birt", The Baptist Magazine, 30 (1838), 54-59, 107-116, 197-203,

20. Samuel Pearce, Letter to Isaiah Birt, October 27, 1782 (The Evangelical Magazine, 15 (1807), 111).

21. Ibid., 2-3.

22. On the life and ministry of Evans, see especially Norman S. Moon, "Caleb Evans, Founder of the Bristol Education Society", The Baptist Quarterly, 24 (1971-1972), 175-190; Roger Hayden, "Evangelical Calvinism among eighteenth-century British Baptists with particular reference to Bernard Foskett, Hugh and Caleb Evans and the Bristol Baptist Academy, 1690-1791" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Keele, 1991), 209-240. On Hall, see, in particular, John Greene, Reminiscences of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M. (2nd. ed; London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1834); G. W. Hughes, Robert Hall (1764-1831) (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1961); George J. Griffin, "Robert Hall's Contribution to Early Baptist Missions", Baptist History and Heritage, 3, No.1 (January, 1968), 3-8, 42; Thomas R. McKibbens, Jr., The Forgotten Heritage: A Lineage of Great Baptist Preaching (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), 61-66.

23. On the life and ministry of Steadman, see Thomas Steadman, Memoir of the Rev. William Steadman, D.D. (London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1838).

24. S. Pearce Carey, Samuel Pearce, M. A., The Baptist Brainerd (3rd. ed.; London: The Carey Press, n.d.), 93-94.

25. Ibid., 95.

26. Ibid., 48-49.

27. Ibid., 113; Arthur S. Langley, *Birmingham Baptists: Past and Present* (London: The Kingsgate Press, 1939), 34. Even after Pearce's death, his wife Sarah could rejoice in people joining the church who had been saved under her husband's ministry. See Andrew Fuller, "Memoir of Mrs. Pearce" in his *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce, A. M.* (Philadelphia: Amercian Sunday School Union, 1829), 160-161.

28. Carey, *Samuel Pearce,* 97-98.

29. Fuller, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce* (2nd. ed.), 123-124. See also *ibid.*, 140-141.

30. Payne, "Samuel Pearce", 48-49.

31. Fuller, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce* (2nd. ed.), 80-81.

32. The Second London Confession of Faith 11.1, 2.

33. The Doctrine of Salvation by Free Grace Alone (1795; repr. n.p.: New York Baptist Association, 1855), 2.

34. Her father was Joshua Hopkins (d.1798), a grocer and a deacon in Alcester Baptist Church, Warwickshire, for close to thirty years. Her maternal grandfather was

John Ash (1724-1779), pastor of the Baptist cause in Pershore, Worcestershire, and a noteworthy Baptist minister of the 18th century.

35. Letter to Sarah Hopkins, December 24, 1790 (Pearce-Carey Correspondence 1790-1828, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford).

36. Letter to Sarah Hopkins, November 26, 1790 (Samuel Pearce Carey Collection—Pearce Family Letters, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford).

37. S. Pearce Carey, "Love Letters of Samuel Pearce", *The Baptist Quarterly*, 8 (1936-1937), 96. In his biography of Pearce, Carey has a slightly different version of this quote. Carey appears to have "modernized" the sentence for the biography; see Carey, *Samuel Pearce,* 122.

38. Letter to Sarah Pearce, August 31, 1795 (Samuel Pearce Mss., Angus Library, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford).

39. Letters to Sarah Pearce, September 7, 1795, and undated (Samuel Pearce Mss.).

40. Letter to Sarah Pearce, June 24, 1796 (Samuel Pearce Mss.).

41. Letter to Rebecca Harris, March 29, 1800 (Samuel Pearce Mss.).

42. Letter to Sarah Pearce, June 14, 1793 (Samuel Pearce Mss.).

43. Fuller, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce* (2nd. ed.), 140. For crucicentrism as a distinctive characteristic of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism, see David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (1989 ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 14-17.

44. Letter to Sarah Pearce, July 11, 1792 (Samuel Pearce Mss.).

45. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, I, 52-53. Pearce's friendship with Fuller drew him into a highly significant circle of friends. For the story of this circle, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, his friends and his times* (Darlington, Co. Durham: Evangelical Press, 1995).

