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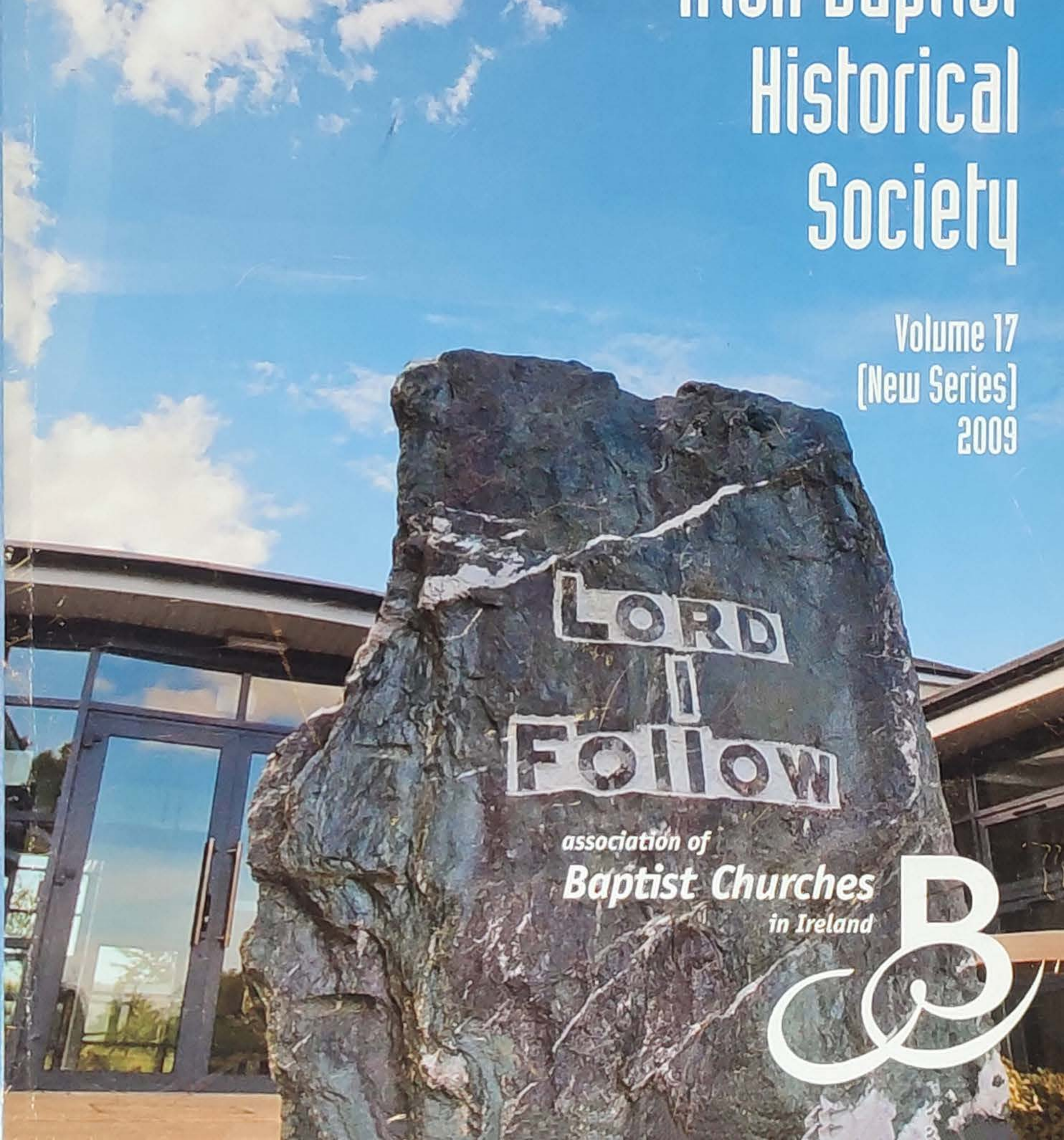
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The Irish Baptist Historical Society

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Editorial

As 2009 marked the 150th anniversary of the Ulster Awakening of 1859 our meetings during the year focused primarily on that great movement of God in the spiritual history of Ulster.

In March I was pleased to have been given the opportunity to research and present a brief history of the 1859 Revival in Coleraine. As a native of Coleraine and, as a child, a pupil at Irish Society Primary School where one of the most remarkable acts of God during the Revival took place, this was particulary fascinating and moving project for me.

In May Pastor Ian Grant spoke on the missionary activity that followed the Revival of 1859. The work of God in Ulster issued in spiritual blessing throughout the world as mission organisation and missionaries emerged with a passion for the world to hear the Good News. Of particular interest was the ministry of Henry Grattan Guinness, the grandson of Arthur Guinness, the founder of the Gusnness Brewery, who, in spite of personal disappointment, was moved by God into a wider and much more effective sphere of service in the preparation of men and women to carry the gospel to the world.

Dr Joe Thompson demonstrated his wide ranging historical knowledge and his passion for the gospel in presenting an overview of the Revival, Dr Thompson's paper was well researched and full of perceptive insight and personal inspiration.

In addition to the Revival, 2009 marked the anniversary of a number of other historical events with significance for church history, one of which was the birth of John Calvin on 10 July 1559. We were very pleased and greatly privileged that Dr Stafford Carson accepted an invitation to attend our Society and present an excellent paper on "John Calvin's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit".

These historical demonstrations of what God can do not only stirred our hearts to wonder and praise but also strengthened our hope that what God has done in the past He will do again in our day.

About Our Contributors

John Gault BA

John Gault and his wife, Hazel, have three children, Kathy, Graham and Martin and two grand daughters, Emma and Ciara. John studied at the Irish Baptist College and pastored Grace Baptist Church, Onchan, Isle of Man before moving to Larne where he has been Pastor of Larne Baptist Church since September 1993. He also serves on the Irish Baptist College Board, is Secretary of the Irish Baptist Historical Society and Chairman of the UK Committee of Evangelize China Fellowship.

Ian Grant BD, MA

After four years as the Irish Director of SIM (Serving in Mission), Ian Grant became pastor of Armagh Baptist Church on 1 May 2009. He is also the current chairman of iMap (Irish Mission Agencies Partnership) in the Republic of Ireland.

Following his graduation from the Irish Baptist College in 1989, Ian obtained a BD degree from Queen's University, Belfast in 1990 having spent a year as Assistant Pastor in Portadown Baptist Church. He then became the first pastor of Mullaghmeen Baptist Church in Co Fermanagh, from which he also planted Cavan Baptist Church across the border in 1993. He served full-time as pastor in Cavan from 1995 to 2005. Ian was awarded an MA in Theology from the University of Wales, Lampeter (via IBC) in January 2008. His dissertation was subsequently published as: *'The Missionary Vision of the Irish Church – where do we go from here?' (Tentmaker Publications, 2008).*

Ian is married to Judith and they have three children: Peter (12), Jenny (10) and Michael (6).

Joseph Thompson BA, BD, MTh, PhD, DD, FRHistS

Joseph Thompson was converted as a boy and, when at Methody ,was called to the gospel ministry. He was educated at Queen's University, Belfast, Trinity College, Dublin and the Presbyterian College graduating – BA, BD, MTh, PhD & DD(Hon). He exercised a teaching and evangelistic ministry in Portglenone, Ravenhill (Belfast) and Armagh. For published work, he was admitted as a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. Joseph is married, has three married daughters and eight grandchildren.

Stafford Carson BSc, MA, MTh, DD

Rev Stafford Carson has been minister of First Presbyterian Church, Portadown since June 2005 and is Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland 2009/10. He is a graduate of the University of Ulster, Queen's University, Belfast, and Westminster Theological Seminary. Mr Carson served as minister of Kells and Eskylane Presbyterian Churches, Carnmoney Presbyterian Church, and from 2000-05 was Executive Vice President of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. He is married to Patricia and they have three children, Sara, Luke, and Ruth.

The 1859 Revival in Coleraine

John Gault

Introduction

In the history of evangelical Christianity in Northern Ireland the events of 1859 are unique. There have been many times of blessing, fruitfulness and spiritual progress but none compare with "the wondrous awakening" which Northern Ireland experienced in 1859. The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1859 said at the General Assembly, "The scenes with which we are now happily familiar are almost without parallel in our historic records". [1] The Coleraine Chronicle, which for a number of months devoted many pages to the progress of the Revival throughout Northern Ireland, reported "nothing at all approaching it has ever visited our country". [2] Eye witness accounts of the Revival in various towns and districts were published in their dozens in the years following 1859 testifying to outpourings of supernatural power the like of which had never been seen before in Ulster.

The beginning of the Ulster Revival can be traced back to the spring of 1856 when a Mrs. Colville, sent by the English Baptist Missionary Society to work as an evangelist in mid-Antrim, was used by God to awaken James McQuilkin to his need of a Saviour. McQuilkin's conversion, followed a few months later by three of his friends, Robert Carlisle, John Wallace and Jeremiah Meneely, led to the commencement of a weekly prayer meetings in the old Schoolhouse in Kells. On New Year's Day 1858 the first conversion took place as a result of the prayer meeting, the number of conversions increasing as the year progressed. Towards the end of 1858 the blessing had spread into surrounding villages and town lands. In Ballymena special prayer meetings were organised to pray that God would visit the town, the first signs of the moving of the Holy Spirit coming in the Spring.

News of the events in mid Ulster had quickly spread throughout the Province: "The remarkable movement which has been going on in the district of Connor and Ahoghill for the last twelve months has exhibited itself with even more striking events in the neighbourhood of Ballymena within the last few weeks, where meetings, attended by upwards of 3,000 have been held, and from which the most marvelous tidings reach us." [3]

Coleraine

The following week, the Coleraine Chronicle reported that the Revival had reached Ballymoney where "between two and three thousand people" had gathered and many had been deeply affected. The news of the effects and spread of the Revival was creating a state of deep anxiety in Coleraine, "Tidings from other places of what God is doing among men, is not without its effect on the people of this town and neighbourhood. Meetings are held, attended by crowds of anxious hearers - men, women and children, who come out for the special purpose of joining together in prayer that God may manifest Himself to them, as He has been pleased to do in other places, by pouring out His Spirit upon them ... in North Brook Street, on Thursday evening, the place being crammed to the door ... and many who could not crush in remaining outside. Other meetings have been held in Killowen which were attended by crowds . . ." [4]

In Duncan Campbell's account of the mighty movement of God on the Isle of Lewis, 1949-53, he defines a Revival as a time when "the community suddenly becomes conscious of the movings of God, so that in a matter of hours, not days ... churches become crowded. Something is happening that moves men and women to the House of God and you find within hours scores of men and women crying to God for mercy. When God stepped down suddenly men and women all over the parish were gripped by the fear of God."

