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About Our Contributors:

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The lecture published in this edition was delivered to the Irish Baptist Historical Society in March 2004.

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Editorial

The 2006 edition of the IBHS Journal illustrates the variety of interests held by society members. There is the ongoing interest in the life and history of the Irish Baptist family of churches, exemplified here in the history of the Lame Baptist Church presented by its current pastor, John Gault. There is much to learn from those who are involved in church planting and the subsequent strengthening and stabilising of the work, and Pastor Gault's account highlights those lessons as he describes its development.

Interest in the wider issues affecting evangelicalism is reflected in the presentation made by Pastor Edwin Ewart in his incisive and illuminating examination of the current challenges it faces. The distinctions drawn between 'evangelicalism' and fundamentalism' are particularly instructive, and the current differences of perspective evident among those who claim to be 'evangelical' raise vital issues of biblical interpretation and authority. These are lucidly described in Ewart's paper.

Learning from the past, and particularly from the lives and labours of outstanding leaders of the past, is central to the interests of the IBHS, and Dr Haykin's paper on Andrew Fuller is interesting, illuminating and challenging. The influence of Fuller on Baptist life in England and beyond can hardly be overstated. His firm stand against an arid hyper-Calvinism was at the core of the revived and powerful interest in overseas missionary work culminating first in the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society and then in the many missionary societies which flourished in what has become known as the 'modern missionary movement'.

What a pity that the warmth and enthusiasm with which our contributors presented their papers to the Society cannot be adequately communicated through the written word alone!

John Birnie

Director of Training

Irish Baptist College

Questions of Authority and influence

In the late 1920's Hensley Henson, the then Bishop of Durham, described evangelicals as `an army of illiterates, generalled by octogenarians.`[1] This type of scathing dismissal was characteristic of the 1920's and 1930's. However, the situation half a century later was markedly different when evangelicals in Britain, as in North America, had become generally accepted as an important and influential factor in the life of the Churches. Who then are the evangelicals? What is evangelical Christianity or the evangelical faith? John Stott helpfully answers this question in the negative in three ways.[2]

In the first place evangelicalism is not a recent innovation. Evangelicals have consistently claimed that their emphases are nothing more or less than original, apostolic, New Testament Christianity. History shows that from the time of the Reformers to the present those who espoused evangelical convictions had the charge of innovation levelled at them. In this connection the comments of Martin Luther bear repetition, `We teach no new thing but we repeat and establish old things which the apostles and all godly teachers have taught before us.`[3] Luther has not been alone in his defence of the antiquity of the evangelical tradition. In the twentieth century the evangelist Billy Graham, viewed widely as an innovator, was accused, ironically, of setting back the cause of religion a hundred years. He retorted that he `did indeed want to set religion back - not just one hundred years but nineteen hundred years, to the Book of Acts, where first-century followers of Christ were accused of turning the Roman Empire upside down.`[4]

Secondly, evangelicals claim that their faith is not a deviation from Christian orthodoxy but rather mainstream Christianity. Evangelicals

have historically endorsed the ancient Creeds of the church and though the term `evangelical` came into widespread use only in the eighteenth century, yet it had been applied long before both to the Puritans in England and the Pietists in Germany in the seventeenth century, and the Reformers in the sixteenth. A significant feature of the heritage of evangelicalism is the imprint of the confessional and dissenting movements of the sixteenth-century Reformation. It may be argued that the renewed intellectual confidence within evangelicalism in the latter half of the twentieth century is due in no small part to this Reformed heritage. In America the Reformed emphasis of Colleges like Westminster Theological Seminary and Reformed Theology Conferences organised by James Montgomery Boice, minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, were highly influential on a generation of Christian leaders. This was mirrored in Britain by the Puritan Conferences of the late 1950's and early 1960's under J. I Packer and D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones[5] and the mentoring ministry of William Still in Aberdeen.[6]

In the third place and crucially, the evangelical faith is not fundamentalism. This distinction is of great importance for a historical analysis of evangelicalism. In contemporary thinking `fundamentalism` has long become something of a term of ridicule but the word did have respectable origins. It arose from the publication of a series of paperbacks entitled *The Fundamentals*, the product of various authors from Britain and North America which were widely distributed between 1909 and 1915. These affirmed basic Christian truths such as the authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the resurrection, salvation and judgement and the necessity of world mission and evangelism. The articles were written against the background of the impact of Biblical criticism on evangelicalism. In Britain, for example, B.H Streeter had published his *Foundations* (1912), a volume which was designed to develop a theology that was in harmony with modern science, philosophy and scholarship. As a result a kind of Liberal Evangelicalism emerged especially in the post-First World War period which claimed a proper use of criticism, science and philosophy subject to the overarching claims of Scripture. This group came to regard the Bible as a literary product and as such subject to the laws that govern any literature. Significantly it was argued that the Bible did not claim the status of infallibility for itself and neither should the church on its behalf. Inevitably this was considered a concession too far to modernism by many

evangelicals. *The Fundamentals*, therefore, came to be regarded as a timely response to the encroaches of modernism on both sides of the Atlantic and anyone who believed the central affirmations in the articles was stated to be a `fundamentalist`. It is noteworthy that a third of the one hundred articles contained in *The Fundamentals* were devoted to Scripture and were aimed at confirming the trustworthiness of the Bible in opposition to the critical approach of much contemporary scholarship. The articles tended to focus not on the academic world of biblical scholarship so much as on the general evangelical populace.

Originally, then, `fundamentalist` was a perfectly acceptable synonym for `evangelical`. Gradually, however, fundamentalism came to be associated with extreme views on a variety of issues such as a completely dismissive evaluation of modern biblical scholarship, a literalistic approach to Scripture, a stridently separatist view of the church, a dogmatic eschatology and a debilitating tendency (especially in the USA and South Africa) to defend the myth of white supremacy. Consequently by the 1950's many evangelical leaders began to disassociate themselves from the label `fundamentalist`. J.I. Packer argued in 1958[8] that while British evangelicals were undoubtedly committed to the defence of the fundamentals they found the label `fundamentalist` thoroughly objectionable on the grounds that it had become a theological swear-word and that it suggested evangelicalism at something less than its best especially in relation to its pronounced anti-intellectual bias. George Marsden defines a fundamentalist as, `an evangelical who is angry about something.` This pithy description has been widely accepted by religious commentators and receives support from Martin Marty who identifies the basic theological feature of the fundamentalist movement as `oppositionalism`.[9] This arises, he says, when an already conservative or traditionalist group experiences threat. The result is a siege mentality in which members of the group defend their distinctives against an unbelieving culture.[10] Such a pattern is observable particularly in American history but also in Britain in the post-World War Two period. Thus in America by the 1930's the term `fundamentalist` began to take on a more limited meaning. Many fundamentalists were leaving the mainline Protestant denominations and soon made such separation a test of genuine faith. By the end of the 1930's most fundamentalists in America were Baptists and a majority were Dispensationalists in their eschatology. Fundamentalism therefore became a fairly precise designation for a particular type of Protes-

tant militant. There is little doubt that fundamentalism in the late 1920's and 1930's proved an increasingly popular alternative to the older mainstream denominations. Membership of these declined in this period, their foreign missionary enterprise lost momentum and their social programmes suffered. Fundamentalism with the development of its Bible Institutes[11], its summer Bible Conferences[12], its utilisation of the rapidly expanding radio industry and its independent foreign missionary arm, became undeniably a growing and dynamic movement in America.

`Oppositionalism` however, quickly proved to be of limited value in constructing a movement to face the future. It is clear that those who demanded separation from allegedly liberal denominations found that their agreement did not always go beyond this short-term agenda. In short, they could agree on what they were against but were unable to devise a cohesive programme of their own for unity and change[13]. Fundamentalism failed completely to turn back the rising tide of modernism. Its statements of belief were largely brief and lacking doctrinal precision and coherence. Its evangelism, though earnest, was generally Arminian in emphasis. Its policy was too often one of making war not just on modernism but also on denominations. Consequently it achieved little impact on the thought life of its day and clearly spurned the social problems of its generation. On both sides of the Atlantic growing disenchantment with this failure and the rigidity of oppositionalism became evident. This was highlighted especially in the alienation of Billy Graham from fundamentalism. Although initially closely associated with the fundamentalist wing of Protestantism, Graham came to see oppositionalism as a barrier to his wider evangelistic ministry and in his efforts to break away from fundamentalist restrictions became a virtual icon of a `new` evangelicalism. Interestingly the first real indicator that Graham's policy had become `broader` occurred in 1954 during his crusades in England. In connection with these Marsden observes that Graham `received broader church support than his fundamentalist supporters would have allowed him in the United States. Such successes in culturally influential circles were leading Graham towards the conviction that he could make marvellous inroads into America's major denominations if he could jettison the disastrous fundamentalist image of separatism, anti-intellectualism and contentiousness.`[14] Mark Noll shares this assessment noting that, in a major campaign in New York City in 1957, Graham insisted on including repre-

sentatives of mainline Protestant Churches in the planning for the crusade, and then directed some who made decisions for Christ at these meetings to those same Churches, thereby attracting `the undying wrath of separatistic fundamentalists.`[15]

In Britain, as in the USA, a new generation of evangelical thinkers and leaders emerged in the period leading up to and after the Second World War. However, the differences between the American experience and the British (with the possible exception of the Province of Ulster in Northern Ireland where parallels with American fundamentalism can legitimately be drawn) were quite marked. Marsden[16] identifies two main differences: British evangelicals showed a lack of widespread militancy exhibiting instead a kind of Keswick-inspired piety; and secondly they made little general impact on the Churches and culture in contrast to their American counterparts. The reasons for this are multiple and diverse. For example, in England intellectual and cultural life was largely centralised whereas in America geographical isolation led to lags in communication and cultural isolation. In terms of the religious scene, in England the universities, the established Church and even the traditions of nonconformity promoted moderation and restraint whereas in America `revivalism` came to be virtually unchallenged by other religious institutions and traditions. In addition Marsden suggests that in America the Romantic era was truncated. He writes, `America came of age during the Enlightenment and remained generally content with mid-eighteenth century modes of thought long after these had gone out of style in Europe.`[17] Thus the American intellectual community remained rather isolated and was constantly playing `catch-up' in its response to newer forms of thought. In addition the fact that America embraced widely a premillennial and Dispensational view of history, which although originating in England did not attract much lasting support there, reinforced a largely anti-naturalistic way of understanding history and historical change. Thus major differences were discernible between the emergence of fundamentalism and evangelicalism in the two settings. Despite this a number of critics have persisted in applying the label `fundamentalist` to evangelicalism across the board. James Barr, for example, in his polemical book *Fundamentalism*[18] fails to make the necessary distinction between fundamentalism and evangelicalism. In his criticism of British evangelicals he appears not to recognise that the objects of his polemic are not in fact fundamentalists. In addition, the kind of criticisms he levels against funda-

mentalists were already current among evangelicals at the time. As Carl Henry remarked, evangelicals did not need James Barr to tell them that `fundamentalist preaching is often exegetically shallow, that fundamentalism uncritically elevated certain prudish traditions to scriptural status..and that many fundamentalists tend to appropriate selected bits of non-evangelical scholarship rather than to initiate creative studies.`[19]

Kenneth Hylson-Smith[20], an Anglican historian, identifies a number of basic factors in the evangelical resurgence in Britain in the immediate post-Second World War period: the development of Tyndale House (established in 1944) and the Tyndale Fellowship as a centre for biblical and theological research; the emergence of John Stott[21] as the most prominent evangelical leader; the publication of the New Bible Commentary in 1954 which placed in the hands of clergy and lay people alike a vital tool for an evangelical understanding of Scripture; the crusades of Billy Graham, previously unknown in Britain, whose three-month crusade in the Harringay Arena in 1954 projected him into the limelight and was arguably a key event in the changing Christian scene in these islands; the work of the Inter Varsity Fellowship (later Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship) and its publishing house, Inter Varsity Press (IVP) which had a dramatic influence on generations of students producing a steady stream of ordinands for the churches. Of course the growth and consolidation of evangelicalism in Britain has not been without its painful episodes. The well-documented confrontation between John Stott and Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones at the Second National Assembly of Evangelicals in 1966[22] over the issue of separatism is a case in point. Nevertheless, evangelicalism has continued to grow within Western Christianity on both sides of the Atlantic in terms of numerical strength, influence and theological acumen. How, then, may evangelicalism be satisfactorily defined?