46. Payne, "Samuel Pearce",

47. Fuller, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce* (2nd. ed.), 38.

48. Ibid., 59. For the diary, see ibid., 39-57. For some lengthy extracts from the diary, see also Michael A. G. Haykin, "Samuel Pearce, Extracts from a Diary: Calvinist Baptist Spirituality in the Eighteenth Century", The Banner of Truth, 279 (December 1986), 9-18.

49. Ibid., 55.

50. Fuller, Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce (2nd. ed.), 35.

51. Letter to William Carey, 27 March 1795 [Missionary Correspondence: containing Extracts of Letters from the late Mr. Samuel Pearce, to the Missionaries in India, Between the Years 1794, and 1798; and from Mr. John Thomas, from 1798, to 1800 (London: T. Gardiner and Son, 1814), 26, 30-31].

52. See Ralph D. Winter, "William Carey's Major Novelty" in J. T. K. Daniel and R. E. Hedlund, eds., Carey's Obligation and India's Renaissance (Serampore, West Bengal: Council of Serampore College, 1993), 136-137.

53. Samuel Pearce, Letter to Sarah Pearce, June 4, 1796 (Samuel Pearce mss.).

54. Ibid.

55. B. R. White, "Thomas Patient in England and Ireland", Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal, 2 (1969-1970), 41. See also Robert Dunlop, "Dublin Baptists from 1650 Onwards", Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal, 21 (1988-1989), 6-7.
56. Joshua Thompson, "Baptists in Ireland 1792-1922: A Dimension of Protestant Dissent" (Unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford, 1988), 9.
57. Letter to William Carey, August, 1796 (Samuel Pearce Carey Collection—Pearce Family Letters, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford).
58. Carey, Samuel Pearce, 119.
59. Memoir of Rev. Samuel Pearce. A.M. (new York: American Tract Society, n.d.), 132.
60. Letter to Sarah Pearce, June 24, 1796 (Smauel Pearce mss.).
61. Letter to William Carey, September 8, 1797 (Missionary Correspondence, 53-54).
62. Andrew Fuller, Letter to William Carey, 18 April 1799 (Letters of Anrdew Fuller, typescript transcript, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford); William Ward, Letter to William Carey, October 1798 [cited S. Pearce Carey, William Carey, ed. Peter Masters (London: Wakeman Trust, 1993), 172]. In his memoirs of Pearce, Fuller wrote that Pearce's sermon was "full of a holy unction, and seemed to breathe an apostolical ardour" [Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce (2nd. ed.), 100].
63. Motives to Gratitude (Birmingham: James Belcher, 1798), 18-19.
64. Cited Carey, Samuel Pearce, 189.
65. Letters to Sarah Pearce, 20 April 1799 and 3 May 1799 (Angus Library).
66. Ernest A. Payne, "Some Samuel Pearce Documents", The Baptist Quarterly, 18 (1959-1960), 31.
67. Fuller, Memoirs of the Late Rev. Samuel Pearce (2nd. ed.), 141.
68. "The dying words of dear Br Pearce to his wife" (Samuel Pearce Mss.).
69. Cited Carey, *Samuel Pearce,* 188.
70. The Doctrine of Salvation by Free Grace Alone, 7.

Jonathan Edwards
and
Revival

Jonathan Edwards was an intellectual and spiritual giant. He had, and still has, a massive influence on many areas of theological thought. Something of the impact he had on his own era is evidenced, for example, in the number of ordination sermons he preached in his lifetime, so many that one scholar wrote a dissertation on them alone. It seems young men entering the ministry were queuing up to have Edwards preach for them; this is indicative of the esteem in which he was held. Not only did they want him to preach for them, they wanted to study with him. There was a constant stream of ministerial candidates who lived and studied in his home, many of whom went on to be renowned in their own right: Joseph Bellamy, Samuel Buell, Samuel Hopkins and of course David Brainerd, to name a few.

In his own lifetime his writings had a great influence, particularly his "Humble Attempt to promote explicit agreement and visible union of God's people in extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth" (popularly known as "The Humble Attempt"). "A Faithful Narrative of the surprising work of God in the conversion of many hundred souls in Northampton and the neighbouring towns and villages of New Hampshire in New England" was also highly regarded: John Wesley, for example, had it printed and distributed by the tens of thousands. Then of course there was his "Life of Brainerd" which had a massive distribution and had an incalculable impact on thousands. Again, Wesley published a shortened version and distributed it widely.