That is what happened in Coleraine. Suddenly that which for a number of weeks had just been news became a living reality that gripped the whole community with the fear of God. During the second week of June the longed for blessing had arrived, "The Revival, which we have no hesitation in ascribing to the work of the Spirit of God, is now in our midst. From being spectators of the marvellous results of awakened consciences in others, the people of our own locality and the inhabitants of our own town, have become sharers in the showers of blessings with which a wise and gracious Providence has been pleased to 'refresh the thirsty ground.' " [5]

An open air meeting was arranged for the evening of Tuesday 7 June on the Fair Hill at which some of the recent converts from Ballymoney had been brought to testify. Shortly after seven o'clock about 4,000 people had gathered, this number having grown by eight o'clock to about 6,000. It was soon realised that the one platform that had been erected would not be adequate and several more platforms were quickly erected with one of the local ministers being put in charge of each. Rev J A Canning who spoke from one of the platforms later related "I never saw before, in any audience,

the same searching, earnest, riveted look fixed upon my face as strained up to me from almost every eye in that hushed and apparently awe struck multitude. The people stood motionless, and perfectly silent; when, about the time the last speaker was closing his address, a very peculiar cry arose from out of a dense group at one side of the square, and in less than ten minutes a similar cry was repeated in six or eight different groups, until, in a very short time, the whole multitude was divided into awe struck assemblages around persons prostrate on the ground, or supported in the arms of relatives or friends. I hurried to the centre of one of these groups ... and found a young man of some eighteen or twenty years. He was uttering incessantly a peculiar deep moan, sometimes terminating in a prolonged wailing cry. I said softly and quietly in his ear 'Why do you cry so?' 'Oh!' he exclaimed, 'my sins! my sins! Lord Jesus have mercy upon my poor soul' ". [6] The Coleraine Chronicle of that week reported that a girl had to be "carried away from the field uttering loud cries for mercy, and wailing for past and countless offences. Others followed in rapid succession, until scenes of suffering souls in distressing agony ... were to be found in every corner of the place of meeting". [7] After some hours as Rev Canning made his way home "door after door, persons were watching for me and other ministers, to bring us to deal with some poor stricken one; and when the morning dawned and the sun rose, I was wandering from street to street, and from house to house, on the most marvellous and solemn errand upon which I have ever been sent". [8]

Thought the next day similar scenes were to be found in private houses an almost ever street and in the evening a large crowd gathered in the market place and again as the Gospel was preached "many more than on the preceding evening sank upon the ground, and with bitter cries besought the Lord Jesus to come in mercy to their souls". [9] It was estimated that not less than 150 people "were stricken down by the power of God", agonising over their deep sinfulness and crying out to God for mercy, some being so prostrated that they had to be carried home. Each day the power of God was having a wider and deeper affect. The Chronicle reported that by Friday the hand of God was being "manifested in a more remarkable manner every hour. We cannot describe that which we see and hear, so startling and marvellous are the occurrences. The Holy Spirit has come with power at most unexpected times, in unlooked for places, and to individuals who seemed farthest from grace and godliness." [10]

The Chronicle also carried reports of meetings being held with similar effects in nearby towns and villages:

Ballybogey: "there were, it was considered, 1,500 persons on the ground"

Ballymoney: "converts are being daily added to the church"

Ballyrashane: "on the leading road down to Portrush, nearly every family has been visited"

Bushmills: "a meeting ... was attended by nearly 2,000 people"

Drumreagh: "75 individuals were almost simultaneously prostrated with a conviction of guilt and the fearful consequences of unforgiven sin"

Macosquin: "Through the parish the Holy Spirit is manifesting himself in a most extraordinary manner . . ."

Magilligan: "The movement is making rapid progress in this district"

Portstewart: "the joyful wonder and excitement are daily increasing"

Portrush: "a meeting was held on the hill - present, about 2,000"

At Aghadowey, Agivey, Articlave, Ballycastle, Cloyfin, Damhead, Dervock, Garvagh, Limavady, Maghera, Mosside, Stranocum "meetings are held with similar results to those which have attended meetings in other localities".

At an open air meeting organised by Rev Kydd at Ballyleese, a very large crowd stood for three hours in torrential rain to listen to what a group of new converts had to say.

Large crowds attended the open air meetings and the local churches were crowded to overflowing at their Sunday Services. At all meetings there were visible sights and sounds of conviction and great outpourings of praise from those who had found peace.

By the beginning of July although "the work of the Lord is in no degree abated in our town and neighbourhood ... the excitable enthusiasm apparent at the first meetings has almost wholly disappeared. Not a day or a night passes in which there are not several brought out of the state of darkness and carelessness in which they had previously lived".[11] "The number of people convinced and convicted every week we are not able to ascertain, but every day and every night numbers, in their homes are forced by an awakened conscience to cry for pardon." [12]

The hunger for God and His Gospel showed no signs of abating throughout July. When it was announced that Rev H G Guinness would preach at the New Market Place on Thursday 14 July a crowd of 6,000 gathered, many arriving two hours before the meeting started. After the benediction Rev Guinness announced that he would preach at New Row Presbyterian Church the following morning at 7am. The building was completely filled with many who were there from the country having come to town as early as 5am.

The effect of the first week of the Revival when it was reported that there was "not a street nor a lane in the whole but can number three or four of these who have been enlightened" [13] had grown steadily through June and July until it had reached almost every family. "In almost every house now there are some members making open profession of Christ". [14] Two months into the Revival, in the second week in August, it was noted "that the public painful prostration has ceased, and living vital godliness has been established". [15] On 20 September Dr James Carson, a local GP and an elder in the Baptist Church, wrote, "It might safely be said that more people have been converted in this district in the last four months than during the previous fifty years".

Tuesday, 15 December, was appointed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as a day of thanksgiving for the Revival. In Coleraine it was "observed as we never saw such a day observed before". [16] Early morning prayer meetings were followed by the Union Prayer Meeting in the Town Hall. Services were held in the churches throughout the town in the morning. In the afternoon there was a YMCA service in First Coleraine Presbyterian Church and in the Town Hall there was a prayer meeting from four to five o'clock, followed at six o'clock by the great evening gathering when the building was completely filled and there were as many outside as inside. It was a day filled " with adoring gratitude to Almighty God".

Features of the Revival

There came over the whole community such a deep awareness of God that temporal matters lost any significance. "Trade, except in Bibles and Testaments, if not suspended has been partially paralysed - those who conducted it having for the present given it up or become incapable of transacting it." [17] The publication of the Chronicle for that week was delayed for a few days because three of the staff had been so deeply seized with a consciousness of their sin that they were unfit for work. The Editor included the following explanation for the delay, "... we have had a difficulty in getting out the Chronicle. Our own young men are still engaged in the work". [18]

Large numbers gathered on the Fair Hill each evening, prayer and praise continuing until long after midnight. Often the ministers of the town were busy with stricken souls until the early hours of the morning, not infrequently being up all night. On one evening the number of those affected was so great that the Town Hall had to be opened and "kept open until five o'clock in the morning, and even then the people were not willing to leave". [19]

After one open air meeting had ended many hundreds of people followed Rev Kydd (Independent) and gathered outside his home and while Rev Kydd ministered to those gathered inside the house Rev O'Hara (Episcopal) preached to the people from the door. On another occasion the Congregational Church was crowded to overflowing. "That congregation was dismissed, but the house at once filled with others: and again, and again the congregations were dismissed, and as often were their places taken by others anxious for their salvation. At last they were forced to dismiss them altogether. They were up all night praying with and advising souls anxious for salvation." [20] A meeting at Billy Wesleyan Chapel on Tuesday 2 August "was dismissed four times, and it seemed impossible to get the people from the Chapel". [21]

The Revival transcended all human barriers and boundaries and affected all ages and all classes of people ... "Strong men and young women as well as children have all been affected. From hoary headed sinners, strong men and women, and little children, the cries of awakened consciences for redeeming mercy go up to Heaven. Rich and poor are now both partakers of the special anointment of the Holy Ghost." [22] The union daily prayer meeting gathered people from all classes who together prayed and praised God in a spirit of harmony and good will.

In Coleraine, as in other places, people were deeply affected with a strong sense of their sinfulness and gripped by terror. Eye witness accounts tell of "loud cries for mercy and wailing for past and countless offences" and "scenes of suffering souls in distressing agony". This deep conviction was often accompanied by "the same mental agony and physical prostration which has been a characteristic of the Revival in other places". [23]

People were suddenly struck down, prostrated, sometimes unable to walk or speak, in some cases individuals remaining in a state of agony for a number of days. These effects were felt even as people went about their normal business, at home, in the street and in their work places "nearly twenty girls were struck down - each in an instant - at their work; several becoming apparently insensible at once, and others uttering agonising cries for mercy". [24] A letter written by Dr Carson was published in the Chronicle 2 July, in which he recounts an incident from his personal experience ... "a poor child, I think about 7 or 8 years of age, came to my house one night at a late hour, and asked to see Mrs. Carson. The child became affected. Her imploring and heartrending cries for mercy, for she said she was a sinner on the brink of Hell, were so absolutely distressing that I had to leave the house as I could not bear to listen. It was a dreadful scene."

On 10 July two Christian workers called with a young girl in the Commons who had been struggling under conviction for a number of days. After speaking to the girl they sang a Psalm at which point the girl fell into a distressed state losing both her speech and sight, which only returned 18 hours later when she found peace with God.

At one of the meetings held in the Congregational Church in early October the large number present left the building (so it was thought) after the benediction. The next day a number of the ladies of the congregation came to the building at noon to make arrangements for a social tea meeting to be held that evening. "They were astonished to find an individual on his knees, in one of the pews, earnestly imploring mercy and pardon. From the enquiries made as to how he had effected an entrance it appeared that he had been in the Chapel all night, having been 'stricken' with a sense of sin at the meeting the evening previous. When the doors were opened, and his spirit freed from the thraldom of Satan, he was found pouring out his heart before God, and ere he left to go home to his own house, he was made to rejoice in Christ as his Saviour." [25]

The evangelical ministers of Coleraine at the time were Rev James O'Hara (Episcopal), Rev William Ritchie (1st Presbyterian), Rev J Alfred Canning (2nd Presbyterian, New Row), Rev Joseph MacDonnell (3rd Presbyterian, Terrace Row), Rev John Kydd (Independent) and Rev George Vance (Methodist). One of the features of the work in Coleraine was the remarkable unity found among these men, who worked together, assisting, supporting and encouraging one another. Each of them, apart from Rev Ritchie, who had been very ill, was involved at the very heart of the work, on occasions being up all night assisting needy souls and at times being brought to the point of exhaustion. It is significant, however, that no obvious leader emerged and alongside the efforts of local and visiting ministers much of the work was carried out by laymen. Often large crowds were affected, not by the preaching of ministers, but by the testimony of a recent convert and both new and more experienced Christians made an enormous contribution in comforting and praying with those in distress. God worked in the most unusual circumstances and through the most unlikely people. "In a small house in a neglected portion of the outskirts of the town, a child, some eight years of age, was made the instrument in God's Hand of awakening three others-all members of different families, and one of them a young man who the evening previously had 'sat in the scorner's seat'." [26]

The desire for prayer was spontaneous and intense and within the first days of the Revival meetings were being arranged in most evangelical churches for special times of prayer. On Monday, 13 June and continuing every day

"the people have met in the open air and in the House of God for united and congregational prayer to the Throne of Grace". [27] Open air prayer meetings were gathering over 1,000 people which included many who were still seeking peace with God. Within a short space of time the local churches were holding daily morning and evening meetings for prayer being attended "by large numbers of young and old". In addition small groups of people in different districts had arranged and were carrying on their own prayer meetings in the early mornings, during lunch breaks and in the evenings. This activity extended to the various towns and villages around Coleraine where large numbers were also meeting every day for prayer.

The longing for prayer was accompanied by a love for God's Word. "The Word of God is now more highly prized than ever, and light and immoral publications are entirely neglected." [28] "The Word of God which makes wise unto salvation has been read and studied as it never has before." [29]

Another interesting feature of the Revival was the large number of leading Christians, particularly from England and Scotland, who, upon hearing the extraordinary reports, came to Northern Ireland to see for themselves and to participate in the work. By the end of June numerous ministers and laymen were visiting Coleraine each week, the most prominent of the early visitors being Rev A Moody Stewart who preached to a very large congregation in the First Presbyterian Church. The number of visitors increased weekly, the most notable being Rev A A Bonar and Mr Brownlow-North who addressed an open air meeting of "several thousands" at the New Market Place. "We have had from Scotland ministers from the Established as well as the Free Church and, from England, ministers belonging to all Protestant denominations." [30]

The Moral Effects of the Revival

The change in the moral climate of the community was sudden and dramatic. "What years of lecturing and years of distribution of tracts on total abstinence would fail to effect has been accomplished in a day - drunkenness has ceased, or almost entirely disappeared, and Sabbath desecration to a great extent has been abandoned. Open profanity it is impossible to discover." [31]
A number of young ladies who had been "avowed prostitutes" testified to being saved from their sin.