The term describes a diverse coalition incorporating those from mainstream denominations and some from none. Timothy L. Smith[23] compares evangelicalism in America to a kaleidoscope comprising black Pentecostals, Mennonite Peace Churches, Nazarenes and Southern Baptists. This diverse grouping might agree in a general way on the essentials of evangelicalism but beyond that they represent largely independent traditions. Marsden argues that given the general lack of unity within evangelicalism over the last forty years witnessed by controversies over political stances, the doctrine of inerrancy, and the

scandals surrounding celebrity leaders of the Moral Majority, it is remarkable that American evangelicalism possesses the degree of coherence it does. Alister McGrath relates the problem of defining evangelicalism in part to its origins[24]. He argues that the movement draws upon such a rich diversity of resources and is located in so many different cultural contexts that a degree of diversity within evangelicalism is inevitable. This should not, however, deter us from seeking to establish the essence of evangelicalism.

Historically fundamentalism and evangelicalism have shared a common theological foundation (and many core beliefs continue to be held by both) but the latter's rejection of fundamentalist excesses, in particular the insistence on separation and the prevalent anti-intellectualism of the movement, have led to a definite parting of the ways. Clearly, however, the task of defining evangelicalism is growing increasingly problematic as a rapidly expanding number of groups and individuals apply the label to themselves. It may be that the term will ultimately become so devalued that it will be rendered theologically redundant much in the way that the term `Christian` today often simply indicates that one is not a Muslim or an atheist. Various approaches have been taken in attempting a definition.

The British historian David Bebbington[25] defines evangelicalism in terms of four frequently quoted distinctives:

> *conversionism*, that is to say that evangelicals believe that people's lives need to be changed. This point of course requires further definition since many in Christendom hold the same view but in a way that evangelicals would not recognise as biblical conversion;
>
> *activism*, that is an emphasis on evangelistic activity for which evangelicals have been renowned. In practice it is possible to confuse evangelicalism with being evangelistically minded. This is seen in the way people frequently confuse the terms `evangelical` and `evangelistic`, but while the two should go together they are not the same thing.
>
> *Biblicism*, that is seeking to be ruled in life and thought by the teaching of the Bible. Since evangelicals accept the Bible as the word of God written,all other authorities must give way to it. The term `biblicism` is not particularly helpful in describing evangelical conviction about the locus of final authority since it appears to lend weight

to a well-worn caricature, what has been called `Bibliolatry`, that is, that evangelicals are more focused on the Bible than on Christ.

Bebbington's fourth distinctive is *crucicentrism*, a clumsy term by which he intends the virtually universal evangelical emphasis on substitutionary atonement, that Christ took our sins on himself on the cross.

On the whole Bebbington's framework is helpful in seeking a working definition and many writers share his basic approach. It has the advantage of emphasising doctrinal features without which evangelicalism becomes merely a set of attitudes. Admittedly the four qualities could unwittingly give the impression that evangelicals embrace a narrow even sectarian interest but this would be to ignore the fervour with which evangelicals have adopted the teaching of the early creeds of the church on such issues as the Trinity or the Person of Christ, and doubtless Bebbington does not intend to give that impression. Alister McGrath is one writer who, to a degree, follows Bebbington's basic structure[26]. He suggests a cluster of six controlling convictions which are doctrinal: the supreme authority of Scripture; the majesty of Jesus Christ as incarnate Lord and Saviour; the Lordship of the Holy Spirit; the necessity of personal conversion; the priority of evangelism and the importance of the Christian community for spiritual nourishment, fellowship and growth. However, for McGrath these convictions are not merely doctrinal but also existential (meaning that they affirm the way in which the believer is caught up in an experiential encounter with God in Christ). He maintains that evangelicalism must be defined not just in terms of its doctrinal core but also in terms of its distinctive ethos. For McGrath this means that evangelicalism is directed and defined by a Pietist concern for a living faith. It is, `as much a devotional ethos as it is a theological system.`[27] The attraction of such an approach is obvious. People are rightly concerned with reality and not merely with an intellectual assent to correct doctrine. Nevertheless, the articulation of this position must be carefully measured lest the doctrinal centre of evangelicalism be eroded and not all who espouse it are as careful as McGrath. Clearly the larger the evangelical community, the more potential for confusion and erosion.

While recognising that in many parts of the world the term `evangelical` has different overtones, for example in Germany it suggests what is Protestant over against what is Roman Catholic and bears almost sectarian connotations. It is, nevertheless, a useful exer-

cise to isolate a term which refers to Christians who wholeheartedly agree on certain fundamentals even if they exhibit a much greater degree of diversity than a previous generation. We contend that it is most helpful to define `evangelical` and `evangelicalism` in terms of the `evangel`. Viewed in this perspective evangelicalism is defined as a movement determined by its doctrinal centre rather than its periphery and always subject to the scrutiny of Scripture. In this connection D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in three addresses first delivered to students in 1971 argued that people and movements change their character while the labels stay the same[28]. For Lloyd-Jones evangelicalism, therefore, must be defined by theological considerations. Robert K. Johnston concurs stating that evangelicalism is first a theological term, the word distinguishing that group in Christendom whose dedication to the gospel is expressed in a personal faith in Christ as Lord and whose understanding of the gospel is defined solely by Scripture, the written word of God. He quotes Carl Henry, `Evangelicals are to be known in the world as the bearers of good news in message and life - the good news that God offers new life on the ground of Christ's death and resurrection in the context of a biblically controlled message.`[29] In Johnston's view it is particularly the tenet of biblical authority that sets evangelicals off from their fellow Christians.

As one reflects on the development of the movement known as evangelicalism it is possible to identify a kind of `schizophrenia` between a more inclusive evangelicalism that seeks to embrace all who confess Jesus as Lord, and an evangelicalism that insists on the non-negotiability of historic evangelical truth. D. A. Carson remarks that, whether at the intellectual or popular levels, `the product is less and less evangelical in any useful historic or theological sense.`[30] There is nowadays a growing tendency to reduce the theological content in evangelical definition. In the view of Richard Lints[31] evangelicalism is defined much more readily by cultural, institutional and personal factors. Thus members of local evangelical congregations, he argues, retain and maintain their allegiance because of factors such as the social mix, the type of ministry and the expression of praise rather than any confessional statement. This assessment is very true to life. Even a cursory examination of evangelical Church life in Ireland today reveals this type of pattern in which less attention is paid to the denominational label and more focus placed on the `package` on offer. One of the most pervasive tendencies in Western society today is `expressive in-

dividualism` or the freedom to express oneself against all constraints and conventions. Lints argues, rightly, that a direct consequence of this has been the decline of denominationalism. Whereas there was a time when people on the move generally sought out a congregation of the same denomination to which they previously belonged, today's generation selects whatever group seems to meet their felt needs. However, the predominance of such sociological categories in current definitions of evangelicalism should not dissuade us from seeking a common denominator controlled by Scripture. We therefore bear in mind that, drawing on the heritage of the Reformation, men like J. Gresham Machen in America and Charles Simeon in Britain saw as central what many contemporary scholars regard as marginal and defined their stance primarily in theological terms. With this in mind it is therefore logically coherent and historically consistent to define evangelicalism in terms of its doctrinal content and prominent in this is the tenet of biblical authority. It is arguable that a movement away from this position (and in our view, from the principle of biblical inerrancy) has been a key factor in the increasing fragmentation of evangelicalism today.

At this point it is necessary to define briefly what is meant by the authority of Scripture insofar as evangelicals understand it. Taking its direction from the Reformation principle of `Sola Scriptura` evangelicalism has characteristically maintained that Scripture alone must have final authority in all matters of faith and conduct and theological reflection. This was expressed historically, quite explicitly, over against the Roman Catholic insistence on the authority of the Pope and the Magisterium and set out in many Protestant Confessions of Faith in the Reformation period and later. The Genevan Confession of 1536, for instance, states, `we affirm that we desire to follow Scripture alone as the rule of faith and religion, without mixing it with any other thing which might be devised by the opinion of men apart from the word of God.`[32] In 1571 the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England followed suit[33]. Thus while others may claim biblical authority in some qualified sense, some making tradition co-normative; some finding parts of Scripture unreasonable; some treating the Bible subjectively, stressing the effect on the hearer and not the quality of the source, evangelicalism classically believes the text of Scripture as written to be totally authoritative in all that it affirms. H.D. McDonald states that `authority is the right and capacity of an individual to perform what he

wills and who, by virtue of his position or office, can command obedience. It has also an application to words spoken or written whose accuracy has been established and whose information can consequently be trusted.'[34] In evangelical theology the Bible possesses such authority precisely because it is God's book. This redirects the focus in a helpful way indicating that the Bible possesses authority because God has invested his authority in the Scriptures. From the outset Scriptural evidence about authority itself indicates that all authority belongs to God. N. T. Wright[35] believes that this understanding of Biblical authority is a challenge to the world's notion of authority (which is essentially 'authoritarianism') and also to the church's view which tends to adopt the model of the world. Biblical authority is not, he rightly argues, authority to control people and crush them. Nor is the Bible a rule book for the legalist. Its authority is felt, says Wright, when the church with Scripture in hand and heart speaks and acts for God in the world. Wright's view has much to commend it, not least in tracing the source of Scriptural authority, warning against an imprisonment of the Bible within popular evangelical frameworks, and highlighting the multifaceted nature of the Bible as a book of enormous variety designed to meet human need in all its conditions. Yet it appears that he wants to deliver the Bible from a 'prison' in which he believes it is held. That prison, surprisingly, is identified in part as the classical evangelical understanding of the inspiration of Scripture. Wright caricatures those who mouth 'lots of words beginning with "in-"' (presumably a reference to the terms, 'inerrant' and 'inerrancy') as having fallen into a rationalistic trap, characteristic of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Instead, while stating that he endorses the inspiration of Scripture, Wright advocates a new freedom of approach in which the reader will discover God speaking new truth through the Bible. This approach, however, is left sufficiently vague to provide little clear direction or focus. The absence of a definition of 'inspiration' in the article leaves the reader dissatisfied. It is not enough, we suggest, to say that, 'the Bible will not let you down'.[36] In the current atmosphere of widespread rejection of theological categories, authentic Christian thinking ought to be driven by unambiguous knowledge as to why 'the Bible will not let you down'. It simply will not do to leave the question of inspiration 'hanging' or worse, to treat Scripture in cavalier and subjective ways.

This raises the question of how any ancient text can function as au-

thoritative. After all much of the Old and New Testament is not a rule book; it is narrative. Suffice to say at this point that evangelicals affirm the Bible to be authoritative over their lives principally out of plain loyalty to Jesus Christ. Since, as indicated, ultimate authority in the New Testament resides in Christ, then it is the view of evangelicalism that Christians ought to believe what he taught for the simple reason that it is he who taught it! In fact Christian understanding of a vast number of issues (including God, man, good, evil, time, eternity, heaven and hell) is conditioned by what Jesus taught and this includes his teaching on the Bible. In relation to the Old Testament, for instance, Jesus made several direct statements about its divine origin and permanent validity. For example, `I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished` (Matthew 5:18) and again, `the Scripture cannot be broken` (John 10:35). Furthermore, indirect evidence for Jesus's `high` view of Scripture is provided by the formulae he used to introduce Old Testament quotations, for example, quoting Psalm 110, `David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared...` (Mark 12:36). Perhaps even more impressive than what Jesus *said* about Scripture was the way he *used* Scripture. Incontestably it occupied an important place in his own life and ministry. John Stott emphasises this when he shows with superb insight how in the areas of personal duty, official ministry and public controversy, Jesus personally submitted to the authority of Scripture and endorsed it as the Word of God. [37]

In the case of the New Testament the argument is different but equally compelling. If Jesus endorsed the Old Testament, he also foresaw the writing of the New Testament, indeed he actually intended it and consciously made provision for it by the appointing and authorising of the apostles. In giving to each of them a personal commission, a historical experience (that is, they individually saw the risen Christ) and a special inspiration (resulting in a self-consciousness that what they were writing was the Word of God cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:16), Jesus provided for the writing of the New Testament Scriptures. Therefore, since Jesus adopted such a view of Old and New Testament Scripture, the question becomes, how can his disciples have a lower view of Scripture than their Teacher and Master? Since the disciple is not above his teacher nor the servant above his lord, traditional evangelicalism affirms that we must follow the example of Christ in making

the Bible the ultimate authority in our lives. It is then that evangelicals as gospel people and Bible people will have the influence they ought in the nation and the world.