Subsequent generations have also experienced the impact of Edwards through his voluminous writings. His influence told heavily on some of our own English Baptist forbears, especially that cluster of men who were involved in the development of the great missionary endeavour at the time of Carey. Andrew Fuller wrote in his memoir, "In 1776 I became acquainted with Mr Sutcliffe who had lately come to Olney

and soon after with Mr John Ryland jnr. then of Northampton. In them I found familiar and faithful brethren; and who, partly by reflection, and partly by reading the writings of Edwards, Bellamy, Brainerd etc. had begun to doubt the system of false Calvinism to which they had inclined when they first entered the ministry, or rather decided against it."[1] In his last letter, written nine days before his death, Fuller wrote, "We have some who have been giving out of late that if Sutcliff and some others had preached more of Christ and less of Jonathan Edwards, they would have been more useful. If those who talk thus preached Christ half as much as Jonathan Edwards did and were half as useful as he was, their usefulness would be double what it is. It is very singular that the Mission to the east should have originated with men of these principles; and without pretending to be a prophet I may say, if it ever falls into the hands of men who talk in this strain, it will soon come to nothing."[2] John C Ryland simply spoke of him as, "The greatest, wisest, humblest and holiest of uninspired men".[3]

There is a continual stream of those who acknowledge their indebtedness to Edwards right down to our own day: RM McCheyne, David Livingstone, BB Warfield and John Murray for example. DM Lloyd Jones gave his own estimation: "I am tempted perhaps foolishly to compare the Puritans to the Alps, Luther and Calvin to the Himalayas and Jonathan Edwards to Mount Everest! He has always seemed to me to be the man most like the Apostle Paul".[4] High praise indeed.

So much for the stature of the man, but who was he? What was his background?

He was born 5th October 1703 in East Windsor, New England. His mother was Esther Stoddard, the daughter of the Congregational colossus of New England, Solomon Stoddard. It was not until the twentieth year of her marriage that she made a public profession of her faith in Christ and became a communicant member of her husband's church. She was a winsome, godly woman who had an avid love of books and a long life, living until her 98th year. Jonathan's father was from a different pedigree entirely.

Richard Edwards, Jonathan's grandfather, married Elizabeth Tuttle in 1667. Three months after the marriage she informed him that she was pregnant with another man's child. Richard endeavoured to love and

care for his wayward wife but this was just the beginning of a pattern of bizarre, immoral and violent behaviour which eventually ended in divorce. Elizabeth was undoubtedly mentally disturbed and it was a family trait: her sister killed her own child and her brother murdered another sister with an axe. Timothy Edwards was the son of the union between Richard and Elizabeth and one can only imagine the shock waves that went around New England society when it was announced that the daughter of the prestigious Stoddard family was to marry Timothy Edwards. However, Timothy was a godly, scholarly man. He became the minister of the church at East Windsor in 1695 and was greatly used of God and saw periods of powerful revival under his ministry. He exercised a profound influence over Jonathan and inculcated in him the habit of carrying out all his study with pen in hand. There were also ten daughters in the Edwards household, four older, six younger than Jonathan. All of the family were tall including the girls and Timothy, who it seems had a ready wit and would at times speak of his having 'sixty feet of daughters'.

As Jonathan was growing up he witnessed at least two seasons of revival, one when he was nine years old and then again when he was twelve. These events did make an impression on him and for a time he changed his ways and gave himself to prayer, but the change was transient: he had not experienced true conversion. In 1716 he went to study at Yale. Of that time he later wrote, "I was at times very uneasy, especially toward the latter part of my time at college, when it pleased God to seize me with a pleurisy in which He brought me nigh to the grave and shook me over the pit of hell. And yet it was not long after my recovery before I fell again into my old ways of sin. But God would not suffer me to go on with my quietness; I had great and violent inward struggles."[5]

It was in 1721 that what he referred to as 'the great change' came about. Again in his own words, "I was indeed brought to seek salvation in a manner that I never was before; I felt a spirit to part with all things in the world for an interest in Christ. My concern continued and prevailed with many exercising thoughts and inward struggles."[6] "The first instance that I remember of that sort of inward sweet delight in God and divine things that I have lived so much in since, was on reading the words, 'Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible,

the only wise God be honour and glory for ever and ever amen' ... From about that time I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by Him ... I felt then a great satisfaction as to my good state. but that did not content me. I had vehement longings of soul after God and Christ and after more holiness, wherewith my heart seemed to be full, and ready to break."[7] This time the change was real and lasting. Now his real life work could begin.