The Head Constable, who had been stationed in Coleraine for 18 years, reported that "never in that time had he a Petty Sessions to attend at which he had not to prosecute parties for both riot and drunkenness, except at the

Sessions yesterday (Friday 17 June). A complete reformation has been effected in the habits of many people who had formerly been guilty of offences of the most debasing character". [32] The progress of the early converts was carefully observed and the Chronicle, 18 October, records the abiding change in the "host of individuals who were, humanly speaking, beyond recall on the road to ruin. In the workshop and in the family their walk and conversation are still such as becometh the Gospel".

At the local County Court in January 1860, the presiding Judge in addressing the jury said, "During the entire three months which have passed since I was here before, I find that but one new case has to come before you and one which is in some respects very unimportant. How is such a gratifying state of things to be accounted for? I believe I am fully warranted now to say that to nothing else than the moral and religious movement which commenced early last summer can the change be attributed". [33]

Opposition to the Revival

Initially a number of leading Christian Ministers had reservations and concerns about the genuineness of the Revival, some expressing disapproval for the "amount of physical manifestation" and others suggesting that a "searching inquiry" should be made to determine if this was a genuine work of the Spirit.

As the work progressed it was carefully monitored and assessed by leading Christians both from Northern Ireland and Great Britain, "the influx of Scotch and English visitors, who throng to this town, to satisfy themselves that the work is of God, arguing correctly, that if it is so, they will know it by its fruits. Men eminent in every attribute of Christianity, careful to discriminate between truth and error, and exceedingly tenacious of the truth and perfection of God's Word visit us daily, and the testimony of all is one". [34] "Everyone who visits us goes away with the same impression - that God has been pleased to do a great and a good work in Coleraine." [35]

The physical manifestations and the increasing influence of the Revival provoked a reaction of ridicule and condemnation, the movement at first being discarded as some kind of "epidemic" with explanations ranging from "infectious and sympathetic excitement" to some "kind of animal magnetism". In mid-June a report, supposedly written by a county Derry clergyman, entitled "Extravagances of the Revival Movement at Coleraine" appeared in the Northern Whig. It was claimed that the Revival had led to a lamentable state of "social disorganisation" in Coleraine. The organizers of open air

meetings were described as "manifestly idiotic" and "grossly ignorant of the simplest principles of Christianity". Hundreds of people were said to be roaming the streets, going from house to house "yelling, screaming and blaspheming". It was further claimed that "several persons have gone to Insane Asylums, and others are under restraint in their own homes". [36]

A Unitarian Minister published a letter in which he "reported" some of the experiences of some who had been affected. "One lady saw a deceased Presbyterian minister driving a bread-cart through hell. Another saw the late Pope dancing on a red hot griddle and a previous occupant of the Papal chair cutting turf in order to keep up the heat." These claims were quickly refuted and condemned by one of the evangelical ministers. Rev Dr Reichel, a liberal Presbyterian minister, said in 1861 that the Revival had been a "miserable caricature which disgraced not only religion but our common sense".

Some foreign newspapers carried reports that were sometimes inaccurate and exaggerated. A regional Canadian newspaper, the Huron Signal, used terms such as "social depravity", "fanatical outrage" and "violent insanities" in a report on the Revival in Coleraine.

Incidents peculiar to Coleraine

One of the best known incidents of the Revival in Coleraine concerns the effects that were felt in the Irish Society Primary School during the first week of the movement. On Friday, 10 June, one of the boys was so troubled that he was unable to concentrate on his school work and so he was sent home in the company of another boy. On their way they noticed an empty house where they went in to pray and where the troubled boy found peace with God. He returned to the school and told the teacher, "I am so happy! I have the Lord Jesus in my heart". His words had a profound effect on the other boys. One boy slipped quietly out of the classroom to be followed by others who in a short time were found around the wall of the playground on their knees in prayer. Rev William Arthur, who was visiting the town at that time, has recorded this remarkable incident, "Their silent grief soon broke into a bitter cry. As this reached the ears of the boys in the room, it seemed to pierce their hearts as by one consent, they cast themselves upon their knees and began to cry for mercy. The girls' school was above and the cry no sooner penetrated to their room, than, hearing in it a call to themselves, they, too, fell upon their knees and wept. The united cry reached the adjoining streets and soon every spot on the premises was filled with sinners seeking God." [37] Rev O'Hara, who saw people running in an excited state to the school, followed and found about 100 children on their knees, together with a

number of ladies and gentlemen prostrated before the Throne of Grace. Other ministers were sent for and they spent the whole day helping those in spiritual distress until eleven o'clock that night when the last person left the school grounds. "A more affecting or impressive sight could not be witnessed this side of the grave, than witnessing those young children crying for mercy with such earnestness ..." [38]

The new Town Hall had just recently been completed and plans had been made to celebrate the opening with a ball. Instead its first use was to serve the Gospel and bring glory to God. Following the "mighty doings of God" on Tuesday, 7 June, meetings were held on the Wednesday and Thursday evenings which drew large crowds and where many were stricken with grief. On Thursday so many were prostrated that it was suggested that the new Town Hall might be used to minister to and pray for the afflicted, "Instead of the joyous dance and the stirring and enlivening music of the ball-room, the walls of the hall gave back the almost despairing groan of a stricken sinner, or resounded with the adoring thanks of a redeemed saint. To us who visited it at intervals through the night from 12 o'clock the scene was indescribable. For six long hours we saw, in the niche of a window, a mother with her afflicted son's head in her lap waiting until God ... should give him a sight of the cross." [39]

During the second week of the Revival one of the local ministers suggested that Coleraine should adopt the "American plan of revival meetings", leading to the commencement of a daily meeting for united prayer in the Town Hall at 9.30am which was "largely attended - many tradesmen and labourers in their shirt sleeves being attentive listeners to the preached Gospel". [40] The meetings lasted for only 30 minutes and were presided over by one of the evangelical ministers of the town. A committee representing all the evangelical denominations of the town managed the practical details of the meetings. Day by day the numbers increased until by the beginning of July "the hall of the new building is on every occasion completely filled" the meetings also being marked by a deepening spirit of reverence "the reverent attitude of kneeling at prayer is now universal" while previously people had been content "with an inclination of the head". [41] In the second week in September, three months after the commencement of the Revival, the numbers attending were so great that the building could not contain them.

On Monday, 25 July, Rev Canning suggested that a collection should be taken up to purchase a copy of the Word of God to be kept as a memorial of the Lord's work in Coleraine. An offer of financial help from an interested Christian from London was declined by Rev Canning who said that "the people of Coleraine prized the privilege too highly themselves to allow any others to help them". [42] At the beginning of October the Memorial Bible and

accompanying Psalter was presented to and used in the United Prayer Meeting.

Inside the front cover of the Bible the following inscription is found:

> This copy of the Holy Scriptures, purchased by the contributions of all Evangelical denominations in Coleraine, who have been attending a Union Prayer Meeting, held in the Town Hall, is intended to be -
>
> 1st. A memorial to the most gracious and widespread religious awakening, which commenced upon the evening of the 7th of June, 1859, at an open air meeting for prayer and preaching of the gospel, held on the Fair Hill of Coleraine, where many "with strong crying and tears" were led to exclaim "What must I do to be saved?" and where many more throughout the night, and during the period which has since elapsed, were led by the Spirit of God to embrace an offered Saviour, and to find peace and joy in believing. It is meant to be -
>
> 2nd. A memorial of the first opening of the new Town Hall of Coleraine, where, on the night of 9th June, 1859, nearly one hundred persons, agonised in mind through conviction of sin, and entirely prostrate in body, were bourne into that building to obtain shelter during the night, and to receive consolations from the instructions and prayers of Christian ministers and Christian people. And this copy of God's Word is intended to be -
>
> 3rd. A memorial to other people and other times, of the blessed spirit of union and brotherly love, which has been one fruit of God's wondrous work in Coleraine, and which has found its expression and its witness in the crowded Union Prayer Meeting, which assembles daily in the Town Hall from half past nine until ten o'clock.
>
> Filled with adoring gratitude to Almighty God, for the gift of His Holy Spirit, by whom many hundreds of souls have been brought to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. We the Ministers of the Gospel in Coleraine, Presidents of the Union Prayer Meeting, together with the Committee of Management, do subscribe our names to this inscription; expressing our desire and determination, that this copy of the Holy Scriptures shall be committed to the custody and safe keeping of the Chairman of the Town Commissioners, as a token of our gratitude to God for the times of refreshing with which He has been pleased to visit Coleraine, and a witness to other days of "how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

James O'Hara, A.M.	*Rector of Coleraine*
J. Alfred Canning	*Minister of 2nd Presbyterian Church*
J. MacDonnell	*Minister of 3rd Presbyterian Church*
John Kydd	*Pastor of Congregational Church*
George Vance	*Wesleyan Minister*
William Ritchie	*Minister of 1st Presbyterian Church*
J. T. McAlden, M.D.	*Chairman of Committee*
John Young	*Secretary of Committee*
Andrew C. Sharpe	*Surgeon*
Samuel White	
William Young	
John Matthews	
J. MacCombie,	*Editor of the "Chronicle"*
John Horner	
James Nelson	
Thomas Boyd	
James Thompson	*Treasurer Of Committee*
Thomas Nevin	
Alex. Cuthbert	

Townhall, Coleraine
October 6, 1859

* * *

NOTES

1 John T Carson, *God's River in Spate*;
(Belfast, Presbyterian Historical Society, 1958), p.1

2 Coleraine Chronicle, June 11, 1859

3 ibid. May 28, 1859

4 ibid. June 4, 1859

5 ibid. June 11, 1859

6 cited William Gibson; *The Year of Grace*
(Belfast, Ambassador Productions Ltd, 1989); p.52-53

7 Coleraine Chronicle, June 11, 1859

8 cited William Gibson; *The Year of Grace*, p.54

9 Gibson; *The Year of Grace*, p.54

10 Coleraine Chronicle, June 11, 1859

11 ibid. July 2, 1859

12 ibid. July 16, 1859
13 ibid. June 11, 1859
14 ibid. July 30, 1859
15 ibid. August 13, 1859
16 ibid. December 19, 1859
17 ibid. June 11, 1859
18 ibid. June 11, 1859
19 ibid. June 25, 1859
20 ibid. June 25, 1859
21 ibid. August 6, 1859
22 ibid, June 11, 1859
23 ibid. June 11, 1859
24 ibid. June 11, 1859
25 ibid. October 8, 1859
26 ibid. July 30, 1859
27 ibid, June 18, 1859
28 ibid, July 30, 1859
29 ibid. October 15, 1859
30 ibid. August 20, 1859
31 ibid. June 18, 1859
32 ibid. June 18, 1859
33 Gibson; *The Year of Grace;* p.55-56
34 Coleraine Chronicle, August 13, 1859
35 ibid. August 20, 1859
36 ibid. June 18, 1859
37 Carson, *God's River in Spate;* p.35-36
38 Coleraine Chronicle, June 11, 1859
39 ibid. June 18, 1859
40 ibid. June 18, 1859
41 ibid. July 9, 1859
42 ibid. July 30, 1859

The Effect of the 1859 Revival on Mission

Ian Grant

The immediate context of the 1859 Revival was one of the lowest points of Irish history – the Great Famine of 1845. Ireland was at her lowest ebb in the aftermath of the famine, because of death and emigration, but within a few short years she would experience a supernatural touch from God in the form of the 1859 Revival, when it is estimated that over 100,000 people were converted to Christ in a period of less than 2 years! The impact these events had on the missionary vision of the Irish Church since is quite remarkable.