Notes:

1. Quoted in Oliver Barclay, *Evangelicalism in Britain* 1935-1995 p.9
2. John Stott, *Evangelical Truth, A Personal Plea for Unity*, p.16ff.
3. Martin Luther, *Commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* p. 53
4. Stott, *Evangelical Truth*, p.17
5. `The Puritan Conference` was first held in 1950 at Westminster Chapel where Lloyd-Jones was the minister. `From the beginning`, J. I. Packer says, the Doctor `made no secret of his belief that what we were doing was of great potential importance for the church.` Quoted in Iain H. Murray *D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones The Fight of Faith 1939-1981,* p.227. By the 1960's the divergent views of Packer and Lloyd-Jones on ecumenism and the church had developed into a rift which precipitated the closure of the Puritan Conference (see John Brencher, *Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Twentieth Century Evangelicalism*, p.110ff.
6. William Still (1911-1997), a Church of Scotland minister for over 40 years in Gilcomston South Church Aberdeen, exercised enormous influence over a great number of students, trainee ministers, and colleagues from Scotland and Ireland in particular. E.J Alexander writes, `It would be almost impossible to measure the significance of William Still's life and ministry. Certainly no man this century has had such a profound and far-reaching effect on the ministry of the Church of Scotland as he.' *Evangelicals Now* September 1997 p.4.
7. J. I. Packer, *Fundamentalism and the Word of God.*
8. George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* p.1
9. Quoted in Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* p.20
10. It is important to note that fundamentalism as a phenomenon is found more widely than within Protestantism. Thomas F. O'Meara, *Fundamentalism, A Catholic Perspective*, recognises a Catholic fundamentalism which, for example, invests divine power in a bishop, a pope and even a medal! O'Meara defines the phenomenon as offering simple answers to complex questions such as the being of God, the nature of revelation and the morality of war. He argues that fundamentalism flourishes in a time of uncertainty because it offers instant and easy certainty. O'Meara argues that within Roman Catholicism, fundamentalism generally reacts to what are perceived to be the failings of the modern church and seeks to direct it back to the 'old paths', in the process displaying two main forms: the first locates divine power in created things like a statue; the second locates divine revelations in authority structures. According to O'Meara, both of these are to be rejected. Religious things are not the absolute, the absolute is the power of God's Spirit in men and women. Significantly, in this regard, he rejects any notion that the word of God can be equated with a book of words whether Greek or English.
11. Joel A. Carpenter, Fundamentalist Institutions and the rise of evangelical Protestantism *Church History*, 49 March, 1980, states that by 1930 there were over 50 of these Institutes in major American cities and they became co-ordinating agencies for popular fundamentalist hostility to modernism.
12. Ibid., These Conferences, offering a blend of resort-style recreation, old fashioned camp meetings and bible teaching from leading fundamentalist preachers, proved

a powerful force in bonding commitment to the movement.

13. Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*, p. 25, shows how J. Gresham Machen of Westminster Seminary (though certainly not a fundamentalist in the strictest sense of the term), having withdrawn his support from the official Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions in the USA, set up an Independent Board in 1933. By the time of Machen's death in 1937 the latter body had virtually ceased to exist, unable to hold together in the face of internal controversies such as a dispute between Calvinists and Dispensationalists. Machen expressed his deep personal dislike of the term `fundamentalist` but was careful to avoid criticism of those more comfortable with the label on the grounds that supernatural Christianity was confronted with a great enemy which had to be opposed on every front (see Rudolph Nelson, *The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind, The Case of Edward Carnell*, p. 38.
14. G.M Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism, quoted in Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, p.35
15. Mark A. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity, An Introduction*. p. 49.
16. G. M Marsden, Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon: a comparison with English Evangelicalism, *Church History* 46 June 1977.
17. Ibid., p.228.
18. James Barr *Fundamentalism* (1977). Barr followed this in 1984 with *Escaping from Fundamentalism*, which he described as a pastoral book designed to give help to those who had grown up in fundamentalism but had come to view it as a prison from which they needed to escape. In this volume Barr rehearses again his vehemently negative arguments on the subject of verbal inspiration (chapters one and thirteen).
19. Quoted in Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*, p.33.
20. Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England (1734-1984)*
21. Stott who came to All Souls Church, Langham Place, London in 1950 was at the heart of the evangelical renaissance in Britain. His expository ministry in All Souls and his wider work especially among students and in the `Eclectic Society` (a forum for evangelical clergy) had a highly significant impact on the development of evangelical life in Britain and further afield. Alister McGrath writes, `His impact on a rising generation of evangelical students, through his speaking and writing, though universally acknowledged, cannot easily be measured. If the remarkable growth of English evangelicalism can be attributed to any one person, it is to Stott..` McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, p.35.
22. The biographies of both men detail the history of this incident from their respective positions: Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided*, chapter 27 and Timothy Dudley-Smith, *John Stott, A Global Ministry* p.65ff.
23. In G. Marsden, `Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon`, p.65
24. McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, p.50.
25. David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730's to the 1980's.*
26. McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, p.51.
27. Ibid., p.52
28. D.M Lloyd-Jones, *Knowing the Times: Addresses delivered on various occasions (1942-1977)*
29. Robert K. Johnston, *Evangelicals At An Impasse. Biblical Authority in Practice* p.3
30. Carson, *The Gagging of God*, p. 453.

31. Ibid., p. 453/4f.
32. Mark Noll (Ed), *Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformation* p.126
33. Ibid., p. 220.
34. W. A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* p.138
35. N. T. Wright, How Can the Bible Be Authoritative? *Vox Evangelica* Vol XXI 1991
36. Ibid., p. 30.
37. John R.W. Stott, The Authority of the Bible p.10-15

"The Elephant of Kettering": The Life and ministry of Andrew Fuller (1754-1815)

Near the beginning of the funeral sermon that John Ryland, Jr. (1753-1825) preached for Andrew Fuller in 1815, Ryland described Fuller as "perhaps the most judicious and able theological writer that ever belonged to our [i.e. the Calvinistic Baptist] denomination."1 Although Fuller was Ryland's closest friend and confidant, his judgment is by no means skewed. Joseph Belcher, the editor of the final edition of Fuller's collected works, believed that his works would "go down to posterity side by side with the immortal works of the elder president Edwards [i.e. Jonathan Edwards, Sr.],"[2] while Charles Haddon Spurgeon once described Fuller as "the greatest theologian" of his century.[3] And in an allusion to his weighty theological influence, the nineteenth-century Welsh author David Phillips described the Baptist author as the "elephant of Kettering."[4] Fuller wrote on a variety of theological issues, many of them in the area of apologetics. For instance, he wrote refutations of such eighteenth-century theological aberrations as Socinianism as exemplified by Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) and the Deism, especially as it was found in the writings of Thomas Paine (1737-1809).[5] It is his rebuttal of Hyper-Calvinism, however, that I wish to focus on this evening.

The pathway to conversion, 1754-1769

The youngest of three brothers, Andrew Fuller was born on February 6, 1754, at Wicken, a small agricultural village in Cambridgeshire, to Robert Fuller (1723-1781) and his wife Philippa Gunton (1726-1816), who rented and worked a succession of dairy farms.[6] Baptists by conviction, both of his parents had been born into Dissenting families.

Honour Hart, for instance, who was Andrew Fuller's paternal grandmother, had become a Baptist after a number of years as a Congregationalist. His maternal grandmother, Philippa Stevenson, was among the founding members of Soham Baptist Church, where Fuller would later spend his first pastorate.

When Fuller was seven years of age, his parents moved to the village of Soham, about two and a half miles from Wicken. Once settled in Soham, they joined themselves to the Calvinistic Baptist work in that locality. The pastor of the work was a certain John Eve (d.1782), who was a Hyper-Calvinist or, as Fuller put it, one "tinged with false Calvinism" in his teaching.[7] Many years later Fuller remembered how Eve's preaching "was not adapted to awaken [the] conscience," and "had little or nothing to say to the unconverted."[8] Thus, despite the fact that Fuller regularly attended the Baptist meeting-house, he gave little thought or heed to the sermons that he heard. When he was fourteen, though, he began to entertain thoughts about the meaning and purpose of life. He was much affected by passages that he read from the biography of John Bunyan (1628-1688), his Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, as well as Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and some of the works of Ralph Erskine (1685-1752), the Scottish evangelical minister and poet who, you will recall, was a significant figure in the Marrow controversy. These affections were often accompanied by weeping and tears, but they ultimately proved to be transient, there being no radical change of heart.[9]

Now, one popular expression of eighteenth-century Hyper-Calvinist spirituality was the notion that if a scriptural text forcefully impressed itself upon one's mind, it was to be regarded as a promise from God. One particular day in 1767 Fuller had such an experience. Romans 6:14 ("sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace") came with such suddenness and force that Fuller naïvely believed that God was telling him that he was in a state of salvation and no longer under the tyranny of sin. But that evening, he later recalled, "I returned to my former vices with as eager a gust as ever."[10]

For the next six months, he utterly neglected prayer and was as wedded to his sins as he had been before this experience. When, in the course of 1768, he once again seriously reflected upon his lifestyle, he was conscious that he was still held fast in thraldom to sin. What then

of his experience with Romans 6:14? Fuller refused to doubt that it was given to him as an indication of his standing with God. He was, he therefore concluded, a converted person, but backslidden. He still lived, though, with never a victory over sin and its temptations, and with a total neglect of prayer. "The great deep of my heart's depravity had not yet been broken up," he later commented about these experiences of his mid-teens.[11]

In the autumn of 1769 he once again came under the conviction that his life was displeasing to God. He could no longer pretend that he was only backslidden. "The fire and brimstone of the bottomless pit seemed to burn within my bosom," he later declared. "I saw that God would be perfectly just in sending me to hell, and that to hell I must go, unless I were saved of mere grace." Fuller now recognized the way that he had sorely abused God's mercy. He had presumed that he was a converted individual, but all the time he had had no love for God and no desire for his presence, no hunger to be like Christ and no love for his people. On the other hand, he could not bear, he said, "the thought of plunging myself into endless ruin." It was at this point that Job's resolution—"though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15)—came to mind, and Fuller grew determined to cast himself upon the mercy of the Lord Jesus "to be both pardoned and purified."[12]

Yet, the Hyper-Calvinism which formed the air that he had breathed since his earliest years proved to be a real barrier to his coming to Christ. It maintained, as we have seen, that in order to flee to Christ for salvation, the "warrant" that a person needed to believe that he or she would be accepted by Christ was a subjective one. Conviction of one's sinfulness and deep mental anguish as a result of that conviction were popularly regarded by Hyper-Calvinists as such a warrant. From this point of view, these experiences were signs that God was in the process of converting the individual that was going through them. This perspective on conversion was a direct result of the argument that the Scriptures invite only those sinners who are sensible of their sin to believe in Christ. The net effect of this teaching was to place the essence of conversion and faith not in believing the gospel, "but in a persuasion of our being interested in its benefits." Instead of attention being directed away from oneself towards Christ, the convicted sinner was turned inwards upon himself or herself to search for evidence that he or she was being converted.[13] Against this perspective Fuller would later argue that the gospel exhortation to believe in Christ was a suffi-

cient enough warrant to come to the Lord Jesus.

Fuller was in the throes of a genuine conversion and quite aware of his status as a sinner, but, under the influence of the Hyper-Calvinist spirituality of conversion, he was convinced he had neither the qualifications nor the proper warrant to flee to Christ in order to escape the righteous judgment of God. Upon later reflection, he saw his situation as akin to that of Queen Esther. She went into the presence of her husband, the Persian King Ahasuerus, at the risk of her life, since it was contrary to Persian law to enter the monarch's presence uninvited. Similarly, Fuller decided: "I will trust my soul, my sinful, lost soul in his [i.e. Christ's] hands—if I perish, I perish!" So it was in November, 1769 that Fuller found peace with God and rest for his troubled soul in the cross of Christ. [14]

His personal experience prior to and during his conversion ultimately taught him three things in particular. First, there was the error of maintaining that only those sinners aware of and distressed about their state have a warrant or right to come to Christ. Second, genuine faith is Christ-centred, not a curving inwards upon oneself to see if there was any desire to know Christ and embrace his salvation. Finally, Fuller recognized that true conversion is rooted in a radical change of the affections of the heart and manifest in a lifestyle that seeks to honour God.[15]

Soham Church, a theological "labyrinth"[16]

The following spring in 1770 Fuller was baptized and joined the church at Soham. That fall, though, the church was sorely divided over the question of whether or not sinful men and women had "the power...to do the will of God and to keep themselves from sin." The controversy in the Soham church over this issue—which Fuller later described as the "wormwood and the gall of my youth"[17]—had arisen through Fuller's rebuke of a fellow member who had gotten drunk. When confronted by Fuller with regard to his sin, the individual replied that he was not able to prevent himself from sinning in this way and that he was not his own keeper. Fuller told him that "he could keep himself from such sins as these, and that his way of talking was merely to excuse what was inexcusable." The man answered Fuller by telling him that he was still a young Christian and only in time would he come to know the deceitfulness of the heart. While this member was ultimately dis-fellowshipped, the theological implications of his answers to Fuller

continued to be debated in the church for quite a few months and eventually led to Pastor Eve's resignation from the church in October, 1771. Fuller later commented that though this controversy deeply troubled him, it was ultimately the means of leading him into "those views of divine truth" that later made their appearance in his major published works.