He served a brief Pastorate in New York from 1722-23 and then, having received his MA, he served for a time as tutor at Yale. It was in 1727 that two of the greatest events in his life took place. On 28th July of that year he married Sarah Pierrepont and entered into that beautiful marriage relationship that he subsequently referred to as an 'uncommon union'. In the same year he became the assistant to his redoubtable grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, in the church at Northampton. He eventually succeeded his grandfather as minister of the church in 1729 and there saw mighty periods of revival during which many hundreds were converted. However, all was not well in Northampton and on 22 June 1750 he was dismissed from the church following a series of disputes about discipline in the church. From what had been the most influential pulpit in New England he went into a position of relative obscurity as minister at an Indian outpost in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. In the providence of God, however, it was here that he had the time to write some of his most profound and theologically important works. After about five years he acquiesced to the request to become the president of Princeton College. His time in that position was short-lived; following an inoculation against smallpox he fell gravely ill and passed into the presence of the Lord on 22nd March 1758. His last hours were an inspiration to those gathered around him. As he came near the end he said, "Now, where is Jesus of Nazareth, my true and never failing friend." He gave this closing counsel, "Trust in God and you need not fear." One of his daughters, Esther followed him the following month and on October 2nd his beloved Sarah joined him in glory, a victim of dysentery.

So much for Edwards' background and life; what of Edwards and revival? As we examine this specific area of his work and thought we will do so under four main headings: his experience of revival, his explanation of revival, his examination of revival and his expectation

of revival.

1. His experience of revival.

Jonathan Edwards lived in an atmosphere that was permeated by revival and he had personal experience of it in a number of ways

During his father's ministry.

During his time as a minister Timothy Edwards saw at least four or five distinct periods of awakening, of which Jonathan experienced two. The first of these was in 1712/13. Of this period he wrote, "I had a variety of concerns and exercises about my soul from childhood; but I had two more remarkable seasons of awakening, before I met with that change by which I was brought to those new dispositions, and that new sense of things, that I have since had. The first time when I was a boy, some years before I went to college, at a time of remarkable awakening in my father's congregation. I was then very much affected for many months, and concerned about my soul's salvation; and was abundant in religious duties."[8] But as he goes on to say, his convictions eventually wore off and he returned to his old ways.

The second period of revival was 1716/17. It was at this time that his mother and one of his sisters publicly professed faith in Christ. He recalls that during that move of the Spirit he witnessed "Commonly on Mondays above 30 persons to speak to my father about the condition of their souls".[9] Stephen Williams, a colleague in the ministry at the time gave an account of one of the services: "Heard Timothy Edwards speak on an awakening subject ... there was an extraordinary stir among the people - many were crying what must I do to be saved".[10]

During his grandfather's ministry.

It was the burning conviction of Solomon Stoddard that revival should be the church's primary concern. Along with his son-in-law, William Williams, he both engaged in, and actively promoted, fervent evangelism. In effect he became the forerunner of mission to the American Indians. In 1723 he wrote a pamphlet entitled, "Question - whether God is not angry with the country for our doing so little towards the conversion of the Indians". He had very clear and decided views regarding the whole exercise of preaching and what constituted bad preaching; it was a "sign of bad preaching when men don't preach

about the dangers of damnation". He further declared, "We are not sent into the pulpit to shew our wit and eloquence but to set the conscience of men on fire". Quite simply he was a man on fire with a passion for God and the souls of men; this passion burned and kept him in his pulpit until well into his eighties. His last published sermon was, "The defects of preachers reproved". During his long ministry he saw five distinct periods of spiritual awakening, five harvests as he called them, concerning which Edwards wrote, "I have heard my grandfather say, the greater part of the young people in the town seemed to be mainly concerned for their eternal salvation".[11] The last of these awakenings was in 1727 just as Jonathan joined him as his assistant.