Stephen Neill (1990, p213f) points out that in the previous (18th) century,

> "The Protestant Churches owe[d] an immeasurable debt to the Evangelical Revival in the broad sense of that term. Many forces – high Anglican piety, the mystical tradition, the pietism both of Halle and Herrnhut – combined to produce John Wesley and the Methodist movement in Britain ... This naturally found its expression both in such movements of reform as the campaign for the abolition of slavery and in zeal for missionary endeavour."

He goes on to say that it was,

> "At a time when all these movements were showing signs of dying down, the Second Evangelical Awakening crossed the Atlantic from America to Britain in 1858. This was undenominational in character, and produced that new phenomenon of the nineteenth century, the interdenominational or undenominational missionary society."

It was in fact to the village of Connor, Co Antrim, that the first evidence of this new awakening came to be seen in these islands. Kells and Connor are two villages separated by a river just a few miles from Ballymena in the heart of Co Antrim. To this day there are strong evangelical Presbyterian congregations on both sides of the river, who are, of course, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Revival in their own way this year.

According to William Henry Harding, the 1859 Revival started when one woman from Gateshead, a Mrs Colville, working with the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), was personally witnessing around Ballymena, when a man called James McQuilken ...

> "... overheard Mrs Colville talking to a certain lady who took more pleasure in doctrinal discussions on Predestination than in vital, personal Christianity. "My dear," said Mrs Colville anxious to direct the conversation into a profitable channel, "you have never known the Lord Jesus." Whatever may have been their effect upon the lady, these words went as an arrow to McQuilken's heart. He was smitten with the thought that, professing Christian as he was, this truth applied to him. For two weeks he had no peace, day or night. Then he found it in Christ. His first convert was a friend named Jeremiah Meneely and these two began to meet for prayer with two other young men, John Wallace and Robert Carlisle. These four commenced, in a little schoolhouse at Kells, Co Antrim, a Believers' Fellowship Meeting."

A more complete account of how these four young men came to faith in Christ is to be found in Ian Paisley's book, *'The "Fifty Nine" Revival'* (1987, pp14-16). It is Paisley who mentions that Mrs Colville was working with the BMS when she came from England to Ballymena. This was the denominational missionary society founded by William Carey and his friends in 1792. Carey became its first missionary to India that same year. Just over 60 years later it would have an enormous impact nearer home ... in Ireland.

Remarkably, although Mrs Colville was of Baptist persuasion, the majority of the impact of the 1859 Revival was felt within Presbyterianism in Ulster. Perhaps that is not surprising, considering that there were probably no more than a dozen Baptist Churches in the whole of Ireland by the year 1859.

However, one result of the revival was the formation of the first ever Baptist Church in nearby Ballymena. By 1861 it had its first building under the pastoral care of John G McVicker. He was an interesting character, who started off his ministry in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Cullybackey

after being ordained in 1852. "But it was not until Sunday 26 June 1859, seven years after his ordination, that [he] was converted" according to an article published by Crawford Gribben in the Evangelical Times in April 2003. He goes on to say that,

> "Three months after his conversion, in September 1859, McVicker renounced infant baptism and was immersed as a believer in a local river ... McVicker quickly gathered a number of others for whom the revival had brought new life. With a shared commitment to Baptist ideals, they established themselves as the first Baptist church in the local market town of Ballymena."

Gribben goes on to say that,

> "The formation of their church had a major impact on local life. The newspapers expressed horror at the development. But criticism only began to mount when McVicker's continuing concern to 'get things right' caused him to resign from the Irish Baptist Society in December 1862 ... McVicker no longer adhered to Baptist views of the pastoral office. Together with a few followers, the former pastor established the first of Ballymena's Brethren assemblies."

The church building he erected for the Baptist congregation in Ballymena has recently been demolished and a new multi-million pound worship centre was opened in 2008 for the 350 strong congregation of Ballymena Baptist Church between Mount Street and Hill Street in the town.

So initially Baptists did not fare too well as a result of the 1859 Revival. However it is worth noting that by 1903, just over forty years later, the Baptist cause on the island of Ireland had grown from a dozen churches in 1859 to "38 associated churches with a total of 2,773 members" (Thompson, 1995, p12). Joshua Thompson, a former secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland states in his denominational history *'A Century of Grace'* that,

> "In the years 1866 to 1872 the twenty-five pastors and evangelists manned one hundred and ten outstations, each man preaching on average six times weekly often to large audiences and frequently in the open-air! They were men of deep passion and commitment with a zest for preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. They reported a steady flow of conversions and baptisms, often in places of determined opposition." (Thompson, 1995, p5).

He suggests that,

> "One reason for this was the persistent and remarkable interest in the gospel among ordinary people, an after-effect of the evangelical awakening of 1859 in Ulster, coupled with the positive, evangelistic spirit of the Irish Baptist churches." (Thompson, 1995, p5)

According to Paisley (1987, p 192), Jeremiah (or Jerry) Meneely, one of the first four converts of the revival in Kells, also "became convinced that the only fit subjects for baptism were believers and that the proper mode was immersion". He and a number of converts from Kells and nearby Connor started "the first Brethren meeting in Northern Ireland – an immediate result of the great awakening". (Paisley, 1987, p193).

Methodists and Episcopalians could also testify of many new converts, of many existing church members revived in their faith, and of some new churches established as a result of the revival. But it was the Presbyterians who experienced the greatest impact from the 1859 Revival.

William Gibson's book *'The Year of Grace'* (1989, p256) ends with the following table showing clearly the increase in Presbyterian congregations and new communicants as a result of the Revival for each county:

	Congregations	**Additional Communicants**
Antrim	81	4,353
Down	69	2,132
Derry	36	1,258
Tyrone	42	1,189
Armagh	27	625
Donegal	23	502
Monaghan	18	412
Cavan	10	169
Fermanagh	1	21
TOTALS	**307**	**10,661**

Of particular note is the story of Drumkeeran Presbyterian Church, Co Cavan, which started as a result of the 1859 Revival, when over 1000 people stood in a field to hear the gospel preached in the open-air, but sadly that church today is struggling to remain open.

According to Gibson (1989, p185)

> "There is a district not far from Killeshandra, named Drumkeeran, of which no notice has been taken in any of the reports of the revival, and where certainly a most extraordinary and in some respects unprecedented movement has taken place. The young minister of the Presbyterian Church, the Rev Samuel Patrick, has been so enfeebled by excessive labour that he has been unable to furnish any statement on the subject. During the first week in October, about which time the place was visited, he never laid himself down to sleep. The meetings which were held nightly in the church were so exciting, and the interest of the people such, that they could not be prevailed on to disperse till the following morning; while during all the day anxious inquirers and others demanded the incessant attention of their pastor."

All evangelical denominations experienced great benefit in terms of fruit from the 1859 Revival but more remarkable still perhaps is the fact that this revival, started by a lady working for a *denominational* mission, was to be the catalyst for the formation of countless *interdenominational* missions in the years that would follow. Why this should be is unclear, but perhaps the revival had so heightened the sense of need for a personal conversion experience of salvation, that all other matters of church policy took second place, apart from the notable exceptions already mentioned, in Ballymena!

If, however, the Holy Spirit really was behind this remarkable movement, then it should be no surprise that the Revival brought about a sense of unity across denominational lines. Indeed, the once schismatic synods of the Presbyterian Churches in Ireland had only united to form the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as recently as 1840. One of the first things they did on that occasion was to send out their first two missionaries! They were "the Revd James Glasgow and the Revd Alexander Kerr [who] were appointed to go to India as the first missionaries to be sent overseas by any Presbyterian body in Ireland". (Holmes, 2006, p4) However Holmes makes a very clear case that there had been a growing interest among Presbyterians, and indeed others, in the work of various voluntary missionary societies before 1840,

> "The societies included the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the London Missionary Society (LMS, 1795), the Edinburgh (later Scottish) and Glasgow Missionary Societies (1796), the Church Missionary Society (1799) and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810). Ireland too became the object of British evangelical missions with the creation of societies such as the Hibernian Bible Society (HBS), the Irish Evangelical Society and the Sunday School Society of Ireland and the Hibernian Society. It was in the auxiliaries of these voluntary organizations and numerous local missionary and Bible societies that Ulster Presbyterians first channelled their enthusiasm for mission by collecting money, offering prayers and gaining information about the countries and people groups they desired to win for Christ." (Holmes, 2006, p1).

Missionary interest had been growing in Ireland as it was growing in the rest of the English speaking world since the late 18th Century, but it was the 1859 Revival which really gave mission from Ireland the impetus that it needed, particularly in the person of Henry Grattan Guinness – a renowned preacher of the 1859 Revival.

The Guinness Connection

The name Henry Grattan Guinness is unmistakably Irish. His grandfather was the founder of the Guinness brewery in Dublin – Arthur Guinness. From humble origins in Leixlip to the west of Dublin, Arthur's family grew into quite a dynasty which can broadly be divided into three branches: The brewing side of the family, the banking side of the family, and the missionary side of the family, of which Henry Grattan Guinness is the most famous.

Henry's father, Captain John Guinness, served for many years in the army in India, and while there came under the influence of Methodism, which was becoming very popular among the ranks of the British army at that time. He was in fact the first Guinness to leave the established church, the Church of Ireland, and become a Wesleyan. Many members of the wider family were already Church of Ireland clergymen, or married to them. Captain John was also the first Guinness to become teetotal! (Guinness, 2005, p 9).

Henry was born in 1835 to Captain John and Jane Lucretia D'Esterre, (whose first husband had died in a duel with Daniel O'Connell, the famous Irish Catholic radical politician – Guinness, 2005, p 1). He was 'dedicated to God at York Street Chapel' (Guinness, 2005, p 30) in Dublin, but because of

his father's ill-health, the family moved around a lot in their early years to places such as Edinburgh, Cheltenham and Clifton. When the second Arthur Guinness died he left £150,000. As a nephew, Henry Grattan Guinness was entitled to £400 of this when he turned 21. 'Some young men might have been impressed, but not Henry Grattan Guinness. Throughout his life money would never be more to him than a tiresome necessity.' (Guinness, 2005, p35). Henry had spent most of his childhood at school in Exeter, and when his father died, the bereavement hit him hard. He began to drown his sorrows in some of the seedier local taverns. When he was 17 he decided to follow his younger brother, Robert Wyndham, to sea, sailing to such places as Mexico and the West Indies. He had found the adventure for which he was looking but, after a storm at sea, he went to Lough Corrib in the West of Ireland to train as a farmer with a desire to emigrate to the colonies.

When his brother returned home from sea one night to tell him that he had got converted on deck, it wasn't long before Henry was converted too. This was the year 1854. Within the year he was working as a farmer's assistant in Tipperary. After spraining his ankle in a wood one day, he had time to reflect on what he was going to do with his life. He spent hours alone seeking inner peace with God and to know what God wanted him to do with his life. At last, he says,

> "The gates of glory and immortality opened to my mental vision and there shone before me an interminable vista of pure and perfect existence in the life to come. Inspired by this new awareness of eternal salvation, he was now alerted to, 'the miserable and abject slaves of Romish superstition' all around him and began to preach in the marketplace, in fields, on street corners, anywhere local people would stop and listen. And they did, in such numbers that a local priest called Father H was so annoyed, that he set off on horse-back with a whip to silence the young Protestant upstart." (Guinness, 2005, p38).

The opposition grew, but Henry thrived on it, knowing he had found his life's work. His mother wrote to ask him to come back to Cheltenham, which he eventually did before going in January 1856 to study at New College, St John's Wood, London. He found it difficult to settle to study, he would rather be preaching, especially in the open-air. He never did finish his second year.

> "On his twenty first birthday he noted in his diary that his only ambition was 'to live preaching and to die preaching; to live and die in the pulpit; to preach to perishing sinners till I drop down dead.' Uncle Arthur's bequest of £400 was now his to do with as he pleased. He gave it to his mother, and set off for Birmingham with a half a crown in his pocket." (Guinness, 2005, p41).