In January of 1774 he was asked by the church to regularly fill the pulpit. Sixteen months later, Fuller was ordained as the second pastor of the Soham church. The work consisted of forty-seven members and met for worship in a rented barn. It was not until 1783, a year after Fuller had been called to Kettering Baptist Church, that the church had the finances to erect a more permanent dwelling.

During this first year of ministry, Fuller's time was largely taken up with reading and study. He continued to reflect upon the principles at stake in the controversy that had wracked the Soham church a few years earlier. The controversy caused him to realize that God's will regarding the unregenerate entailed more than "mere outward actions, but extended to the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart."[18] Yet, due to the fact that Eve's preaching was the only homiletical model he had ever had, he preached like Eve and refused to urge the unconverted to come to Christ. But he was increasingly dissatisfied with Hyper-Calvinist reasoning. He began to sense that his "preaching was anti-scriptural and defective in many respects." But he saw no easy solution to his problem. He felt he was having to feel his way slowly "out of a labyrinth." [19]

One of the ministers who took part in his ordination in May, 1775 was Robert Hall, Sr (1728-1791), pastor of the Calvinistic Baptist cause in Arnsby, Leicestershire. At the ordination, Fuller was asked why Eve had had to leave the church in 1771. After Hall had heard Fuller recount the details of the controversy that had led to Eve's resignation, he recommended that Fuller study the classic work by Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) on divine sovereignty and human responsibility, his A Careful and Strict Enquiry Into the Modern Prevailing Notions of the Freedom of Will (1754). The Arnsby pastor was rightly convinced that this work would help clarify some of Fuller's thinking about the power of sinful men and women to obey God.

In this treatise Edwards had sought to show that it was scriptural to uphold the responsibility of men and women for their remaining in sin

as well as to maintain that human beings are utterly unable in their own strength to turn from their sin and turn to God. A person's possession of natural faculties such as reason and will render him or her accountable to God for the proper use of them. However, due to the perverse disposition of the human will, men and women in their natural state are unable to use their natural faculties aright. Humanity's consistent failure to live in such a way as to please God stems, then, not from physical inability, but from moral inability. As we shall see, this distinction between physical and moral inability would also be central to the attack Fuller made on the canons of Hyper-Calvinism. But it was not until 1777, nearly two years later, that Fuller actually read this work.

In the meanwhile Fuller was immersing himself in the doctrinal treatise entitled A Body of Doctrinal Divinity by John Gill, which was all but required reading for English Baptist pastors in the eighteenth century. One could be assured that Baptist pastors owned at least two works: John Gill's A Body of Divinity as well as Gill's expository commentary on the entirety of the Old and New Testaments. Fuller was also reading the works of the Baptist author from the previous century, John Bunyan.

He read most of Gill's systematic work, found much that was helpful in it, but was deeply troubled by the evident differences between Gill and Bunyan. Both were ardent Calvinists, but whereas Bunyan recommended "the free offer of salvation to sinners without distinction," Gill did not. Fuller wrongly concluded that though Bunyan was "a great and good man," he was not as clear as Gill regarding the gospel. Yet, as Fuller perused the writings of other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors, in particular those of the Puritan theologian John Owen (1616-1683), he noted that they too "dealt...in free invitations to sinners to come to Christ and be saved." In other words, Fuller had discerned that with regard to the preaching of the gospel there was a definite difference not only between Bunyan and Gill, but more broadly between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Calvinism and that of the early eighteenth century.

Although Fuller would eventually find strong theological allies in the elder Hall, John Ryland Jr and John Sutcliff (1752-1814), pastor of the Baptist work at Olney, Buckinghamshire, these men lived sixty to seventy miles away. Fuller's inquiry after the truth was in many ways therefore a solitary one. As Ryland wrote in his memoirs of Fuller: "he

had fewer means of assistance from men and books than he might have had elsewhere; but he was obliged to think, and pray, and study the Scriptures, and thus to make his ground good."[20] A personal covenant written by Fuller in 1780 speaks of his "determination to take up no principles at second-hand, but to search for every thing at the pure fountain of [God's] word."[21]

This then was the crucible in which The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation was written.

The refutation of Hyper-Calvinism:

The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation

A preliminary draft of the work was written by 1778.[22] In what was roughly its final form it was completed by 1781.[23] Two editions of the work were published in Fuller's lifetime. The first edition, published in Northampton in 1785, was subtitled The Obligations of Men Fully to Credit, and Cordially to Approve, Whatever God Makes Known, Wherein is Considered the Nature of Faith in Christ, and the Duty of Those where the Gospel Comes in that Matter. The second edition, which appeared in 1801, was more simply subtitled The Duty of Sinners to Believe in Jesus Christ, a subtitle which well expressed the overall theme of the book.[24] There were substantial differences between the two editions, which Fuller freely admitted and which primarily related to the doctrine of particular redemption, but the major theme remained unaltered: "faith in Christ is the duty of all men who hear, or have opportunity to hear, the gospel."[25] Or as he put it in his preface to the first edition: "God requires the heart, the whole heart, and nothing but the heart;...all the precepts of the Bible are only the different modes in which we are required to express our love to him."[26]

In the first section of the work, Fuller states the theme of the book and spends some time discussing the nature of saving faith. He especially takes to task the popular High Calvinist view of faith as something primarily subjective.

> *The Scriptures always represent faith as terminating on something without us; namely, on Christ, and the truths concerning him: but if it consist in a persuasion of our being in a state of salvation, it must terminate principally on something within us; namely, the work of grace in our hearts; for to believe myself interested in Christ is the same thing as to believe myself a subject*

of special grace.[27]

As Fuller goes on to point out, genuine faith is fixed on "the glory of Christ, and not the happy condition we are in." These are two very different things. The former entails "a persuasion of Christ being both able and willing to save all them that come unto God by him," while the latter is "a persuasion that we are the children of God."[28] The Hyper-Calvinist schema thus ultimately turns faith into a preoccupation with the one's spiritual state and security and Christ a means to the latter.

In Part II of the work Fuller adduces six arguments in defence of his position. Let us look at one of these arguments, the first, in which Fuller seeks to show from various Biblical passages that "unconverted sinners are commanded, exhorted, and invited to believe in Christ for salvation."[29]

John 12:36, for instance, contains an exhortation of the Lord Jesus to a crowd of men and women to "believe in the light" that they might be the children of light. Working from the context, Fuller argues that Jesus was urging his hearers to put their faith in him. He is the "light" in whom faith is to be placed, that faith which issues in salvation (John 12:46). Those whom Christ commanded to exercise such faith, however, were rank unbelievers, of whom it is said earlier "they believed not on him" (John 12:37). [30]

Or consider John 6:29 where Jesus declares to sinners that "this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Fuller first points out that this statement is made to men who in the context are described as following Christ simply because he gave them food to eat (verse 26). They are unbelievers (verse 36). Christ rebukes them for their mercenary motives and urges them to "labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (verse 27). Their response as recorded in John 6:28 is to ask Christ "what shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" His answer is to urge them to put their faith in him (verse 29). Or, as Fuller puts it, faith in Christ is "the first and greatest of all duties, and without it no other duty can be acceptable."[31]

Again, in John 5:23 we read that all men and women are to "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." Giving honour to the Son entails, Fuller rightly reasons, "holy, hearty love to him" and adoration of every aspect of his person. It "necessarily supposes faith in him."

Christ has shown himself to be an infallible teacher, a holy advocate who pleads the case of his erring people, a physician who offers health to the spiritually sick, and a supreme monarch. Honouring him in these various aspects of his ministry requires faith and trust. "To honour an infallible teacher is to place an implicit and unbounded confidence in all he says; to honour an advocate is to commit our cause to him; to honour a physician is to trust our lives in his hands; and to honour a king is to bow to his sceptre, and cheerfully obey his laws."[32]

Fuller can also point to the incident with Simon Magus in Acts 8, where the magician is urged by Peter to "repent" and "pray" for forgiveness of his sinful thinking (Acts 8:22). Forgiveness, though, can be found only in Christ. So, Fuller reasons, "he was, in effect, directed to believe in Jesus." [33]

Another argument that Fuller brings forward is the fact that lack of faith in Christ is considered a "heinous sin" in the Scriptures, Fuller reasoned that trust in Christ is required of all that sit under the preaching of the Word.[34] Men and women are never reproved for their not being among the elect, for election is solely God's work. But "sinners are reproved for not believing," as in passages John 5:40, where Jesus rebukes his hearers for being unwilling to come to him to receive eternal life.

One very important question that Fuller had to wrestle with had to do with human inability and the Spirit's help. Hyper-Calvinists argued that sinners are unable to do anything spiritually good, and thus are under no obligation to exercise faith in Christ. They supported their argument by reference to such texts as John 6:44 ("No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him") and 1 Corinthians 2:14 ("the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"). The inability of which these passages speak, Fuller contended in response, is a moral inability, which is rooted in the sinful disposition of the heart. Men and women refuse to come to Christ because of their aversion to him. They fail to understand the gospel and the things of the Spirit because they lack the means by which such matters are understood, namely, the presence of the indwelling Spirit. And they lack the Spirit because their hearts are closed to God. These verses are not speaking of a physical inability—such as insanity or mental deficiency—which excuses its subject of

blame.[35] In making this distinction between physical and moral inability, which Fuller derived from Jonathan Edwards, Fuller was seeking to affirm a scriptural paradox: sinful men and women are utterly powerless to turn to God except through the regenerative work of God's Holy Spirit, yet this powerlessness is the result of their own sinful hearts.[36]

This led Fuller to address the role of the Spirit's work in conversion. Hyper-Calvinists argued that if repentance and faith are ascribed by the Scriptures to the work of the Spirit, then "they cannot be duties required of sinners." As Fuller points out, though, the force of this objection is dependent upon the supposition that "we do not stand in need of the Holy Spirit to enable us to comply with our duty." What is amazing about this supposition is that Arminianism assumes the same. For the Arminian, because faith is commanded of sinners by God, then they must be able to believe without the irresistible drawing of the Spirit. Similarly, the Hyper-Calvinist reasons that since faith is wrought by the Spirit it cannot be an act of obedience. The truth of the matter, however, is that "we need the influence of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do our duty" and that "repentance and faith, therefore, may be duties, notwithstanding their being the gifts of God."[37]

There were two main practical conclusions to Fuller's arguments. First, sinners have every encouragement to trust in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of their souls. They do not need to spend time dallying to see if they are among God's elect or if God is at work in their hearts by his Spirit. Moreover, they can no longer sit at ease under the sound of the gospel and excuse their unbelief by asserting that faith is the gift of God.[38]

Second, ministers of the Word must earnestly exhort their hearers to commit themselves to Christ and that without delay. In so doing they will be faithful imitators of Christ and his Apostles, who "warned, admonished, and entreated" sinners to repent, to believe, and to be reconciled to God. Many Hyper-Calvinist ministers of Fuller's day, though, were too much like John Eve and had next to nothing to say to the unconverted in their congregations, because they believed that these men and women were "poor, impotent...creatures." Faith was beyond such men and women, and could not be pressed upon them as an immediate, present duty. Fuller was convinced that this way of conducting a pulpit ministry was unbiblical and simply helped the unconverted to remain in their sin.

Fuller put his position well in an article of the statement of faith he made at his induction into the Kettering pastorate in 1783: "I believe it is the duty of every minister of Christ plainly and faithfully to preach the gospel to all who will hear it; ...and that it is their [i.e. the hearers'] duty to love the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in him for salvation... I therefore believe free and solemn addresses, invitations, calls, and warnings to them to be not only consistent, but directly adapted, as means, in the hand of the Spirit of God, to bring them to Christ. I consider it as a part of my duty which I could not omit without being guilty of the blood of souls."[39]

Controversy

As we have noted, Fuller originally wrote this treatise to help clarify his own thinking. It was not intended initially for public consumption. Nevertheless, his friends, the elder Hall, Sutcliff and Ryland encouraged Fuller to consider seriously its publication. But Fuller delayed publishing his manuscript. He honestly feared that it might injure the cause of Christ. He was also afraid of the controversy that it would engender. This latter fear was only alleviated by the conviction that his argument for the obligation of men and women to believe in Christ was indeed of vital importance. Finally, in October of 1784 Fuller took the plunge and made the decision to publish. The following month he walked the thirteen or so miles from Kettering to Northampton to deliver it into the hands of Thomas Dicey (1742-?), a wealthy Northampton printer whose father and grandfather had made the family money through the sale of ephemeral popular literature. When Fuller's book appeared the following year, it was indeed an epoch-making work. It provided a theology for many others in the Baptist denomination whose thinking was moving in the same direction and developing along the same lines.