During his own ministry.

Jonathan took up the pastoral charge in Northampton having lived and breathed the air of revival throughout his life. In mid 1731 however he discerned signs of a change coming about in the young people of the town. By 1734 several families were swept by a tide of deep religious concern. Then in April 1734 a young man died of pleurisy. This created an air of solemnity in the district and Edwards preached at the funeral from the text, "In the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up. In the evening it is cut down and withered" Psalm 90:5-6 Shortly after this a young woman died; on this occasion Jonathan preached on the joys and comforts experienced at the death of the saints. These events were the catalyst for a great move of the Spirit of God that swept the area.

This work spread primarily among the young until in December 1734 a most notorious and immoral young woman was converted. This served to open the flood gates and by March/April 1735 the move was in full spate. It was estimated that some 300 souls had been saved in a six month period. The effect on the whole locality was staggering. "All other talk but about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown by; all the conversation, in all companies and upon all occasions, was upon these things only, unless so much as was necessary for people carrying on their ordinary secular business. Other discourse than of the things of religion, would scarcely be tolerated in any company."[12] "Our *young people*, when they met were wont to spend the time in talking of the *excellency* and dying *love* of Jesus Christ, the

glory of the way of *salvation*, the wonderful, free, and sovereign grace of God, his glorious work in the *conversion* of a soul, the truth and certainty of the great things of God's word, the sweetness of the views of his *perfections* etc."[13] Thus Edwards had the first taste of revival in his own ministry, but this was merely a precursor for what was to come.

George Whitefield visited New England. News of how God had been using him in England had gone before him and he enjoyed the same blessing of God in America during what has become known as the Great Awakening. In October he preached five sermons in Northampton. Jonathan recorded the event in his memoirs, "... Mr Whitefield came to town, which was about the middle of October ... The congregation was extraordinarily melted by every sermon; almost the whole assembly being in tears for a great part of sermon time. Mr Whitefield's sermons were suitable to the circumstances of the town; containing a just reproof of our backslidings, and in a most moving and affecting manner, making use of our great professions, and great mercies, as arguments with us to return to God".[14] This work continued and increased after Whitefield left and by the middle of December their was a great alteration particularly among the young people and children.

What was happening in Northampton was being replicated all over the country, and not just under the preaching of Whitefield; many others were taken up and used of God in a remarkable way. So it was that on 8th July 1741 one of the most famous events in all of church history took place. Jonathan had travelled to Enfield with his friend Eleazer Wheelock. Apparently he was not scheduled to preach on that occasion but for some reason he was called upon to preach at short notice. He preached a sermon that he had previously preached in Northampton from Deuteronomy 32:35. The effect was electrifying. His cousin, Stephen Williams, minister at Longmeadow, Massachusetts, recorded in his diary, "We went over to Enfield where we met dear Mr Edwards of Northampton who preached a most awakening sermon from these words - Deut. 32:35 and before sermon was done there was a great moaning and crying out through the whole house 'what shall I do to, be saved,' 'Oh I am going to hell,' 'Oh what shall I do for Christ,' etc. So that the minister was obliged to desist, the shrieks and cries were piercing and amazing. After some time of waiting the

congregation were still so that a prayer was made by Mr Wheelock and after that we descended from the pulpit and discoursed with some people, some in one place and some in another and amazing and astonishing the power of God was seen and several souls were hopefully wrought upon that night and oh the cheerfulness and pleasantness of their circumstances that received comfort, Oh that God would strengthen and confirm. We sung a hymn and prayed and dismissed the assembly."[15] That sermon, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God", became the most famous sermon preached during the Great Awakening but it is remarkable that when it was first preached at Northampton it did not produce the dramatic effects manifested at Enfield. In the address Edwards wonderfully blends both the most solemn warnings and the most tender invitations to fly to Christ for refuge.

Jonathan Edwards experienced revival to a truly remarkable degree but what was his understanding of the whole experience?