That was what this particular Guinness did with his 'beer money'. No-one could ever legitimately say that the missionary empire he would build in the following days was ever funded by the proceeds of alcohol. He was totally dependent on God for his finance from that time on. And yet, years later,

> "In Edinburgh in the bleak November of 1863 his preaching tour came to a sudden standstill. A distinguished Irish politician accused him publicly of bribing his converts with money from the Guinness brewery. Most of the newspapers reported the story and all further speaking engagements were cancelled forthwith." (Guinness, 2005, p61).

Back in April 1857 he had been invited to preach at Moorfields Tabernacle, once the pulpit of George Whitfield. The pastor, Dr Campbell, was so impressed he invited him to stay on as a minister. After a struggle Henry declined, believing that he could not be tied to one church, but on 29 July that year he was ordained there 'as an itinerant, interdenominational evangelist.' After saying good-bye to his mother he 'set off on a three-year preaching tour which would take him half way around the world' (Guinness, 2005, p43). This tour saw him preaching to thousands in Wales, Scotland, Paris, Boulogne, Geneva, and Chamonix in the Alps. It was while he was in Switzerland that he received an invitation to go to preach in his birthplace – Dublin.

He arrived in Ireland in February 1858 and caused quite a stir in Dublin itself. 'Only 22% of the population was Protestant' (Guinness, 2005, p47) but the front pages of the newspapers recorded that,

> "Few preachers have ever addressed congregations more select. They consist of the elite of all denominations, including a considerable number of the Established Clergy. The wealth, the respectability, the cultivated intellect, as well as the evangelical piety of the city, have been represented in a measure unprecedented, we believe, on such an occasion in this country. Judges, Members of Parliament, distinguished orators, Fellows of College, the lights of various professions, and, to a considerable extent, the rank and fashion of this gay metropolis, have been drawn out to a dissenting chapel which was thronged, even on weekdays, by this new attraction." (Guinness, 2005, p48).

It was when he went north to Belfast that the signs of revival began to appear, with thousands lying prostrate on the ground for hours after he had preached. This was only early 1858 and the full flow of

the revival was still a year away ... but it is interesting to note how the pro-Catholic *Dublin Evening Post* remarked on the non-sectarian nature of his preaching:

> "The Rev Grattan Guinness will, however, have accomplished a great deal for society and religion, if his disinterested advice be followed ... Before Protestants seek to convert Roman Catholics, let them seek to convert themselves." (Guinness, 2005, p49).

When Henry returned to Ireland the following year, 1859, he focussed more on open-air preaching, because here he could reach all types and levels of society, not just the 'well-heeled' inside church buildings. On one occasion in Ulster he had to be hoisted onto the roof of a cab, so that the 20,000 who had turned out could all see him. His audience included prostitutes and drunkards. The *Freeman* paper of 10 August 1859 states that, "The Rev H Grattan Guinness preached to at least 15,000 people in the open air." (Orr, 1965, p128).

"On Wednesday, 27 July ... in Coleraine ... an immense assembly, numbering 7,000 persons, was brought together to hear an address from the Rev H G Guinness. 'During the progress of his sermon several people were convicted, and carried away'." (Weir, 1987, p73). So he was rapidly becoming an important Revival preacher, together with Brownlow North and many others who would later cross the Atlantic to make a profound impression on American preachers, including D L Moody in Chicago (Orr, 1965, p170).

At the end of 1859 Henry went to preach in the United States and Canada, preaching many times a week, for many weeks on end in places such as New York and Philadelphia. He was so busy that by the time he returned to Ireland in mid 1860 he was exhausted and unable to continue his whirlwind of preaching. What he needed was a holiday. For this he went to Ilfracombe in Devon, and it was there that he was to meet his life partner, Fanny Fitzgerald, who was also descended from a distinguished Irish family. Her parents had both died tragically and she was brought up by a rather strict Quaker family, called the Wests, who eventually joined the Brethren.

Henry and Fanny married in Bath on 2 October 1860 (Guinness, 2005, p55). In the next forty years they were to forge a very important partnership in terms of the development of many missionary societies, the training of hundreds of missionaries and the establishment of all kinds of ministries at home and abroad. The missionary empire they, and their children, established was certainly a high-water mark as far as the missionary vision of the Irish Church is concerned.

Dr Henry Grattan Guinness, one of the outstanding preachers of the 1859 Revival in the British Isles, carried his evangelistic passion from the Revival into foreign missionary work. Founding a college in London for the training of missionaries, he systematically surveyed the neediest areas of the world, his work giving rise to the Regions Beyond Missionary Union with missions upon many continents. Dr Guinness's daughter, Geraldine, married Howard Taylor of the China Inland Mission and became Dr Hudson Taylor's biographer; Whitefield Guinness, his son, went to China also and built up the work of the China Inland Mission in Honan; his daughter, Lucy, married Karl Kumm, the founder of the Sudan United Mission. In the third generation, many of Grattan Guinness's descendants were active in Christian work at home and abroad. Harry Guinness succeeded his father as principal of Harley College. Dr Henry Grattan Guinness in his day not only won thousands of converts in the 1859 Revival but trained more than 1,300 eager volunteers for missionary service under thirty denominations in forty missionary societies. (Orr, 1965, p173f).

To train 1,300 missionaries from 30 denominations to work with 40 missionary societies around the world can only be described as a phenomenal impact on world mission, by one Irish family, and yet they did it against the back-drop of many trying circumstances. The public accusation mentioned earlier that Henry was bribing his converts with Guinness money, left Henry, his wife and two small children almost penniless. It was then in April 1864 that they were offered a house rent-free in Limerick.

There, Henry risked life and limb trying to preach in the open-air to the Catholic community of the City. Henry had been badly beaten by the mob he was trying to preach to. *The Times*, records on 6 May, 1864, that 'Mr. Guinness had been saved from the vengeance of the populace by a Captain Jones of the depot battalion.' (Guinness, 2005, p62). Henry realised that doors to his own preaching were closing one after another, and he soon came to the conclusion that 'instead of preaching himself, perhaps the time had come to train others to do it.' (Guinness, 2005, p63). This involved first of all a move to Dublin. There, 'Henry accepted the position of elder at Merrion Hall, a newly built, socially unfashionable Brethren Chapel. He rented 31 Upper Baggot Street as his, 'Training Home for Evangelists and Missionaries.' Among his first eight students was Tom Barnardo. Henry and Fanny, after having Hudson Taylor to speak at a Bible Class in their home in Dublin, volunteered to go to China, but it was Hudson Taylor who gently told them to 'Stay here, and train me the men and women.' (Guinness, 2005, p9).

During the years 1868-72 Henry and Fanny struggled with this, because they really did feel called to go to China. They spent the next few years unsettled,

but managed to move to Paris and start an Evangelical Chapel there on the Rue Royale, before France declared war against Prussia. In the end they took Hudson Taylor's advice seriously, because in 1872 Henry finally saw it:

> "His vision was to set up the world's first interdenominational missionary training college run on the same principles as Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission...attendance at Henry's college would not depend on denomination, gender or financial wherewithal. There would be no fees. God would provide the location, the staff, the students – and the food to feed them." (Guinness, 2005, p79).

It was not long after this that they moved to the East End of London and there founded the missionary training institute which was later to be known as Harley College. The College had a full complement of 32 students in the first year! In December 1875 they were also given a run-down former stately home in Derbyshire called 'Cliff House', which they also used to train missionaries in all kinds of practical skills as well as spiritual ones. They ran all this, and a number of mission halls in the East End of London, including a boat which they used for evangelistic trips around the Thames – all of which were good outlets for the students in terms of practical ministry and evangelism training.

To the end of their lives their zeal for world mission never waned, despite many sad losses they had to endure as a family. Some of their ventures were more successful than others, but they and their students never seemed to stop founding missions:

> "Grattan Guinness, George Pearse, and other leaders in the 1859 Revival in Britain joined in founding the North Africa Mission, which sought a foothold in Morocco, Algeria and Tunis in the 1880s. It was difficult indeed to win converts from Islam in the Maghreb or Libya or Egypt." (Orr, 1965, p183).

It was one of Henry Grattan Guinness's students, Samuel A. Bill, who entered the Qua Iboe area of Nigeria in 1887, backed by a strong board in Northern Ireland, to found the Qua Iboe Fellowship. They have just recently changed their name to Mission Africa, but are still based in Northern Ireland, and are now sending missionaries from both the UK and Ireland to Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Chad. This was just a few years before the Sudan Interior Mission entered Nigeria in 1893 with the aim of going not only to the interior of Nigeria, but actually to spread their chain of mission stations across the full width of the Continent to Ethiopia. Around the same time just after the North Africa Mission had sent a scout to Egypt in 1892, another Northern Ireland

based mission, The Egypt General Mission, itself a product of the revival, was able to develop 'a considerable interdenominational work in the Nile kingdom.' (Orr, 1965, p216).

In the 1890s, the Regions Beyond Missionary Union, founded by Henry Grattan Guinness, entered Peru. Later it merged with other missions working in Latin American countries to form the Evangelical Union of South America (Orr, 1965, p217). Since 5 June 1990 this has been known as Latin Link. The work done by these missions included church planting, medical and educational work, and Bible and Christian literature distribution. So by the end of Henry's life, he and his children had been responsible for founding missions on practically all the main continents of the world. Indeed when Fanny died in 1898, all of her children were involved in missionary work somewhere. Geraldine, their daughter arrived in Australia after a period of service in China, over a month after her mother's death, to be told the sad news (Guinness, 2005, p180).

What can we learn from the Guinness' vision for world mission?

It was the product of a genuine spiritual revival. J Edwin Orr said that *'Every revival of religion in the homelands is felt within a decade in the foreign mission-fields.'* This is exactly what happened as a result of the 1859 Revival. By 1870 many of the interdenominational faith missions we know today were beginning to come into existence. There was a unity about them, as believers from various denominational backgrounds now realized that only one thing was important – that of seeing all men and women coming to personal faith in Christ. No-one was beyond the pale. Genuine revival today would produce a similar effect in terms of candidates volunteering for mission.

The Guinness family never divorced overseas mission from home mission. Perhaps this is an area to which attention must be given. Many mission agencies today are very focused on one particular country or continent of the world. Mission representatives at home, can become so focused on mission overseas, that they forget about mission on their own door-step. This has been brought home to us by the number of immigrants from the former mission-fields of the world, now living in Ireland. It is time Irish believers were as concerned for those here, as for those far away. Many of the recently arrived immigrants come from restricted access countries.

They saw the importance of good missionary training at home. Henry saw that denominational colleges focused on training for the ministry of their own

particular churches at home. A different kind of training was needed for those who were going overseas to other cultures to face the hardships of life in developing countries. While there is a legitimate emphasis on academic study today in many theological colleges, the role of interdenominational colleges, as missionary training colleges, could be re-emphasized. This need not and must not in any degree diminish the integrity of the qualification obtained at the end of the process, since many countries in the world today look for genuine academic achievement if someone is to be admitted to teach at a theological college in their country.

The need for a good flow of information from mission-fields to supporters. In Geraldine Guinness, who became Hudson Taylor's daughter-in-law and biographer, and perhaps even more so in Lucy Grattan Guinness, later to be Lucy Kumm, God provided the Guinness missionary movement with extremely able writers, who had the ability to turn 'fairy-tale into reality with their illustrated missionary magazines,' (Guinness, 2005, p170) long before the invention of the television or video. We live in the age of the internet and of cheap world-wide travel to all kinds of exotic places. Perhaps something of the romance of these places has diminished or, to some, they may simply be seen as the next destination for a holiday. The challenge to communicate the spiritual needs of such places, particularly of Asia, remains as great a need as ever. We must use all forms of media to even greater effect.