Of the various early, written attacks against Fuller's position there were two major ones, both of them by London Hyper-Calvinists. The first, by William Button (1754-1821), pastor of Dean Street Baptist Church, appeared in 1785. The second, by John Martin (1741-1820), who pastored Grafton Street Baptist Church, was published in three parts between the years 1788 and 1791. It is noteworthy that despite their attacks on Fuller, both Button and Martin subsequently had friendly relations with him. Button, for instance, was a firm supporter of the Baptist Missionary Society from its early years until his death. And Martin, in 1797, could speak of his sincere respect for Fuller. Later opponents of

Fuller's views, or Fullerism as it came to be called, were not as generous. The Strict Baptist patriarch, William Gadsby (1773-1844), could state in public that Fuller was "the greatest enemy the church of God ever had, as his sentiments were so much cloaked with the sheep's clothing."[40]

Far less significant than the theological responses of Button and Martin, but probably more irksome, was the petty sniping and ostracism to which Fuller was subjected. Rushden Baptist Church was about ten miles south of Kettering. From 1785 to 1794, though, relations between Fuller's church and that in Rushden were quite acrimonious. In the summer of 1785, a Mrs. Wright, who was a member of the Rushden church but was now living in Weekley, just north of Kettering, requested a letter of dismissal from Rushden to Kettering. The pastor of Rushden, William Knowles (d.1794), refused to give her one, because, he said, "the church at Kettering had gone off from their former principles." After a while Mrs. Wright again sought a letter of dismissal from Rushden, but to no avail. On behalf of the Kettering congregation, Fuller then wrote to the Rushden work and asserted that they still held to those truths "commonly called Calvinistical," which were "the source of all our salvation and all our hope."

A response from Rushden was a long time coming. Eventually on December 22, 1785 the Rushden Baptists wrote back and accused the Kettering congregation of lording it over their church. "Have we not," they wrote, "an undoubted right to dismiss or not to dismiss a member at [our] discretion without being compelled thereto?" Nevertheless, they said, if the Kettering church wanted to receive Mrs. Wright as a member, they were free to do so, but it would have to be without a letter of dismissal. Indeed, at this point, the Kettering Baptists were prepared to accept her without such a letter. The Kettering church also acknowledged that there was indeed one difference between them and the Rushden believers. It was obviously this one difference which had led to the strained relations between the two churches. "We consider," Fuller wrote in the minute book of the Kettering congregation, "the doctrines of grace as entirely consistent with a free address to every sinner, and with an universal obligation on all men where the gospel is preached to repent of their sins and turn to God through Jesus Christ."

However, Mrs. Wright, being of a timid disposition, was unprepared to leave the Rushden fellowship with ill-feeling. She thus stayed in the

Rushden church until Knowles died in 1794, and finally, on February 16, 1796, she was given an honourable dismissal to Kettering.[41]

"The armies of the Lamb"

Along with this re-thinking of the responsibility of both preachers and hearers of the gospel came a fresh perspective on the nature of the church. Now, Fuller wholly affirmed traditional Calvinistic Baptist thinking about the church. In that tradition the church is a body of people who have personally repented and exercised faith in Christ, and borne witness to this inner transformation by baptism. But Fuller is also concerned to emphasize something else about the church.

When Fuller spoke of the local church his emphasis often fell on the church's responsibility to evangelize and indeed participate in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth. As he wrote in 1806:

> *The primitive churches were not mere assemblies of men who agreed to meet together once or twice a week, and to subscribe for the support of an accomplished man who should on those occasions deliver lectures on religion. They were men gathered out of the world by the preaching of the cross, and formed into society for the promotion of Christ's kingdom in their own souls and in the world around them. It was not the concern of the ministers or elders only; the body of the people were interested in all that was done, and, according to their several abilities and stations, took part in it. Neither were they assemblies of heady, high-minded, contentious people, meeting together to argue on points of doctrine or discipline, and converting the worship of God into scenes of strife. They spoke the truth; but it was in love: they observed discipline; but, like an army of chosen men, it was that they might attack the kingdom of Satan to greater advantage. Happy were it for our churches if we could come to a closer imitation of this model!*[42]

Fuller certainly had no wish to abandon either the stress on doctrinal preaching for the edification of God's people or that on proper discipline, but he had rightly noted that the pursuit of these concerns to the exclusion of evangelism had produced in all too many eighteenth-century Baptist churches contention, bitter strife and endless disputes. These inward-looking concerns had to be balanced with an outward focus on the extension of Christ's kingdom.

Moreover, evangelism was not simply to be regarded as the work of only "the ministers or elders." The entire body of God's people were to be involved. This conception of the church is well summed up in another text, which, like the one cited above, compares the church of Christ to an army. "The true churches of Jesus Christ," he wrote five years before his death, "travail in birth for the salvation of men. They are the armies of the Lamb, the grand object of whose existence is to extend the Redeemer's kingdom."[43] Retaining the basic structure of seventeenth-century Baptist thinking about the church, Fuller has added one critical ingredient drawn from the experience of the Evangelical revival: the vital need for local Baptist churches to be centres of vigorous evangelism.

Conclusion

By 1798 there were close to 361 Calvinistic Baptist churches in England and Wales. This number had risen to 532 by 1812, and in 1851 it stood at over 1,370. From a more personal angle, one can observe the revival that was taking place in the following extracts from the letters of Andrew Fuller. [44]

In the year 1810 Fuller noted in a letter to William Carey: "I preached a sermon to the youth last Lord's Day from 1 Thess 2:19. I think we must have had nearly one thousand. They came from all quarters. My heart's desire and prayer for them is that they may be saved." Fuller was still rejoicing when he wrote to his fellow Baptist pastor, John Ryland, on December 28: "I hope the Lord is at work among our young people. Our Monday and Friday night meetings are much thronged." A couple of months later he told Ryland: "The Friday evening discourses are now, and have been for nearly a year, much thronged, because they have been mostly addressed to persons under some concern about their salvation." And what was happening in Fuller's church was happening in Baptist causes throughout the length and breadth of England and Wales.

The central figure remembered in this revival is often William Carey. It is vital to note that behind Carey stands Fuller. Harry R. Boer puts it this way: "Fuller's insistence on the duty of all men everywhere to believe the gospel...played a determinative role in the crystallization of Carey's missionary vision."[45]

Notes:

1. *The Indwelling and Righteousness of Christ no Security against Corporeal Death, but the Source of Spiritual and Eternal Life* (London: W. Button & Son, 1815), 2-3.

Ryland went on to write the classic study of Fuller's life: *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated; in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller* (London: Button & Son, 1816). The same publisher published a second edition of this biography in 1818. For more recent studies, see Gilbert S. Laws, *Andrew Fuller: Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder* (London: Carey Press, 1942); Phil Roberts, "Andrew Fuller" in Timothy George and David S. Dockery, eds., *Baptist Theologians* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), 121-139; Peter J. Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth-Century Particular Baptist Life* (Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K./ Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster Press, 2003); and Michael A. G. Haykin, ed., *'At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word': Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K./Waynesboro, Georgia: Paternoster Press, 2004). See also two very fine unpublished theses on Fuller: Doyle L. Young, "The Place of Andrew Fuller in the Developing Modern Missions Movement" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981); Thomas Kennedy Ascol, "The Doctrine of Grace: A Critical Analysis of Federalism in the Theologies of John Gill and Andrew Fuller" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological seminary, 1989). Also see the excellent study by E.F. Clipsham, "Andrew Fuller and Fullerism: A Study in Evangelical Calvinism", *The Baptist Quarterly*, 20 (1963-1964), 99-114, 146-154, 214-225, 268-276.

2. "Preface to the Complete American Edition" [*The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, revised Joseph Belcher (1845 ed.; repr. Harrisonburg, Virginia: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), I, viii].
3. Cited Laws, *Andrew Fuller*, 127.
4. *Memoir of the Life, Labors, and Extensive Usefulness of the Rev. Christmas Evans* (New York: M. W. Dodd, 1843), 74.
5. Fuller's main refutation of Socinianism may be found in *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared, as to their Moral Tendency* (*Works*, II, 108-242). His chief response to Deism, especially that of the popularizer Thomas Paine (1737-1809), is *The Gospel Its Own Witness* (*Works*, II, 1-107). For examinations of Fuller's reply to these theological aberrations, see Michael A. G. Haykin, " "The Oracles of God": Andrew Fuller and the Scriptures", *Churchman*, 103 (1989), 60-76 and *idem*, "A Socinian and Calvinist Compared: Joseph Priestley and Andrew Fuller on the Propriety of Prayer to Christ", *Dutch Review of Church History*, 73 (1993), 178-198.
6. Andrew Gunton Fuller, "Memoir" (*Works*, I, 1). For details of Fuller's family, see Ryland, *Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1818 ed.), 8-10; Andrew Gunton Fuller, *Andrew Fuller* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), 11-12.
7. Fuller, "Memoir" (*Works*, I, 2, 12).
8. *Works*, I, 2.
9. *Works*, I, 3.
10. *Works*, I, 3.
11. *Works*, I, 3-4.
12. *Works*, I, 4-5.
13. Andrew Fuller, *Strictures on Sandemanianism, in Twelve Letters to a Friend* (*Works*, II, 563-564). See also Clipsham, "Andrew Fuller and Fullerism", 103.
14. Fuller, "Memoir" (*Works*, I, 5-6).
15. Clipsham, "Andrew Fuller and Fullerism", 106-107.
16. Fuller compared his movement away from Hyper-Calvinism to the finding of a path

out of a labyrinth: Fuller, "Memoir" (*Works*, I, 13).
17. *Works*, I, 10. The controversy is described by Fuller in *Works*, I, 8-10.
18. *Works*, I, 12-13.
19. *Works*, I, 13.
20. *Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1818 ed.), 43.
21. *Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (1818 ed.), 129.
22. A. G. Fuller, "Memoir of the Rev. Andrew Fuller" in *The Principal Works and Remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852), 32, note. Cf. *idem*, *Andrew Fuller* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), 168.
23. J.W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller* (London, 1816), 270.
24. *Works*, II, 328-416.
25. *Works*, II, 342. The edition reprinted in this collection of Fuller's works is the second edition. Unless otherwise indicated, references will be to this edition. Extremely helpful in tracing the differences between the two editions is Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771-1892: From John Gill to C.H. Spurgeon* (Edinburgh/Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 2006), 156-172.
26. *Works*, II, 332.
27. *Works*, II, 334.
28. *Works*, II, 334-335.
29. *Works*, II, 343.
30. *Works*, II, 345.
31. *Works*, II, 345.
32. *Works*, II, 346.
33. *Works*, II, 347.
34. *Works*, II, 353-358.
35. *Works*, II, 376-379.
36. James E. Tull, *Shapers of Baptist Thought* (1972 ed.; repr. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1984), 90.
37. *Works*, II, 379-380.
38. *Works*, II, 383-386.
39. Cited A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd., 1956), 163-164.
40. John Gadsby, *A Memoir of the Late Mr. William Gadsby* (Manchester: J. Gadsby/ London: R. Groombridge, 1844), 34, footnote.
41. The Minute Book of Fuller Baptist Church, Kettering, entries for 17 August 1785, 6 November 1785, 22 December 1785, and 26 February 1796 [Fuller Baptist Church, Kettering, Northamptonshire].
42. *The Pastor's Address to his Christian Hearers, Entreating their Assistance in Promoting the Interest of Christ* (*Works*, III, 346).
43. *The Promise of the Spirit, the Grand Encouragement in Promoting the Gospel* (*Works*, III, 359).
44. The following extracts from the letters of Andrew Fuller are all cited by Doyle L. Young, "The Place of Andrew Fuller in the Developing Modern Missions Movement" (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981), 232.
45. *Pentecost and Missions* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1961), 24.

"A city set on a hill"

History
of
Larne Baptist Church
1955 - 2005

Following the relocation of Larne Baptist Church from Grammar Brae to Craigyhill in 1964 the late Pastor J. Henry wrote an article for Irish Baptist Magazine which he entitled "Larne - A City Set on a Hill," and in which he made the statement that the Church is now "a witness for the Gospel in a very strategic position."

The minutes of the Deacons' and Members' Meetings from 1955 until 2005 indicate many changes in society and politics, record many changes in personnel but also reveal that in the fifty year history of Larne Baptist Church our purpose and priority has remained constant and unchanged - to be "a witness for the Gospel in a very strategic position." The vision which brought this Church into being is still with us today and our objective in 2005 is to embrace and pursue that vision and to see the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ bearing fruit in the building up of the Church and the salvation of many souls.

Latharna

The history of Larne can be traced back to the 1st century B.C. when the Celtic King Ard-Righ gave a stretch of land along the Antrim coast to one of his sons, Lathar. The area became known as "the district of Lathor" which was in Gaelic "Latharna." This name was later anglicised to Larne, although the name "Lathama" has survived the centuries and is still in use in the town in a variety of ways.

The location of the original village, which was probably on the south side of the river, offered the early settlers two great benefits. First it is an area of natural and outstanding beauty, located on the edge of the sea surrounded by glens and hills. Second it possesses a natural har-

bour which has been used through the centuries by multitudes of sailors, soldiers, traders, immigrants and emigrants.