2. His explanation of revival.

In order to grasp how Edwards understood revival we must see how he viewed salvation. What is the purpose of God in salvation? Fundamentally and primarily it is the supreme means of displaying the wisdom of God. His thinking in this regard is clearly outlined in his sermon on Ephesians 3:10, 'The wisdom of God displayed in the way of salvation'. As he develops his thought in the sermon he says, "God has greatly glorified himself in the work of creation and providence. All his works praise him, and his glory shines brightly from them all: but as some stars differ from others in glory, so the glory of God shines brighter in some of his works than in others. And amongst all these, the work of redemption is like the sun in his strength. The glory of the author is abundantly the most resplendent in this work."[16] He then goes on to show how each attribute of God is glorified in redemption and each Person of the divine trinity is exceedingly glorified in this work. In sum, God's great wisdom is revealed in providing a way of salvation that glorifies God to the ultimate degree in all its parts; planning, provision, application, and the benefits that flow from it. He takes up this theme in "A history of redemption". Here he makes the point that redemption is, quite simply, the greatest of God's works. "And from what has been said, one may argue that the work of re-

demption is the greatest of all God's works of which we have any notice, and it is the end of all his other works. It appears plainly from what has been said, that this is the principal of all God's works of providence, and that all are subordinate to the great affair of redemption. We see that all the revolutions in the world are to subserve this grand design. This shows how much greater the work of redemption is, than the work of creation: because it is the end of it; as the use of a house is the end of the building it. But the work of redemption is the sum of all God's works of providence; all are subordinate to it: so the work of the new creation is more excellent than the old."[17] He goes on, "... so all the decrees of God some way or other belong to that eternal covenant of redemption which was between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world. Every decree of God is some way or other reducible to that covenant."[18] Elsewhere in this same work, he speaks of the application of this wonderful work of redemption to sinners. "It may be here observed that from the fall of man, to our day, the work of redemption in its effect has mainly been carried on by remarkable communications of the Spirit of God. Though there be a more constant influence of God's Spirit always in some degree attending his ordinances; yet the way in which the greatest things have been done towards carrying on this work, always have been by means of remarkable effusions, at special seasons of mercy."[19]

What then are we saying? For Edwards, the work of redemption is the greatest of God's works in which his wisdom and glory is most fully displayed and revival, or remarkable communications of the Spirit, are God's means of making this redemption effective in the experience of sinful men and thus magnifying his wisdom and glory. But to understand Edwards aright we must not only grasp the purpose of redemption but also the source of redemption and its application. For Edwards this has to be traced to its source in the sovereignty of God. "From my childhood up, my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life; and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlasting tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember very well when I seemed to be convinced, and fully satisfied, as to the sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure ... There has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, with respect to

the doctrine of God's sovereignty, from that day to this; so that I scarce ever have found so much as the raising of an objection against it. in the most absolute sense, in God showing mercy to who he will show mercy, and hardening whom he will ... The doctrine has very often appeared exceedingly pleasant, bright and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God."[20]

For Jonathan Edwards, God was utterly sovereign in all his actions, including revival. Therefore his explanation of revival would be that it is an absolutely sovereign work of God whereby he applies the work of redemption to fallen men and thus displays his own wisdom and glory in an absolutely irrefutable manner.

3. His examination of revival.

Jonathan was blessed with tremendous erudition and a wonderfully analytical mind. These abilities, coupled with his personal experience, put him in an unrivalled position to carry out a thorough and painstaking examination of revival. There were however certain things that compelled him to make such an examination. As is so often the case in the things of God, the revival suffered much because of the foolish behaviour of some of its friends. Chief among these was James Davenport. He was a very able and useful preacher. Sadly he refused to be guided by wiser heads and calmer spirits and instead followed all manner of impulses that he interpreted as being divine guidance. This led to the most excessive and bizarre behaviour on his part, and that of his followers, which brought the true work of God into disrepute. Thankfully he eventually saw his errors and was brought to repentance and restoration. The behaviour of Davenport and others of his ilk put a rod into the hands of the enemies of the awakening with which to beat its proponents. The main spokesman for those who were opposed to what was occurring was Charles Chauncey, junior pastor in First Church Boston.