The example of living entirely by faith and dependence on God is a commendable one, and yet it was Fanny who looked after the books, while Henry was often away travelling on preaching or mission trips. Living by faith and dependence on God to supply all his needs was how Henry Grattan Guinness and Hudson Taylor founded their organizations, but even OMF, the descendant of the China Inland Mission, is debating internally the principle on which it was founded. Is it right to *ask* supporters for finance, or to simply *trust* God to move someone's heart somewhere to give to meet a need without asking? Or is it better, like the denominational missions, and others such as Mission Africa, to pay their missionaries a salary each month, and for the mission itself to depend on God in faith and in prayer to bring in the budget each month?

> "Being of a more practical turn of mind than Henry, she [Fanny] did not see prayer and effort as mutually exclusive. "We cannot expect God to do by a miracle that which we can do for ourselves," she stated firmly. That meant writing endless, time-consuming bulletins and reports to the Institute's supporters. Yet time and time again, Henry was right. Provisions would simply appear, just as they were most needed." (Guinness, 2005, p88).

Fanny struggled to make ends meet, while Henry got on with the work, but living by faith as far as finances are concerned can be a strain on any missionary family today and is often one of the factors that bring a family home from the field prematurely. There are no easy answers to this, but the example which the Grattan Guinness family leaves to Irish missionaries today is an amazing one against the back-drop of the wealthy Guinness beer industry which is so well known in this country.

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NOTES

1 'It is estimated that the Irish Presbyterian Church (alone) had 60,000 converts.' Paisley, 1987, p192).

2 Source: A Tract written by William Henry Harding entitled 'The Ulster Revival of 1859' now out of print, but accessed on the internet on 2/8/07
http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/ulster_revival.doc

3 Source: 2006 Annual report of Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland accessed on internet 2/8/07, *http://www.baptistsinireland.org/baptistsinireland/download/ABCI%20Annual%20Report%2006WEBVERSION.pdf* (pp55-58) Note: a number of churches which did exist then, mostly in the South of Ireland, have since died out.

4 See also the article by Joshua Thompson, 'Some Extinct Baptist Churches of the Nineteenth Century' (p11) in the Journal of the Irish Baptist Historical Society (Volume 3 New Series) 1995/96, for a full discussion of the rise and fall of the fortunes of Baptist Churches in Ireland during the period 1814–1861.

5 Source: John G. McVicker and the 1859 revival by Crawford Gribben accessed on the internet on 09/02/2004:
http://www.evangelical-times.org/Website_Pages/ArticleDetail.php?articleID=179

6 Source: an essay published in The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 01-OCT-06, by Andrew Holmes 'The shaping of Irish Presbyterian attitudes to mission, 1790-1840.' Copyright 2006, Cambridge University Press, accessed on the internet on 01/02/2007:
http:// www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-23181830_ITM

7 SIM-UK still has a descendant of the Guinness family serving in theological education in Malawi – Ruth Guinness from Bristol. However Ruth has been at home undergoing major surgery in recent months.

8 China Inland Mission, founded by Hudson Taylor in 1865 is now known as OMF-International, formerly, Overseas Missionary Fellowship: *http://www.omf.org*

9 Sudan United Mission founded in 1904 is now Action Partners: *http://www.actionpartners.co.uk*

10 Tom Barnardo, the Founder of Barnardos Children's Homes, was converted under Henry Grattan Guinness's ministry: *http://www.barnardos.org.uk/*

11 North Africa Mission is now known as *Arab World Ministries*. *http://awm.gospelcom.net/int/uk.php*

12 The Qua Iboe Fellowship is now known as *Mission Africa*. *http:/39999/www.missionafrica.org.uk*

13 Sudan Interior Mission is now known as *Serving in Mission*. *http://www.sim.co.uk*

14 Source: For a more detailed explanation of how various missions amalgamated or merged to form Latin Link please visit: *http://www.mundus.ac.uk/cats/3/1229.htm* (accessed on the internet on 06/08/07).

15 Source: *http://www.pearlofgreatvalue.com/RevivalandMissions.php* accessed on internet 18/05/09

The 1859 Revival with particular reference to Baptist Churches in Ireland

Joseph Thompson

'The Year of Grace' [1] was the title which Rev Professor William Gibson gave in 1860 to his history of the 1859 Revival in Ulster. This was the first eye-witness, close-up view of the Revival and it is the basic quarry from which historians still mine . . . it is mainly, but not exclusively a Presbyterian view.

Gibson was well qualified to write on this subject for at least three reasons:

(i) On a visit to America in 1858 he saw and experienced the American Revival.

(ii) He travelled throughout Ulster in the autumn of 1858 recounting the American story and, in so doing, he both encouraged the desire for the Revival and also saw its first stirrings and progress.

(iii) In December 1859, he sent our questionnaires to 460 congregations in Ulster which were in connection with the General Assembly with queries regarding the Revival and he received 307 mainly positive replies and to receive a 67% response was a very high percentage. [2]

Dr J Edwin Orr, one of your own distinguished sons, judged that:

> ". . . Baptists cooperated with the 1859 Revival movement in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. That Baptist opposition or indifference was utterly non-existent would be difficult to prove without reference to every Baptist church in the land. It would be fitter to say that this present research has uncovered not an instance of Baptist opposition to the Awakening. (Orr's descriptive preference for Revival so as to distinguish it from Revivalism.) The files of the non-denominational 'Revival

> Weekly', the most comprehensive record of the movement, indicate nothing but whole-hearted cooperation." [3]

In 1859, the number of Baptists in Ulster must have been small because Dr Joshua Thompson records that in 1903 there were 38 associated churches with the Baptist Union of Ireland with a total of 2,773 members [4] with, no doubt, other non-associated churches with unknown numbers. Notwithstanding the size of the denomination, Orr's judgement of whole-hearted cooperation is, on the whole, accurate. This qualification is because of Tobermore which will require consideration.

Gibson, in his history of the '59, sets the scene in the early seventeenth century and quickly introduces The first revival in 1625 [5] commencing in the Six Mile River Valley and influencing especially the counties of Antrim and Down. Upon the labours of the early Presbyterian ministers, "a signal blessing rested visibly upon their labours. Not only did a marked improvement manifest itself in the entire habits and demeanour of the people, but a spirit of intense religious earnestness began to be evinced, which issued in one of the most remarkable awakenings recorded in the annals of the Christian Church." [6]

What of results?

(i) A multitude of conversions.
(ii) A desire for fellowship and teaching led to the monthly Antrim Meeting which provided both.
(iii) This Antrim Meeting became a quasi Presbytery which provided ministers for vacant churches.
(iv) An embryonic Presbyterian Church, apart from Anglicanism, was created.
(v) Ecstasies and enthusiasms were criticised and accepted as the power of God. [7]

But, you may ask, what has this to do with the Baptists?

Robert Blair, one of the early Presbyterian ministers and active in the 1625 Revival, records in his autobiography:

> "We had also an assault from the Separists. (Presbyterian historians judge these to be Baptists.) [8] Some faction in London, hearing that there was a people zealous for the Lord in the North of Ireland, came to Antrim, where our monthly meetings were, and there set up their dwelling, thinking to 'fish' in these waters. They thought that zealous people would seek after them and did not call to any; but therein they were frustrated of their

expectations. [9] Nearly 20 years later some Baptists lingered there (ie in Antrim). [10]

My point is that there was Baptist interest in Revival.

The eighteenth century Evangelical Revival in Britain had repercussions in Ireland. Whitefield, the Wesleys, Cennick and the Countess of Huntington preachers all preached in Ireland (and this is more than a lecture in its own right). However, another influence is noteworthy - that of the Haldanes in Edinburgh. In 1798, 'The Evangelical Society of Ulster' [11] was formed to make the Gospel known. The Haldanes were Presbyterian, became Independent and then Baptist and from their followers came the Haldane Baptists in Scotland (as well as some Congregational Churches). Their spiritual journey was also comparable to that of Alexander Carson of Tobermore - Presbyterian, Independent and then Baptist. The connection with Irish Baptists and the Haldanes is primarily through Alexander Carson. Robert Haldane often published Carson's works, shielded him from loss and secured for him at least some reward for his labours. [12] This is a link between Irish Baptists and the wider Evangelical Revival.

These two examples of Revival indicate Baptist interest in and, to a large degree, involvement in previous days of awakening . . . and this introduces us to our subject:

The 1859 Revival

My earliest recollection, as a child of 4, is the funeral our senior minister, Rev Dr Robert Barron. He was born in 1851 and in 1859 remembered the people coming, singing from the services in Lylehill Church during the Revival. His mother knelt down with him beside a hedge and prayed that 'we too might be converted'. Sixty-five years later he still remembered:

Where're you meet you always say,
What's the news, what's the news?
Pray, what's the order of the day.
What's the news, what's the news?
Oh, I have got good news to tell,
My Saviour has done all things well,
And triumphed over death and hell.
That's the news, that's the news.

Maybe I should define 'Revival'. Let Rev Duncan Campbell, who lived through the Lewis Awakening, speak:

> "Revival is a going of God among His people and an awareness of God laying hold of the community."

Revival is not worked up but sent down. Revival is to the Church first, to God's people, to you and me, and then to the community - that is what happened in Ulster in 1859. Dr Paul Darragh in his doctoral thesis[13] has maps locating the places affected by the Revival in Ulster. It looks like Ulster with measles!

In considering the '59, we will single out three areas - the Course, the Causes and the Consequences.

THE COURSE

The birthplace and cradle of the Revival was Connor - a large Presbyterian congregation of over 1000 families. It was favoured by the evangelical ministry of Rev J H Moore from 1840 and also by his immediate predecessor, Rev David Hamilton who was the close friend of Rev Robert Murray McCheyne. The people were fed with the finest of the wheat.

In 1857, J H Moore spoke to some of his promising young men to "do something more for God". He said:

> "could you not gather six of your careless neighbours, either parents of children, to your house or some convenient place on the Sabbath and spend an hour with them, reading and searching the Word of God?" [14]

From this came the Sabbath School at Tannybrake (near Connor) and then a prayer meeting in an old schoolhouse near Kells. This also coincided with the commencement of prayer meetings in Fulton Street, New York, where, interestingly, six attended the first meeting - one Presbyterian, one Baptist, one Congregationalist, one Dutch Reformed and two others.

John Hamilton Moore was:

- a Calvinist in theology, who freely offered the Gospel in his preaching;
- a pastor who knew every one in his congregation - 1000 families;
- an initiator of a new system of Sunday Schools and printed suitable notes on the Bible passages for his teachers;
- an organiser of prayer meetings and although for some time they dwindled, he prepared to cover his whole area with them. In due course he had over 100 prayer meetings each week.

- a teacher of his people re Revival, reading extracts from books on this subject on some Sunday evenings . . . and, of course, when the story came of the American Revival in 1858 he immediately told his people.

It was within this congregation that the prayer meeting in Kells was taking place. From the end of 1857 a young man was converted and other conversions followed weekly.

Of this work, Rev S J Moore (a brother of J H Moore) wrote:

> "The awakening to a spirit of sin, the conviction of its sinfulness, the illumination of the soul in the knowledge of a glorious Saviour, and conversion to Him - all this operation, carried on by the life-giving spirit, was in the Connor district for more than eighteen months; a calm, quiet, gradual, in some cases a lengthened process, not commencing in or accompanied by a 'smiting down' of the body or any extraordinary physical prostration more than what might be expected to result from great anxiety and deep sorrow." [15]

The Revival, firmly rooted in prayer and anchored in the Word of God, began to spread - as a river overflowing its banks, as one said, or another, as fire - and the churches in Ulster were ready to receive it.