Although the population of Larne remained comparatively small (in 1901 the population was 6670) yet the possession of such a well located and usable harbour has given Larne a part to play in many major social, political and spiritual developments that have affected Ireland.

In 1018 AD a great naval battle was fought with Viking invaders in Larne Lough when the Viking King Einar Jarl was defeated by Konofogor (Conor?), King of Ireland. Larne was used as one of the landing places when the Anglo-Normans arrived in Ireland in the 12th Century. On May 25th 1315AD Robert Bruce and his army landed in Larne in an attempt to make Bruce King of Ireland but his ambition failed when his army was eventually defeated.

Between 1600-1640AD a large number of English and lowland Scots passed through Larne as they came to settle in Ulster, especially in Counties Antrim and Down. In the following century, between the years 1750-1775, no fewer than fifty-seven ships set sail from Larne laden with emigrants for the British Colonies in North America, many of whom were to make significant contributions to the progress of America. Billy Kennedy in The Making of America (Ambassador Productions Ltd 2001) lists seventeen American presidents with Ulster links, two of whom, Andrew Johnson (1865-69) and Theodore Roosevelt (1905-09) are believed to have had ancestors from just outside Larne.

Christianity

Around the beginning of the 5th Century a young man from the west coast of Britain was kidnapped by Irish pirates and brought to Ireland where he was sold into slavery. His name was Succat but he was given the Latin name Patricius, better known by us as Patrick. There is a tradition that Patrick was sold in a Larne market and later made his way back from Slemish, near Ballymena, to Britain through the port of Larne.

Later in the 5th century three Christian foundations were established around Larne. The only one which survived began as an Augustinian Monastery known as Invermore and was located very close to the site of the present Church of St. Cedma.

In the middle of the 6th Century a Christian Community was founded in

Bangor, which gave birth to great missionary endeavour, by Comgall, who was born at Magheramorne, four miles south-east of Larne in 517AD.

The first Presbyterian minister arrived in the town in 1627 and the first Presbyterian congregation split into the "Bridge" congregation (now First Larne) which was orthodox and the "Head of the Town" congregation which favoured "New Light" (Unitarian) teachings. Gardenmore Presbyterian Church was established in 1769 by Scottish Calvinists.

John Wesley preached in Larne three times, in 1758, 1760 and finally in 1771. In his journal Wesley wrote, "I went on to Lam and preached at nine in the Main Street to a very attentive congregation. Thence I rode to Glenarm."

During the 1859 revival it was reported on 7th June, "at Larne the revival has commenced in real earnest. Last Sunday evening the different places of worship were crowded to excess; many were convinced and converted.....the town is in a state of considerable excitement....nothing else is talked of....." Remarkable scenes were recorded in the surrounding towns and villages of Carnlough, Ballycarry, Ballyeaston and Raloo.

Baptists

Baptists in Ireland trace their history back to the mid 17th century. When Cromwell's army came to Dublin in 1650 there is some evidence that there was a Baptist Church already in existence, the origin of which is unknown, yet there is no doubt that Cromwell's arrival gave a new impetus to the Baptist cause. Some Baptist Churches founded in those days are still in existence today. By 1813, however, only five Baptist Churches remained in the South and in that year the Swifts' Alley Church in Dublin, under the leadership of John West, started a movement for the evangelisation of Ireland, which led to the formation of "The Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel in Ireland." Support and help was given by Baptists in Great Britain throughout the most of the 19th century and towards the end of the century it was ascertained that the Baptist Churches in Ireland were now able to manage their own affairs. In 1895 "The Baptist Union in Ireland" was founded, followed by the formation of the Annuity Fund in 1902, the Orphan Society in 1916 and the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission in 1924.

Baptist witness in Larne commenced in the mid 19th century. The

Larne Weekly Reporter dated June 3rd 1865 records that on the previous Sunday a meeting was held in a hired room in Point Street at which a sermon was preached by a Baptist gentleman from Carrickfergus, where a Baptist Church had been founded in 1862. The article comments, " the proceedings were looked upon as an attempt to introduce the Baptist doctrine here," and also that the audience were rather disappointed because "no points of a controversial character were introduced by the speaker during his whole discourse." An article in the same newspaper dated August 5th 1865 records that two Baptist preachers were visiting the town and conducting meetings on alternate Sundays. For some time meetings were held in properties in Point Street and also in the Court House, with ministers coming from Carrickfergus and Ballynure. In the September 5th 1874 edition of the Larne Weekly Reporter a local man called David Moore is mentioned as being a leading figure in the formation of the Larne Baptists in 1865, and a listing of ministers up to 1874 was given as Messrs. Rocke, Skelly, Wilkie and McMurtry. The report also mentioned that there had been two cases of adult baptism at the Corran since the Baptists were established in Larne. These records give a brief but interesting insight into Baptist activity in Larne 130-140 years ago, but it is not known what became of this particular group.

The modern history of Baptist witness in Larne begins in 1955.

THE YEARS 1955 - 1958

The formation of the present Larne Baptist Church can be traced back to late 1954 and to a large degree to the faith and vision of Dr. L.A.Hughes, who had moved from England to work in Larne. Dr Hughes discovered that a number of people holding Baptist convictions had moved into the Larne area and so arranged meetings in his home for fellowship and to seek God's will for their future. On December 20th a deputation from the Baptist Union visited the group in Larne and it was agreed to commence holding services as soon as possible. A room was hired in the Victoria Hall, Curran Road, and the first service was held on Sunday February 13th 1955 at 8.00pm. The Irish Baptist Magazine of March 1955 records that about forty people were present, some having travelled quite a distance. Pastor G. Weir, the Home Mission Chairman, gave the address and the service was "marked with great rejoicing and the Holy Spirit's presence." On March 13th morning services were started at 11.30am and regular

weekly prayer meetings on Tuesday evenings.

The Church was formally constituted at a meeting held on Tuesday 19th April at Millbrook House, the home of Dr & Mrs Hughes. and chaired by the Union President, Mr. Stewart Neill. After reading the basis of doctrine of the new Church, Dr Hughes then read out the names of the twelve foundation members, each of whom signed the minute book individually. The foundation members were; Mr T Armstrong; Mrs M Cordner; Mr R Cowan; Mrs I Cowan ; Dr L A Hughes; Mrs N Hughes; Mr P Hughes; Mrs M Lynn; Mr J Weir; Mrs E Weir.

The address was given by the Union Secretary Pastor J. Thompson, who, taking the text Phillipians 1:27, urged the new Church to strive to develop five characteristics namely, steadfastness, unity, humility, co-operation and courage.

At the suggestion of the President, the newly constituted Church elected the following men to serve as deacons: Mr T Armstrong, Mr R Cowan and Dr L Hughes. At a Church Meeting on Tuesday May 3rd 1985 Dr Hughes and Mr Armstrong were elected to serve as Church Secretary and Church Treasurer respectively.

It is interesting to note from April 1955 until April 1957 there were only three Deacons' Meetings, but within the same period there were twenty three Church Meetings (almost one per month) and the Annual General Meeting was then called the Annual Social.

The first Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday April 19th 1956, with 125 friends attending and Pastor J Thompson presiding. Dr Hughes reported that the first year of the church had been a year of blessing and encouragement.

Throughout the year there had been a steady increase in attendances at Sunday services as well as prayer and Bible study meetings and the Church particularly rejoiced in the fact that during the year a number of souls had been saved. On Thursday 13th October the first baptismal service of the Larne Church was held at the invitation of Pastor McNabb in Mountpottinger Baptist Church, when three believers bore testimony to the faith by the ordinance of baptism.

Dr Hughes also expressed gratitude for the generous giving of the members and friends of the Church. A number of gifts had been given to the Church including new hymn books, communion trays, a lectern

and an organ stool. The offerings from February 13th 1955 until March 31st 1956 totalled £164:19:1 for the General Fund and £201:19:4 for the Building Fund. The report places great emphasis on the fact that the first year in the life of the Church was particularly marked by a great spirit of unity, love and expectancy.

Early in its life application was made to enter into the fellowship of the Baptist Union of Ireland which duly took place at the Assembly Meeting in May 1956.

At the time of the first AGM negotiations to purchase a site for the erection of a building were far advanced. The site in question was at the junction of Mill Brae and Lower Cairncastle Road (now called Grammar Brae), measuring almost an acre, and ideally located to serve both the old and the new parts of the town. The site, now part of the grounds of Larne Grammar School, was duly purchased, although the Church continued to meet in Victoria Hall for almost another year. A three week tent mission was held on the site in June 1956 when a number of souls were saved under the preaching of Mr James McManus.

The Forbes Memorial Hall

To perpetuate the memory of Pastor Frank H. Forbes, Secretary of the Irish Baptist Home Mission from 1937-1952, two portable Halls were constructed for use in extending the work of Irish Baptists. The first Hall was used at Stonepark and the one which came to Larne was one section longer and two feet wider and was composed of a vestry, two cloakrooms and a hall capable of seating 150 people.

The opening service on Saturday April 6th 1957was chaired by Pastor R A Boggs and the speaker was Pastor G Weir. On the Sunday following the second Anniversary services were held in the new Hall when the speaker was Pastor J Thompson.

The original agreement with the Home Mission was that Larne would have the use of the Forbes Hall for 3 years from 1st April 1957 at the rental cost of £52.00 per year. Following the completion of the Church building the future of the Forbes Hall was considered by the Home Mission and the Church. The two options were the Hall being moved to Dundalk or the Church buying it. The Home Mission asked for £1000.00 and the Church replied by offering £500.00, which was accepted and the Forbes Hall became property of the Church in 1980,

and served the Church well until the new extension was completed in 2004.

Pastor Lutton

Within the second year of the Church's life membership had increased to twenty three and two baptismal services had been held, one at East End Baptist Church and the other at Glengormley, when seven believers had been baptised. In his annual report Dr Hughes concluded with these words, "we face our third year greatly encouraged, with high hopes and with determination that ever looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, great things shall be accomplished in His name and for His glory in the days to come."

The third year in the life of the Church (April 1957-March 1958) was again one of steady encouragement when the membership grew to 33. Since the formation of the Church, services had been conducted by a number of visiting preachers and now it was felt that it was time for a more consistent ministry. The deacons made enquiries about the possibility of the Home Mission providing pastoral oversight and after consultation with the Evangelistic Committee it was agreed to approach Pastor H C Lutton, then working in Canada, and it was agreed that he would come to Larne for a period of six months commencing on 17th November 1957 to engage in pastoral work, visitation and evangelistic missions. A meeting to mark the beginning of Pastor Lutton's work in Larne was held on Saturday 16th November. The meeting was chaired by Pastor G Weir and the preacher was Pastor Robert Clarke, President of the Baptist Union, who spoke from 2 Corinthians 5:9.

During Pastor Lutton's time in Larne two special Gospel campaigns were conducted, one for two weeks in January in the factory hall at Millbrook and the other for three weeks in March in the Forbes Hall when Pastor Ravey was the invited preacher, this work bearing fruit in a number professing faith.

End of an era

Within the first three years the Church had added to the Sunday Services and Midweek Meeting a Sunday School (1956) with twenty children and four teachers, a Women's Auxiliary (1957) and Children's and Young People's Meetings (1958).

At the end of the third year Dr Hughes made this perceptive observation in his annual report, "We have entered our fourth year. The thrill and the glamour, the enthusiasm and the excitement of the beginning of a new cause has gone. We shall not forget them but we shall not experience them again. I believe we enter a new phase in the life of our church - a phase which will call for faith, for patience, for determination, for stickability, for love and for loyalty. Of ourselves, friends, we shall fail. Let us hold to Him "who cannot fail."

Visiting speakers in the first three years included Pastors Baxter, Blayney, Boggs, Bradley, Clarke, Coleman, Graham, Johnston, Lyttle, Minnis Mills, Mullan, H. Orr, Ravey, Ruddock, Thomspon, Weir and Mr S C Brennan. Special mention should be made of and special thanks given to Pastor J Thompson who proved to be a steadfast and consistent friend and encouragement to the church in its early years. In addition, it is clear a number of other friends helped in ministering God's word in the early years. The work of each is known to God and the contribution each has made to the development of the work in Larne is deeply appreciated by those who have inherited the fruit of their labours.

THE YEARS 1958-1974

Disappointments and developments

After the excitement of establishing a new Church and the encouragement of seeing the work growing under the blessing of God the fourth year in the life of the Church proved to be more demanding. Pastor Lutton, under whose ministry a number of people professed faith, left Larne on July 2nd 1958 after accepting a call to the Pastorate of East End Baptist Church. The services were conducted by visiting speakers each week and in March 1959 the Larne Baptists joined with other evangelical denominations in the town for two weeks of meetings to celebrate the 1859 revival, under the ministry of Rev W A Dunlop and Dr J Edwin Orr. The encouragements received from these meetings and the hopes and prayers that God would do again what He had done a century before were offset by the disappointments of a decrease in membership to twenty seven and the deaths of two loyal and devoted adherents.