It was largely a desire to counteract the damage done by both the friends and enemies of the revival that motivated Jonathan to scrutinise the subject in such depth. He wrote a number of works to this end but primarily, "Thoughts on revival of religion in New England"; "A Treatise concerning the religious affections", and, "Distinguishing marks of a work of the Spirit of God". Each one of these can be classed as a masterpiece of experimental theology and are extremely

relevant to our present age and circumstances. However, we can only give a brief overview of the last mentioned work. In this he takes as his text 1 John 4:1 "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God". He introduces his subject by showing that there is an absolute necessity laid upon us, by the text, to engage in examination of anything that is claimed to be a work of God. This is a refreshing corrective to the atmosphere which seems to pervade our generation in which it appears that any attempt thus to examine that which purports to be a work of God is liable to bring down upon the head of the examiner the accusation that he is endeavouring to quench the Spirit of God. After the introductory section he then outlines the criteria that can be applied to assess whether or not something is truly a work of God. First he gives 8 negative signs, that is, signs that can neither prove nor disprove that God is at work.

1. It is carried on in an unusual way.
2. Effects are produced on bodies - tears, trembling etc
3. It produces much talk about religion
4. Strong emotions are stirred and strong impressions are produced.
5. Example serves as a catalyst. That is, the report about revival in one place produces similar scenes in another place.
6. Errors are mixed with it.
7. Some of the professed converts fall away.
8. Ministers preach the terrors of the law.

Having dealt with the eight negative signs he then moves on to outline five positive signs, that is, five signs that indicate that a true work of God has been done.

1. It exalts the Person of Jesus as revealed in the scriptures.
2. It assaults Satan's kingdom.
3. It exalts the scriptures as the very word of God.
4. It lifts up sound doctrine.
5. It promotes true biblical love.

Although Jonathan Edwards lived in an era far removed from ours the biblical principles that he expounds and applies in these works are timeless and ought to be studied by everyone who has a desire to see a true work of God done in our day.

This brings us finally to consider,

4. His expectation of revival.

Jonathan lived in constant expectation of revival. This was not merely a pious hope or longing. Rather it was a hope firmly grounded in his understanding of the scriptures. This view found fullest expression in his "History of Redemption". At one place in this work, basing his remarks on Jer.10:11 & Is.2:18, he wrote, "Then shall the many nations of Africa, who seem now to be in a state but little above the beasts, and in many respects below them, be visited with glorious light, and delivered from all their darkness, and shall become a civil, Christian, understanding and holy people. Then shall the vast continent of America, which now in great part is covered with barbarous ignorance and cruelty be everywhere covered with glorious gospel-light and Christian love; and instead of worshipping the devil as now they do, they shall serve God , and praises shall be sung everywhere to the Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Saviour of the world."[21] He continues in the same vein with statements about the East Indies, all this in the 18th Century, a time when the continent of Africa was still largely unexplored and when settlers had the barest toe-hold in America. But this was his expectation and that expectation was largely to be fulfilled by remarkable movings of God's Spirit.

This expectation did not lead Edwards into a pacific waiting for God to do his work in his own time. Rather it spurred and motivated him in every area of his life. It affected his praying. This is evidenced in his 'Humble Attempt'. In this work, which is designed to stimulate greater activity, unity, and earnestness in prayer, he gives as a reason for engaging in prayer the following argument. "It is evident from the Scripture , that there is yet remaining a great advancement of the interest of religion and the kingdom of Christ in this world, by an abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God, far greater and more extensive than ever yet has been".[22] This is what he expected, thus he prayed for it fervently.

This expectation also influenced his whole theology. Indeed his unfulfilled intention was to write a complete work of theology with this as its governing theme. As one Edwards scholar put it, "His vision of the millennium's realities and his anticipation of the 'glorious work of God's Spirit' that would bring it to fruition so pervaded his thinking that nearly every one of his central doctrines is illuminated by an unfolding of the millennial vision."[23]

It also impinged on his view of preaching. Every time he preached he sought by the aid of the Spirit to make an indelible impact on his hearers. Thus he stated, "The main benefit that is obtained by preaching is by impression made upon the mind in the time of it, and not by the effect that arises afterwards by a remembrance of what was delivered."[24] To him, to be used in preaching to bring men to Christ is the greatest honour a man can have bestowed upon him. "Hence we learn that it is a great honour that God does men when he makes them the instruments of work wherein God's power is so much manifested. It is an honour to the angels to be employed in such glorious messages as they are employed in. It was a great honour to the prophets and apostles that God made them the instruments, or rather the occasions, of working such miracles that were immensely beyond the strength and wit of man. It was a very great honour God did Moses, that at his word such wondrous miracles should be wrought, and so too Elias. But this work is a far more glorious work than those miracles. There is more of the power and wisdom and grace and other perfections of God seen in it than in them ... This is as glorious a work as creation. It is the new creation. How great an honour, therefore, is it that God should make his word in the mouths of men to be a means to this work."[25]