Let Rev Marcus Dill speak:

> "It is right it should be known that this movement has not come upon us quite so suddenly as people at a distance might be led to suppose. I am able to testify that there has been a gradual, but perceptible, improvement in the state of religion throughout this district for some years. Ministers were led to speak to the people with greater earnestness about 'the things which belong to their peace'. Attendance on the public ordinances of religion had considerably increased. Open-air preaching was extensively practised. Sabbath schools were greatly multiplied. Prayer meetings were growing up in many districts. Sacred music, which had been much neglected, was cultivated with ardour and success. And altogether the people were in a state of preparation - a state which passed into one of earnest expectancy when the glad news of the American revivals reached our shores." [16]

Or again, as Rev J A Canning judged:

> "Nothing seemed to be lacking but a power to bring home an offered gospel to the hearts and souls of the people. People

were looking for the power of the Holy Spirit to impart to the truth a vivifying energy." [17]

. . . and God did that when He came to Connor.

On 9 December 1858, a young man, Samuel Campbell, was converted through the influence and prayers of the Connor Fellowship. He was from Ahoghill and a worker in the linen business of Mr James Ross of Kells. He asked praying friends to pray for his family and on Christmas Day he went home and told the news of his conversion to his mother, sister and brother. His sister embraced Christ as her Saviour while his brother came under deep conviction. Let John T Carson take up the story:

"Anxiously, Samuel pleaded the Saviour's cause and prayerfully he laid siege to their souls. Returning a second time, he was thrilled to hear the news that his mother had found peace in Christ. His brother, however, remained obdurate; he must, therefore, go again. When he arrived he was told that his brother was at a shooting match and, with eternity in view rather than time, he went to him without delay and said, 'I have a message for you from the Lord Jesus.' What followed is of some significance, for it seems to have been the first instance of what was to happen later in many cases. Samuel's brother came under deep conviction, and he wrestled with an agony of soul which made his body tremble. It was only with difficulty that he reached home and for some days he found no ease of mind. But at last his prayers were heard, his soul found peace and 'he burned with an unquenchable desire to glorify the Name of his Almighty Saviour'." [18]

As Connor was the cradle, so Ahoghill was the trumpet and that because of phenomena, especially prostration, similar to Samuel Campbell's brother. We must comment on this as critics of the revival accused it of frenzy and delusion because of those smitten and prostrated in a state of conviction of sin. First of all:

"Such phenomena were not new in revival; it happened in the 1625 Revival at the Six Mile Water. It would seem also to have been contagious in that when someone was present where it happened then visited somewhere else, he 'carried' it. As a general rule it would seem that the better instructed people were in the doctrines of the gospel, the less their experience was characterised by bodily excitement. That physical prostrations occurred is not to be denied, but this phenomenon must be kept in perspective, as only a slender proportion of the multitudes

> affected by the 1859 Revival was so influenced. This is a big subject ... but let us realise that such can happen when the Holy Spirit convicts a person of sin, creating in some, terror and guilt which, by the same Spirit is dealt with in the releasing freedom of the forgiveness of sins through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Secondly:

> "The Rev William Richey of First Coleraine, made the following points regarding prostrations, suggesting (i) that they were usually at the beginning of the movement and were overruled by God for His gracious purposes, (ii) that they drew attention to the Revival and were as the ringing of a bell calling attention to the great number of people who needed help in this great work which was progressing, (iii) that it alarmed and aroused the careless, (iv) that they were used by God to make people withdraw from their ordinary pursuits, (v) that they led to greater prayer amongst Christians and the opening of the eyes of nominal professors, and lastly, (vi) that it brought up the subject of Christian experience. Of prostrations, we must remain agnostic as to how God worked in them and through them, but one thing we do know, that many came out of their 'prostrate' state to find joy and peace in believing in Christ." [19]

Active in bringing them into salvation was the ministry of ministers and mature Christians - in some cases, they went from house to house to deal with convicted people.

Before leaving Ahoghill, the Communion Monday of 26 March 1859 ought to be noted. So great was the crowd in the church that, fearing the galleries would collapse, the building had to be cleared - indeed one side of the gallery did sink. Some 3000 heard the gospel "comprising people of every creed from the Episcopalian to the Roman Catholic. Amid a chilling rain and on streets covered with mud, fresh 'converts' moved by a fervour and apostolic language of the speaker fell on their knees in an attitude of prayer . . . a spark of electricity appeared to have animated a large number of the audience; and it is confidently affirmed that some who went there to mock were heard to pray." [20] Many date their conversion from that memorable night.

"What more shall I say?", asked the writer of Hebrews, "... time would fail me to tell of ..." *(Hebrews 11:32)* As someone said:

> "A great revival is like a forest fire. You may trace its early course—following the first thin line of flame. But soon its progress is so swift and widely diffused that the eye can no

> longer keep pace with it. The flame bursts forth at once in many places and now we see but one great conflagration."

So it was with this work of grace. In 1858 it was only seen in Connor. In 1859, the Heavenly Fire was leaping up in all directions through Antrim, Down, Derry, Tyrone and indeed throughout all Ulster.
From Ahoghill the Revival spread until, in May 1859, it began to manifest itself in Ballymena and it was to become a town where showers of blessing fell in abundance.

Noteworthy:

(i) The united prayer meetings in the Town Hall, presided over by ministers of the town and by leading laymen.

(ii) The real evangelical unity in the town, especially between Presbyterians and the Church of Ireland.

(iii) The increasing desire for Revival, fuelled by a sermon preached in Wellington Street Church by Rev S J Moore. In this, he told of the deep and solemn work he had witnessed when at the spring communion in his brother's church in Connor. This is viewed as the spark which ignited the Revival in Ballymena.

(iv) The Baptist Church begins to appear here in two ways. Firstly, the visit of Mrs Colville 'said to be a Baptist' [21] (more about this when we consider the causes) and, secondly, the adoption of Baptist principles by Rev J G McVicker, the Reformed Presbyterian minister of Cullybackey, which led to the formation of the Baptist Church in Ballymena. [22] (more about this under 'consequences')

We need to retrace our steps to Ahoghill and then to visit Grange as Weir directs. [23] Dr Robert Rogers stated in a general way: "The Revival of 1839 brought much blessing to Grange ..." [24] but this must have included the Baptist Church. Some fifty years later, Rev David McMeekin (High Kirk, Ballymena) recorded some facets of the Revival in Grange. It early manifested itself and frequently since '59, there have been occasional religious upheavals. The first great meeting at 'The Corner' was arranged by Mr James Lee and secured the attendance of some of the more prominent converts - Jeremiah McNeely, James McQuilkin and Samuel Campbell. It was when Samuel Campbell was praying that great conviction of sin occurred. "Some fell to the ground crying out bitterly about sin and salvation ... and while Mr Campbell was subsequently preaching, on Isaiah 55:6-7, the people fell before him on the ground like yellow grain before the scythe." After consultation in the Presbyterian minister's house, the leaders

returned to the church and found it filled to overflowing and a Roman Catholic convert addressing the meeting ... and the people went home, with reluctance, at daybreak. McMeekin ends his record: "... and many rejoiced spiritually from this date". [25] Dr Robert Rogers, interestingly, quotes from the autobiography of a Dr T Coper Boville, who was born at the Grange in 1860 and, as young man, emigrated to Canada where he eventually became Deputy Finance Minister. Obviously, he found the effects of the Revival distasteful. He wrote:

> "There had been a big Revival at the time and everybody I knew was religious. Prayer meetings were held in our house weekly. I saw the beginnings of them but never saw the end. Sunday was a desperately holy occasion, blinds down, all work suspended, no games allowed. The afternoon's enjoyment consisted in sitting around the parents and reading chapters out of the Bible. Above all, Sunday began at 7pm on Saturday. I still recall the row of shining boots neatly lined along the wall on Saturday before 7pm for church going on Sunday. I may say there were clandestine children's games of marbles behind the turf stacks." [26]

Boville was born in 1860 and his critical personal judgement unintentionally witnesses to permanent results of the revival.

Return to Ballymena and glance at the Revival's northward progress to Ballymoney. The active senior Presbyterian minister in the town, Dr Robert Park, rejoiced:

> " ... at nearly the close of a lengthened ministry to be permitted to see many of my charge brought to the Saviour. To know that some, over whom my heart has often yearned, are rejoicing in Jesus and to believe that others are in a hopeful state for eternity, has been not only gratifying, but greatly encouraging."

Present at the Revival services in Baltmoney, without prior arrangement, were the Church of Ireland rector, Rev Henry Ffolliott, and his curate, Rev George V Chichester, and the Presbyterian minister, Rev Jonathan Simpson. Already they were having united prayer meetings in Portrush. An open air meeting was held on 6 July on Ramore Head with some 2000 present. There were short addresses by the local ministers and 'converts' from Ballymoney. That evening, it is believed, some thirty folk found the Saviour. Simpson records that at another open air meeting "an Episcopalian clergyman, a Presbyterian minister, a Congregationalist and a Baptist took part." The best attended open airs meetings were held at a hill called Dunmull, about three miles from Portrush. There were four meetings on

Sabbaths and one weeknight with teeming thousands attending and "the most signal blessings". Brownlow North [27] visited most opportunely and preached at open air meetings - one at Dunmull, attended by 7000 - and also in the Presbyterian Church.

What of results? Rev Jonathan Simpson, writing in 1895, recorded:

> "My record covers three hundred cases, I dare not say of conversion, but I must say, of the mighty Spirit's power to 'convince the world of sin' . . . It were worth living ten-thousand ages in obscurity and reproach to be permitted to creep forth at the expiration of that time, and engage in the glorious work of the last six months of 1859: a year that shall figure high in eternity."

Coleraine enjoyed the preaching and prayers of earnest and faithful ministers who desired to see the Revival come to their town . . . and come it did on Tuesday, 7 June when there was a great open air meeting in the Fair Hill. Over 100 souls were led to Christ and the new unopened Town Hall had to be opened to deal with people seeking Christ. A notable feature of the Revival was the amazing response to Christ in the Irish Society School when a great number of children, then their parents and neighbours found the peace of God's forgiveness. Well did John T Carson write: "What a day in Coleraine! And what a day in heaven too!" [29] A pulpit Bible was purchased by the people of the town to commemorate the Revival. It was signed by all the ministers of the town (but no Baptist pastor) and other Christian leaders. There wasn't a Baptist pastor in the town as the church was vacant [30] but, in 1860, a new pastor came to the Baptist Church ... Thomas William Medhurst who was the first graduate from C H Spurgeon's College. "He plunged into the middle of church growth." [31] wrote Jim Flanagan. In September 1860, church membership stood at 73 and two years' later it had jumped to 165 — surely a result of both the revival and continuing evangelism. A wider influence regarding physical manifestations in the Revival came from the pen of James C L Carson MD, whom Rev Dr N D Emerson believed to be a Baptist [32], and he was.

The flames of Revival spread through all the kingdom of Dalriada, the district of the route westward into County Londonderry to Maghera, Moneymore, Limevady and the city of Londonderry opened its gates to the King of Kings. Like a cleansing flame it moved into County Donegal and southwards into County Tyrone with the same gracious results. Onward the fire burned into Counties Armagh, Monaghan and Cavan and time fails me to tell the story, but from this thumbnail sketch of the Revival I want to single out Tobermore.

If not *the* first, certainly among the first places in County Londonderry that the Revival affected was Maghera. Rev Thomas Witherow, the minister of Maghera Presbyterian Church, tells that the first indications of the presence of the Revival appeared on Thursday, 2 June, in Culnady. He visited the house the next morning. There he learned that, the previous day, a young man called Thomas Campbell has come from County Antrim and, "whilst describing at the fireside to his relatives and friends the strange scenes which, for sometime past, he had witnessed at religious meetings held beyond the Bann, suddenly the servant boy in the family was affected with all the usual symptoms . . . then the servant girl . . . and then the brother of the speaker, George Campbell." Other than a meeting the previous Monday, when Rev Jonathan Simpson (Portrush) gave an account of the work going on in Connor and Ahoghill, there was no attempt in the neighbourhood to produce a revival. It is worthy of note that:

(i) those prostrated were at a fireside of a farm house;
(ii) that they were listening to a conversation of a friend who had witnessed prostrations;
(iii) that Thomas Campbell had not himself been prostrated;
(iv) that there was no exposition of Divine Truth, no appeal to the passions, no excitement beyond what the novel and interesting incidents related might be supposed to produce. [33]

The Revival flowed in this area as in other areas. In Witherow, the Presbyterians had a very wise and able guide. He judged the results to have been beneficial . . . and "the movement has left behind it memorials that give fair promise of their ability to stand the test of time."