Although at the Annual Social held on April 18th 1959 Dr Hughes commented on the difficulties and disappointments of the previous

year, yet this meeting also marked the beginning of a new phase in the life of the Church, when, at the end of the evening members and friends were introduced to Mr. J. Henry, who by an arrangement with the Home Missions Committee "would be spending a few weeks in evangelistic pastoral work in fellowship with the Larne church" (The Irish Baptist Vol LXXXI, No7, July 1959).

Mr Henry worked with the Church for six weeks and then, following approaches to the Home Mission, it was agreed that he would remain in Larne for a further twelve months. On Wednesday 29th July a welcome meeting was held when Pastor J Thompson spoke from Revelation on Ch.3 v7-12.

After the difficulties encountered in the Church's fourth year the fifth year proved to be one of encouragement. The first Young People's Sunday was held in June, the first Harvest Thanksgiving service was held in October and in September a work was commenced for teenagers. Throughout the year attendances at Sunday Services and prayer meetings increased and on Sunday August 2nd Mr Henry commencing this second phase of work in Larne.

In February 1960 five believers were baptised in the Glengormley Church, among whom was the daughter of the Church Secretary, Miss Christine Hughes.

Pastor James Henry

The next significant event was the issue of a call to the Pastorate to Mr J Henry, who duly accepted. The induction service chaired by Pastor J Thompson was held on Thursday June 30th 1960. Pastor G Weir brought the charge to the Church, Pastor H Orr brought the charge to the Pastor and Pastor Clarke (Monkstown) brought greetings from East Antrim Baptist Church.

Under Pastor Henry's early ministry the work made steady progress. Souls were saved and the believers were edified. A meeting for teenagers was started on Friday evenings, the first Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held on Sunday 2nd October.

In May 1962 the Church began to consider the possibility of commencing a uniformed organisation already active in other Baptist churches called "Campaigners". Larne Baptist Campaigners was eventually approved, organised and started in October 1962.

The town of Larne has long had a reputation of being a hard place for Christian work and this was borne out, even in the early life of the Church. Attempts to make some inroads into the population of the new Craigyhill housing development began by starting a Sunday School in the Craigyhill Community Centre on Sunday afternoons. This work started in January 1961 with a few children attending but it was recorded that "the co-operation and interest of parents, apart from a few exceptions, was non-existent."

A tent mission was conducted in Millbrook in July - August 1961. Pastor Henry reported that "every house in Millbrook had been visited and tracts distributed but both during the visitation and in the meetings interest shown by the local populace was nil."

A three week mission was conducted by Pastor Thomas of Ballymena in the newly relocated hall in March 1964 but although invitation leaflets had been distributed throughout the whole district it was estimated that as a result of this only about ten local people had come to the meetings.

A new location

Early in Pastor Henry's ministry discussion began about the possibility of finding a new location for the Church building, preferably in the proximity of the new Craigyhill Housing Development. The minutes of a Deacons meeting held on October 3rd 1960 record that " a plot of ground was available near the shops on Cairncastle Road, but the price (£2000.00) seemed out of the question." Two months later Dr. Hughes reported that there was a possibility that a site at the junction of Cairncastle Road and Churchill Road could be available.

The Church was initially informed that the site would cost in the region on £800.00 and that permission to re-erect the Forbes Hall on the new site would only be given if the Church undertook to erect a permanent building within a few years. After many months of discussion and negotiation the site was finally offered for sale at £500.00 but when a survey of the site was made for its suitability for a new building it was discovered that the site, measuring 150ft x 90ft, would not be adequate to fulfil the projected plans and a further area of ground would be needed.

After further negotiations an additional 70ft in length was offered to and accepted by the Church for a total coat of £700.00. The present

members of the Church have often expressed the appreciation for the hard work, vision and sacrifice of former members in securing for us such a well placed and good sized site.

Additional substantial costs of almost £500.00 were required for providing new foundations and services, relocation and all necessary repair and refurbishment work to the Forbes Hall. These costs, however, were offset by the sale of the original site to Larne Grammar School for £600.00.

The last services on "the old site" were held on Sunday October 20th 1963, almost exactly three years after the subject of moving location had first been raised. Because of practical difficulties in making the re-sited Hall ready for use, the Church met for worship in the Community Centre until they were able to return to the Forbes Hall on January 5th 1964.

Peter Hughes

Peter Hughes, the son of Dr. and Mrs. Hughes and one of the founder members of the Church, together with his wife Betty and eighteen month old daughter Sharon, left Northern Ireland in March 1966 on a cargo boat which would take them to Peru where Peter was to work as a Medical Missionary with Baptist Missions. They arrived in Lima three and a half weeks later and spent the next ten months learning Spanish at the Cochabamba Language School in Bolivia. Peter then had to commence a medical course as the Peruvian authorities didn't recognise his medical qualifications. Finally after receiving the required qualifications Peter and his family travelled to Ilave, 12,500 feet above sea level, in the mountains close to Lake Titikaka. The Baptist Sunday Schools in Ireland raised funds to purchase a Land Rover which was converted to serve as an ambulance and it was shipped to Peru for Peter to use in his work. Peter and Betty worked in Peru from 1966 - 1971, when they had to return home for a serious operation on one of their children, and again from 1974 - 1977, when Betty had to return home because of family bereavement. Peter stayed on a further six months and then returned to N. Ireland to be with his wife and family. In 1980 Peter suffered a stroke, but after a time was able to return to work as a Clinical Medical Officer until his retirement two years ago.

Moira Richmond

Moira came into membership in January 1963 and soon became very

involved in the Church through Campaigners, Sunday School, BYF, Open Air work and Door to Door visitation. Towards the end of 1963 she had a pastoral visit to her home from Pastor Henry who asked if she had ever thought about full-time Christian work and assured her that the Church would support her if she felt that God was leading her to prepare for missionary work. A year later she shared her thinking with the Church and was commended by them to study at the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow for the two year Missionary Certificate from 1965-67. This was followed by a practical year in a Christian Bookshop and then a year at the Baptist College in Belfast before applying to Baptist Missions. She went to Peru in 1971 but had to return home in 1974 because of health problems and after surgery and recuperation started work on a temporary basis at the Irish Baptist College which lasted eighteen years. She met her future husband Brian Dorman at IBC, and after being part of a summer team to Peru "romance blossomed" and they were married in 1992. They had just over a year in Peru but again health problems forced their return. After Brian's by-pass surgery they transferred to Baptist Missions Ireland and following a short time in Cork and Athlone they moved to Belfast and have worked with the Reaching into Belfast up to the present date.

Pastoral vacancy 1965 - 67

Under Pastor Henry's ministry the programme of activities was increased and the Church was strengthened in its resolve to be light in a dark world. The prospect of growth suggested in the early years hadn't materialised because, although additions to the membership had been steady, this was being offset by the transfer to other Churches of those who had left the area. So, in April 1965, ten years after the formation of the Church, the membership stood at 35, exactly what it had been in 1958, seven years before.

In February 1965 Pastor Henry, believing his work in Larne was coming to an end, presented to the Deacons a letter of resignation to take effect from 30th June. A farewell meeting for Pastor and Mrs Henry was held on Wednesday 30th June, chaired by Pastor J McNabb, President of the Baptist Union of Ireland and at which Pastor Henry delivered his final message to the Church. A few months later Pastor Henry was appointed as Home Mission Evangelist in the Omagh Church.

Following Pastor Henry's departure an approach to the Home Mission for a worker resulted in disappointment as there was no one available at that time. A further discouragement was that within the year following Pastor Henry's departure eleven Church members had moved from the area, having their membership transferred to other Churches.

Pastor Rea

Early in 1967 Dr. Hughes was informed by the Union Secretary that Pastor W.H. Rea of Cookstown and Lisnagleer, having reached retiring age, was keen to take on pastoral oversight in a smaller church. Pastor Rea was duly invited to preach in Larne and on that occasion indicated to the Church Secretary that he would be willing to consider coming to Larne. At a Members' Meeting on 25th January 1967 it was agreed that Pastor Rea should be invited to take up the Pastorate in Larne. Following his acceptance of the invitation the service of induction was held on Saturday May 6th 1967. Mr D. Cameron, President of the Union, chaired the meeting and the speakers were Pastor J. Thompson and Pastor R. Boggs. Following two difficult years the arrival of Pastor and Mrs Rea brought a new sense of encouragement and hope to the Church. The next few years, however, proved to be difficult. The number of members dropped, again because of people moving out of the area, and attendances at Services also fell. Often because of failing health Pastor Rea found it difficult to carry out his duties as he would have liked and eventually, for this reason, felt constrained to tender his resignation in May 1974.

THE YEARS 1974 - 1991

Pastor William Reid

In September 1974 the Home Mission, in consultation with the Church, offered a temporary appointment in Larne to Mr. William Reid, who accepted and commenced his work in Larne in October. After three months he was invited to work for the Church on a full time basis as a Home Mission Agent. In his report given at the AGM on April 14th 1976 Mr Reid gave thanks to God that the previous year had seen conversions, increased attendances at the services and the addition of twelve new members bringing the membership to 34.

Towards the end of 1976 the Church issued a call to Mr Reid to the Pastorate, which, after much prayer and careful consideration, he accepted. The induction service took place on Saturday 5th March 1977

when the Church's two previous Pastors, Henry and Rea, both took part in the Service and the charge to the Church was given by Pastor H. M. Carson.

Early in Mr. Reid's ministry the project of erecting a permanent building got under way and the building was eventually completed and officially opened on September 23rd 1978. The year following the opening of the Church Building was a year of encouragement with nine baptisms and nine additions to membership.

The next major event in the life of the Church was the 25th Anniversary Services held in late April to mid May 1980. Pastor Hibbert, President of the Baptist Union of Ireland, spoke at the 25th Anniversary Services on Sunday 27th April. Then followed a week of Ministry of Edification and Encouragement when the speakers were Pastors Henry, Shearer, Harris, Carson, and McBratney. Pastor Shearer remained in Larne for a Gospel Mission from Sunday 4th - Wednesday 14th May.

Pastor Reid served the Church for almost seventeen years, finally leaving in March 1991 in response to a call to the Pastorate of Lisnagleer Baptist Church. The farewell service was held on Wednesday 27th March and the speaker was Rev. Tom McKendry of Larne Congregational Church.

Under Pastor Reid's leadership the Church conducted a regular and comprehensive programme of door to door visitation and tract distribution. Pastor Reid was assisted in this work from time to time with the help of students John McIlvenna, David Gordon and Stephen Curry.

Occasional evangelistic guest services were organised and BYE Teams and Evangelistic Teams of Students from the Irish Baptist College were used to reach out into the community. A Youth Fellowship was launched in March 1980, a Good News club was started in Glynn in 1982 and a children's meeting in Larne had an average attendance of 50 children through the 1980s.

A permanent building

When the site in Craigyhill had been purchased in 1963 one of the conditions had been that a permanent building would be erected within three to five years. It was in fact twelve years before the Church felt it was in a position even to consider this undertaking. At a

business meeting held on May 12th 1975 the question of a permanent building was first discussed as a realistic prospect. Within a short space of time a Building Committee was formed and the Building Fund revived. It was estimated that the total cost of the project would be £35,000.00. At the time of Pastor Reid's induction in March 1977 the Building Fund stood at £8400.00. Early in 1976 an architect was appointed to prepare plans for a new Church building.

About that same time a plot of ground adjacent to the Church site had come on the market. Enquiries made to the Borough Council resulted in the Church being offered the site, measuring 60'0 by 120'0, for £400.00. It was later discovered, however, that the Council had sold a plot of land which didn't belong to them. The rightful owners of the land were in fact the Housing Executive, who, after negotiations, agreed to sell it to the Church for £1000.00. The site was subsequently purchased for this price and has been a great practical asset to the Church ever since.

After plans for the new building had been agreed and passed, the project went out to tender and the successful contractor was Kirkland Brothers of Glengormley with a price of £50,220.00. In spite of a small membership and the additional costs of now having a full time Pastor, the Church agreed to proceed with the building project.

The official opening of the new Church Building was on 23rd September 1978. A large crowd attended the service at which Pastor J. Henry spoke from Isaiah ch.6. He commented that the new Church Building had the advantage of being "beautifully simple and simply beautiful."

During Pastor Reid's time in Lame, two new Churches were established, one in Glenarm and the other in Whitehead.

Glenarm

In 1966 the Morrow family moved from their small farm in Carnalbana to take over a cafe in Altmore Street, Glenarm. A few months after the move John Morrow became aware that the café's large dining room would be a good venue for holding Gospel Meetings. A young girl, Sandra Magee, began a children's/youth meeting later that same year.