This expectation influenced every aspect of Edwards' life, moulding, shaping and motivating him. It was for this reason that he became one of the most meticulously disciplined men that ever lived, working 14-15 hours every day. He was disciplined mentally. The work he did in study was planned and executed with the greatest care. He would determine what subject he would study and pursued each line of thought relative to it until he could mentally proceed no further, all the while making precise notes of all his thoughts. When he went on a journey on horse back, he would decide before setting out what subjects he would meditate on. He would begin with the first and follow it

in his mind as far as he could and he would then pin a piece of cloth on his coat with which he associated the thoughts he had, then he would commence his second subject and so on. By the time he returned home he would have various bits of cloth pinned about his clothing. He would then go to his study and there remove the cloths in sequence, recalling and recording the meditations he had had on each subject.

He was disciplined physically. Each day he would chop logs or ride out on his horse for half an hour or so as a means of exercise. He also was scrupulously careful about his food taking note of those things that made him mentally sluggish and then removing them from his diet.

Most of all he was disciplined spiritually. This reflected in his 'Resolutions' which he made while still young and added to during his life. These were an aid to him in the examination of every area of his spiritual well-being, from his inmost desires, to his daily prayer life, to his casual conversations.

Contrary to what some may say, this stringent self discipline was not born out of a morbid legalism. Rather it was born out of a desire to honour and serve his Sovereign Lord to the utmost of his capacity and to see His great name exalted in all things, but chiefly in the salvation of souls.

Jonathan Edwards was a giant. As far as theologians who have written in the English language are concerned, probably only John Owen is his equal. But he was a man with passion in his heart for souls and the glory of God. In him was most fully realised the desire of James Denney, "If evangelists were our theologians or theologians our evangelists we should at least be nearer the ideal church."[26] May we learn the vital lessons that this theologian of revival has to teach us, but more importantly, may we catch some of his fire for Gods' glory.

Endnotes.

1. *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller Vol.1* Sprinkle Publications p16
2. Ibid p101
3. Iain H Murray *Jonathan Edwards A New Biography* Banner of Truth pxv
4. DM Lloyd-Jones *The Puritans - Their origins and successors* Banner of Truth p355
5. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol.1* Banner of Truth pxii
6. Ibid
7. Ibid pxiii
8. Ibid pxii
9. George M Marsden *Jonathan Edwards - A Life* Yale University Press p33
10. Murray p.21
11. Ibid p88
12. Works Vol.1 348
13. Ibid
14. Ibid plvi
15. Stephen J Nichols *Jonathan Edwards A Guided Tour of His Life and Thought* P&R Publishing p192/3
16. Works Vol. 2 p144
17. Works Vol.1 p616
18. Ibid
19. Ibid p539
20. Ibid pxii/xiii
21. Ibid p608
22. Works Vol.2 p284/5
23. DG Hart Sean Michael Lucas Stephen J Nichols eds. *The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards* Baker Academic p71
24. Richard A Bailey & Gregory A Wills eds. *The Salvation of Souls Nine Previously Unpublished Sermons on the Call of Ministry and the Gospel by Jonathan Edwards* Crossway p12
25. Ibid p50
26. Quoted Carl FH Henry in Introduction to James Denney *The Death of Christ* Keats Publishing

Irish Baptist Historical Society

(Formed 1968)

Training Director
Irish Baptist Historical Society
The Baptist Centre
19 Hillsborough Road
Moira BT67 0HG,
Northern Ireland

Telephone: 028 9261 9267
Fax No: 028 9261 0150
Email: IBC@thebaptistcentre.org

Application for Membership

Please enrol me as a Member of the Historical Society.
I enclose my subscription of £15.00 €25.00 US $30 (sterling cheque)

Name: _____

Address : _____

_____

_____

Postcode _____

Office Use

Membership No. .....
Membership card written
Journal sent / collected