During this time the family were not settled in any Church but a friend,

Lillian McNeill (still a member of Larne Baptist Church) invited the family to "try the Baptists and see what you think." As a result John and his wife Margaret were baptised by Pastor Beattie in Carrickfergus Baptist in 1970 and were received into membership in Larne Baptist shortly afterwards. Some time later John was asked to serve as Deacon. He accepted this offer but told Pastor Rea it might not be for long as he felt his calling was a work in Glenarm. As the Children's Meeting continued each Friday night, a Sunday afternoon service commenced conducted in the main by Bob Sproule who in turn introduced Pastor Hamilton Moore. This became known as Glenarm Evangelical Centre. A pivotal point in the work occurred at the start of 1975 when a coffee bar was held and many young people trusted in the Lord. Through Bible study on a Tuesday night these young people became aware of the need to be baptised and it was at this time Hamilton Moore suggested the time was right to form a Church. Pastor Rea and the members of Larne Baptist Church were kept abreast of all developments in Glenarm and were fully supportive in their prayers and encouragement. Renovations of a store belonging to the cafe took place including a baptismal tank. At a special youth meeting on the last Saturday in June 1976 Hedley Murphy, a well-known evangelist, dedicated the building to the Lord's work. The following Sunday morning Glenarm Baptist Church was formed with thirteen members and for three and a half of the next eight years Hamilton Moore served the Church as Pastor. In 1985 the Church purchased the Courthouse right in the Centre of the village, and on Saturday 26th July Pastor Moore conducted the opening ceremony. Today the church has forty-eight members, is still reaching out to the local community and is still blessed with many young people saved, baptised and in membership.

Whitehead

In March 1977 a monthly prayer meeting was commenced in Whitehead in preparation for a mission in Larne planned for October. Following the mission it was agreed to build on what he already been done in Whitehead and commence a fortnightly Bible study in the town. Over the next few years a number of people from the Whitehead area attended the Larne Church, this number growing to seventeen by the end of 1986, thirteen of whom were in membership.

Early in 1981 serious consideration was given to establishing a weekly

meeting in Whitehead and towards the end of that year this idea had evolved into discussion on possibly having a mission in the Whitehead area in the first half of 1982 which could be followed up with regular worship meetings. Such a prospect presented a great challenge to the church, which had at that time forty eight members and a debt of £15,242.00, particularly in light of the fact that if this project was successful it could mean the loss of at least seventeen regular attendees.

It was eventually agreed to have a week of meetings commencing May 2nd 1982, under the name Whitehead Baptist Fellowship (Extension Work of Larne Baptist Church).

The meetings led by Pastor Reid were held in a room above G. Wilson's paint shop in Balmoral Avenue, following which mid week services were held twice a month. Since the commencement of the meetings in Whitehead it had been generally accepted that if this work should prove successful it would lead eventually to the formation of a Baptist Church in Whitehead. A Committee was set up to oversee the work and to plan and prepare the way for an eventual Church in Whitehead. Towards the end of 1982 a search began for a suitable site and a portable Hall that would adequately meet the needs.

In the meantime a mission was organised for April 1983. Pastor J. Henry, who was to be the speaker, was unable to fulfil this commitment because of having to go to hospital. Pastors Reid and Baxter shared the responsibility. A programme of visitation in Whitehead was arranged, a Children's Meeting and a monthly after-Church Evangelistic Rally were started.

A suitable and affordable site was eventually found on Slaughterford Road and an estimate of £10,500.00 was given for purchasing and preparing the site, and erecting the hall. At a Church Meeting held on July 9th 1984 a full report was given, the implications to the work in Larne were fully discussed and a proposal to proceed with the work in Whitehead was eventually defeated.

In spite of this setback plans for the formation of a Baptist Church in Whitehead continued, and eventually the Church was constituted on February 14th 1987. Thirteen members of the Lame Church were released from membership in Larne and became the foundation members of Whitehead Baptist Church: - Mr. M. Anderson, Mrs. W. Burnside, Mr and Mrs. D. Clement, Mr and Mrs. A. Dunlop, Mr. M. Logan,

Mr and Mrs. P. Logan, Mr and Mrs. W. Logan, Mr and Mrs W. Rea.

In January 1992 the Church called Mike Ewan to the pastorate (part time) and in September 1993 he was joined by IBC student assistant Stephen Cave. In September 1995 Mike Ewan became full time Pastor and in July 2000 he was joined by Stephen Garrett who was called to be Associate Pastor (part time). In November 1997 a permanent Church building was completed and officially opened. The Churches in Whitehead and Larne were deeply saddened by the death in October 1998 of Paul Logan who had served both Churches as Secretary.

The Church. which began in 1987 with seventeen members, has grown to sixty in 2005 with a Sunday morning congregation of around one hundred. From the early days when the Sunday School started with around ten young people there is today a thriving children and youth ministry of over one hundred children and young people.

THE YEARS 1991-2005

Pastoral vacancy 1991 –93

During the vacancy the ministry of God's Word was provided by a number of Pastors and students from Irish Baptist College, while Pastor D. Baxter agreed to take responsibility for any special or sensitive pastoral matters that might arise.

Fourth pastor

In July 1992 John Gault, then Pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Onchan, Isle of Man, took the Sunday Services. He was invited back in November, following which a call was issued and accepted, and Pastor Gault, his wife Hazel and two sons, Graham and Martin moved to Larne in the summer of 1993. The Induction Service, which was held on Saturday 4th September 1993, was led by Pastor S. Curry and the preacher was Pastor P. Williamson. Following the service the ladies of the Church provided a meal for guests in the Hall of Craigyhill Presbyterian Church.

Approaching the end of the 20th Century and with Christian influence in decline in the western world, Larne Baptist Church has made steady progress. The work of evangelism has continued using the means of children's meetings, youth work, literature distribution, ladies' meetings, regular visitation, BYE teams, College evangelism teams, and special guest services and it has always been with grati-

tude and joy the Church has seen souls being saved and added to their number.

Special mention should be made of the number of people from the Church, particularly young people, who have served in BYE Teams and Beach Missions and who have engaged in short term missionary work in Africa, Croatia, Egypt, China, Lebanon, India, Philippines, Romania, USA and Zambia.

At the millennium the evangelist, Mr Paul Hinton, came to work with the Church, and was involved in Church services, Coffee Mornings, Youth Meetings, School Assemblies and PE classes. The highlight was the Millennium Meal to which were invited everyone the Church members could think of who had ever any connection with the Church. The meal was prepared by Church members and served by our young people and the evening ended with Mr. Hinton expounding to the large crowd the riches of God's grace that are to be found in Christ.

During his ministry Pastor Gault has enjoyed the help of assistants Alan Johnston and Trevor Wilson, both Church members and students of the Irish Baptist College.

Alan Johnston

Alan and Norma Johnston came to Larne Baptist Church prior to Alan commencing his studies at the Irish Baptist College in 1992. During Alan's college course he served his assistantship with his home Church, having an involvement in all aspects of Church life and work. Since graduation Alan and Norma have continued to worship and work in Larne, where Alan has served the Church as deacon since February 1997. In 1997 he accepted the post of Co-ordinator of the Care Centre in Monkstown which provides practical Christian help to the whole community and especially the young people of the area. The Care Centre is supported by and seeks to compliment the work of the local Churches and local schools in being a positive influence on young lives and in particular seeking to win them to Christ.

Trevor Wilson

Trevor and Diane Wilson worshipped and worked with Larne Baptist Church during Trevor's period of studies at the Irish Baptist College. During Trevor's student assistantship he helped with all the activities of the Church and conducted midweek meetings and Sunday Services

on a number of occasions.

After successfully completing his College course God called Trevor to Edinburgh to be assistant Pastor at Wester Hailes Baptist Church, where he spent two and a half years before receiving and accepting a call from Lossiemouth Baptist Church. Trevor and Diane and two of their daughters, Kirsty and Nicole, moved North and on 1st April 2004 Trevor was inducted into the Pastorate of Lossiemouth Baptist Church. Christopher, Michelle and Jonathan stayed behind in Edinburgh to complete their studies at university.

Trevor's first year at Lossiemouth has gone well and God has really blessed the Church with many additions to their numbers throughout the year. There is great expectancy that with God's blessing the work will continue to grow to the glory of God.

Barry Reid

Barry and Ashley Reid came into membership in 2003. Barry had previously completed a course at the Belfast Bible College and had a year's experience of pastoral work with Larne Mission Hall. At the time of joining the Church Barry and Ashley were considering the possibility of further studies at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, to be further prepared and equipped for God's Work. This possibility became reality in September 2003 when Barry embarked on a two year Master's Degree course. It is a great encouragement to the Church that in this fiftieth year we will be sending out another member to extend the Lord's Kingdom and exalt the Lord's Name.

Extension

By the mid 1990's the Church was forced to face the reality that substantial repair work would be required if the Forbes Hall was to continue in use. Over the years large amounts of time and money had been spent in maintenance and repair work and it was accepted that we should be thinking of a permanent extension.

A Building Committee was organised and at the AGM on 12th March 1997 it was proposed and accepted that the Committee should further investigate the possibility and practicalities of building an extension. An architect was appointed and the plans together with estimated costs were presented to the Church on 14th November 2001, and at a Church meeting two weeks later, 28th November, it was agreed to

proceed to tender. J. Wilson of Portglenone was eventually appointed as the Building Contractor and work commenced in October 2002 and was completed in January 2004.

The existing Church building was refurbished and redecorated together with a new sound system and power point equipment. The upstairs room was converted into a youth lounge, the kitchen and vestry were redesigned to make a prayer room and the existing porch was demolished and rebuilt to a new design with a balcony above. The extension comprised main and minor halls, a new fully equipped kitchen, and crèche room together with new toilet facilities and showers.

The official opening ceremony was held on Saturday 24th April when Pastor Clive Johnston, President of the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland, was the speaker.

Fifty years old

Larne Baptist Church marks its fiftieth anniversary with a spirit of encouragement and expectancy. We live in godless times and we are located in a hard area but God has placed us here at this time for a purpose. The Lord has granted us excellent facilities to enable us to expand our work and witness in the community. We have within our Church an encouraging number of young adults and young families who also give us great potential for the future.

We are deeply grateful for those who first had the vision and the faith to commence this Church and for those who worked hard, often in difficult and discouraging circumstances, to defend and to advance our work and witness. We are indebted for the service and sacrifice of so many and for the good foundation that has been laid for us to build on today.

The vision of the Church in its first year, recorded in the first Secretary's report, 19th April 1956, is, must continue to be, and can only be, our vision as we embark on the next fifty years - "that God might bless and use us to the furtherance of His Kingdom and to the glory and honour of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ".

Chronology

1955 - 56	First Year	Church Founded 19 April 1955
1955 - 56	Buy site at Grammar Brae	
1957 - 58	Erection of Forbes Hall	
1958 - 59	Appointment of Mr.C.Lutton - Home Mission Worker	
1959 - 60	Appointment of Mr.J.Henry - Home Mission Worker	
1960 - 61	J.Henry inducted as Pastor 30 June 1960	
	Search begins for a new site	
1963 - 64	Relocate to Upper Cairncastle Road	
1965 - 66	Resignation of Pastor Henry	Farewell Service 30 June 1965
1967 - 68	Induction of Pastor W.Rea	Induction Service 6 May 1967
	Transfer of Dr. and Mrs Hughes to Mountpottinger March 1968	
1974 - 75	Resignation of Pastor Rea	October 1974
	Appointment of Mr.B.Reid - Home Mission Worker	
1976 - 77	B.Reid inducted as Pastor - 5 March 1977	
	Formation of Glenarm Baptist Church - 30 May 1976	
1977 - 78	New Church Building	
1978 - 79	Opening of New Church Building - 23 September 1978	
1981 - 82	Commencement of meetings in Whitehead	
1985 - 86	New Premises - Glenarm Baptist Church	
1986 - 87	Formation of Whitehead Baptist Church	
1991 - 92	Resignation of Pastor B.Reid	
1993 - 94	Induction of Pastor J.Gault	Induction Service 4 Sept. 1993
2002 - 04	New Extension	
	Opening Service - New Extension - 24 April 2004	
2004 - 05	Jubilee Year	Fiftieth Anniversary 19 April 2005

Membership

1955	- 12 (Formation of Church)
1956	- 13
1957	- 23
1958	- 33
1980	- 37
2005	- 50

Finances

1955 - 56 (1st year of the Church)	General Fund	£164.19s.1d
	Building Fund	£201.19s.4d
	Total	£366.18s.5d

Public Liability Insurance	1957	17s.6d (87.5p)	
Preaching Fee	1957	Pastor	£2.00
		Other	£1.00