He continues . . .

> "Our district has not been so largely visited as others, but there is here a fair proportion of souls which, during the late harvest, have been gathered to the Lord. In a congregation of three hundred and fifty families there are about a hundred individuals who have benefited more or less, some of them having, for the first time, experienced a saving change, and others, who were believers previously, having received a new and richer baptism of the Holy Ghost. Others may have benefited, with whom there was less outward demonstration and whose cases have not come to my knowledge." [34]

To Witherow, the mass of the population was passed over. The district had only received some drops of the shower, but even drops had done them good.

The record of Maghera Presbyterian Church is that there were ten prayer meetings in the congregation with no fewer than forty new communicants at the Communion after the Revival.

The fires of Revival in Maghera flowed to Tobermore. Gibson simply records for us that there were forty new communicants in the Presbyterian Church post-revival. In that he gives no further information, we may interpret him to mean his account of Maghera is illustrative of the area. [35] R H Carson, the pastor of Tobermore Baptist Church, tells us that the effect of the awakening in America led to the formation of a prayer meeting on a Friday evening and this proved to be a fruitful meeting, as a fortnight after its commencement, there were conversions. From March 1859 to March 1860, ninety-two souls were added to the Church. "There were never less than 100 at the prayer meeting, sometimes as many as 200." [36] Carson commented, "it is with heartfelt thankfulness we record the fact that, up to the present moment, we have not been called upon to exercise discipline in a single instance."

At this point we will leave Carson and Tobermore and return to them again later under 'Consequences'.

We have journeyed with the Revival from Ballymena and now we must take a different route to Belfast and onwards. It is believed that the Revival in Belfast led to "the conversion of 10,000 souls." [37] . . . this was the judgement of Dr John Weir. The story can be followed in Gibson's history. [38]

We will cite the following points:

(i) It would appear that the Revival started at Great George's Street Presbyterian Church on Friday and Saturday, 28-29 May, with two of the converts from Connor with Rev Thomas Toye and then on Sunday in Linenhall Street Church with some of the more prominent Connor converts. From this weekend the movement flowed.

(ii) From this came the Union Prayer Meetings in the Music Hall (Victoria Hall) on Wednesdays 1pm-2pm. The secretaries were Revs James Morgan (Fisherwick Place Presbyterian) and Charles Seaver (St John's Church of Ireland, Laganbank) and they were supported enthusiastically by leaders both in the Churches and in the town.

(iii) A feature of the Revival in Belfast was the great open-air meeting in Botanic Gardens, Belfast with a congregation of up to 40,000. The advent of the train network brought people from all over the province. The chair was taken by Rev John Johnston, Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly, who was described as "the apostle and patriarch of open-air assemblies".

(iv) Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who preached to 7000 in Botanic Gardens in 1858 and was in Ireland again in 1880, said, "I have to thank you all for the kindness with which I have been received and, especially, I have to thank the ministers in Belfast. I never was in a town in my life where I met with such a noble body of men who love the good old truth ..." [39] These ministers heartily encouraged the Revival in Belfast. Involved in the Revival was Academy Street Baptist Church (which later became Great Victoria Street BC). The congregation was addressed by a minister from Canada who spoke on the American Revival. [40] The minister was Rev R M Henry who had been Reformed Presbyterian and became Baptist and influenced Rev J G McVicar to follow the same path. The congregation grew from 40 in 1858 to 128 in 1860. Henry followed Rev W S Eccles in 1858 when Eccles moved to Banbridge, where he was much used during the Revival.

Banbridge was a town favoured by (i) strong evangelical preaching as compared to the Unitarians; (ii) the devoted labours of a Christian layman; (iii) converted young people in Bible Classes and prayer meetings eg an Episcopalian layman cited 40 at a prayer meeting in the YMCA in December 1858. The awakening displayed itself with great power ... on Thursday, 21 July, and on the following evening, at another meeting addressed by three students of theology, sixty-four cases of prostration occurred and they became missionaries to repentance, faith and newness of life. [41]

W S Eccles wrote a letter concerning the Revival in which he viewed that the Spirit was poured out from on high and that a happy fruit was the co-operation between ministers and he writes of taking part in a prayer meeting in Newtownards attended by about 3000. Formerly Baptists would have been ignored. This same observation applied to Conlig. [42] He gladly reported on good attentive response from prostitutes with a dozen Magdalens at his evening service. Two renounced their former mode of life. Dr A R Scott cites: "During that year scores were converted in the little chapel and the congregation became so large that it was found necessary to erect a gallery." [43] To some degree Eccles was involved in the planting of Tandragee Baptist Church and the two young men involved were converted in the Revival. [44]

Our journey has been a long one from Connor . . . and there is so much more to tell. Let me end 'The Course' with Eccles: "I could write a volume of the triumphs of grace in these parts. What for twenty years I panted, and prayed, and laboured for seems now on the eve of realisation. Ireland shall soon, in the highest sense, be great, glorious and free . . ." [45]

Looking back to 1859, the Year of Grace, we need to ask, and to seek to answer, how it all came about. Even as the metaphor 'fire' is illustrative for the spread of the Revival, as we noted in 'the course', so too is a flowing river illustrative of 'the cause and causes'.

John T Carson write well on this theme:

> "In tracing a river back to its source one of the greatest surprises is to discover that the mighty waterway running to the sea has come from a beginning so small and insignificant as to suggest no connection between them. It is often so with revivals of religion. From beginnings so small as to be ignored of men and from sources so modest as to be apparently unimportant in the life of the time, have come some of the greatest and most influential of the awakenings of the Christian Church. Years back in time and often removed from the public gaze God lets His mercy drops fall and the floodtide of His grace is started on its way. It certainly was so with that movement known in Northern Ireland for so long and so affectionately as 'The Year of Grace' or even more popularly as just 'Fifty-Nine'." [46]

This suggests to me a strong and irresistible flowing river with feeding tributaries - the cause, the strong and irresistible flow and action of a sovereign God and the human causes feeding as tributaries into the movement. We are workers together with God. The cause and the causes are spiritually inter-related.

THE CAUSE and THE CAUSES

(a) The Cause . . . the Sovereignty of God

The 1859 Revival was not worked up by man but sent down by a Sovereign God. What Rev Duncan Campbell said of the Lewis Awakening of 1949 is true also of 1859, that "God took the field". When He did this it was a revelation of His sovereignty and majesty in which He revealed His sovereignty in mercy and love and His majesty in holiness and righteousness. God came near and people saw what they were, sinners, and what He is and they sought and found forgiveness and mercy. God's action was well described by Rev Sidlow McFarland: "It seemed that God Himself walked up and down the land touching men's hearts, revealing their sin, and drawing them to Himself." [47]
I see the sovereign action of God flowing as a mighty river, and into it tributaries.

(b) The Causes

All of the causes have been prompted by the guidance of a Sovereign God.

(i) Prayer

The visit, in 1856, of Mrs Colville ought to be noted. She was an English lady of means, "said to be a Baptist" [48], from Gateshead, who came to engage in house to house visitation. Her work did not appear to be very successful or fruitful. In one home in Ballymena where two ladies were discussing freewill and predestination with a young man, James McQuilkin, he asked her if she was a Calvinist or not. She replied that she was no more a Calvinist than the Bible required her to be and then went on to speak of the importance of a special interest in Christ and the need of the new birth. The seed fell into his heart and, not long afterwards, he entered into an experience of salvation through the preaching of Rev William G Campbell, a general missionary of the Methodists who was holding special services in the town of Antrim. To James McQuilkin and others, Rev J H Moore said, "Do something more for God", and encouraged them to gather careless neighbours on a Sabbath to read and search the Word of God. This challenge was taken up and the Tanneybrake Sabbath School was formed and, also, "two months subsequently, a prayer meeting which yielded some of the first fruits of the great awakening".[49] This prayer meeting was formed to prayerfully support the Sabbath School and met more centrally in an old schoolhouse near Kells - the original four being: James McQuilkin, Jeremiah McNelly and two who had been converted through McQuilkin, John Wallace and Robert Carlisle. This prayer meeting needs to be set within a network of prayer meetings throughout the country, eg First Ahoghill Presbyterian Church established prayer meetings 1845, 1855 and 1857,[50] indeed, as far back as 1833 there was a call for prayer meetings in congregations [51] and prayer meetings mushroomed during the Revival. The visit of Mrs Colville, Rev W G Campbell, the Kells prayer meeting have each claimed as being the Cause of the '59. However, Gibson's judgement is wiser:

> "We cannot fix the beginning of the Revival. The end of our vision is not the starting-point of God's working. That which is a germ in relation to one thing is a ripened fruit in reference to another. It is wisest for us to keep human agency in its own place, and to aim at reflecting all the glory on the Sovereign Lord." [52]

(ii) The Influence of America

Christians in Ulster learned that a Revival had started in America. Rev J H Moore, and others, must have learned it from the New York Observer and, I would judge, from letters from relatives in America. Moore told his

congregation in Connor and this increased the desire for Revival. Other factors might also be cited:

- The General Assembly sent Rev Professor William Gibson and Rev William McClure to visit the churches in America and they brought back the story of what was happening and wrote of it.
- Furthermore, William Witherow (Maghera) studied American revivals in preparation for dealing with the Revival if and when it came and Bishop Knox (Church of Ireland Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore) consulted with Bishop McIlvaine of Ohio regarding the American Revival and with his guidance lent his strong support in Ulster.
- One of the topics at the special session of the General Assembly in 1858 was *'Present religious awakenings in America'* and members dispersed to their churches with the prayerful hope for an 'abundant harvest'.

(iii) Evangelical Witness

Of Presbyterianism, Gibson wrote, "For many years a purifying and preparatory process had been going forward especially in that communion which has so largely shared the gracious influence. A return to the 'old paths' of orthodoxy was speedily followed by auspicious indications of returning life ... " [53] He is referring here to the triumph of orthodoxy in the Synod of Ulster in the 1820s when the heretical virus of Arianism, a danger in all our churches, was dealt with. To adopt Magill of Antrim, they refused to allow highway robbers to rob the Saviour of His Crown of Glory.[54] Among the measures to safeguard orthodoxy was the creation of a committee to examine applicants for the ministry. It was from such ministries that the Revival came. Rev William Richey (Coleraine) observed:

> "A great and blessed change ... had, for more than a quarter of a century before the Revival, been gradually taking place. There was far more earnestness in the use of the stated and ordinary means of grace. The pulpit had been gaining both in pathos and power. Appeals to the conscience were more frequent and pointed. There was a fuller exhibition of the Sovereignty of God, of the Person, offices and Grace of Christ, of the work of the Holy Ghost. The nature of religious revival was frequently insisted upon ... the religious training of the young had a large measure of attention ... There had been much earnest prayer for an outpouring of the Spirit prior to the Revival." [55]

Examples of Richey's point re revival being insisted upon is exemplified in J H Moore (Connor), who told his congregation not only of the American Revival but also read extracts about revivals in the past on some Sabbath evenings, and David Adams (Ahoghill) who preached on revival.

Tract distribution was an outreach witness in at least the Connor, Coleraine and Lurgan areas . . . the tracts were really booklets on such subjects as Justification by Faith. They were left one month and then collected (in true Ballymena fashion!) a month later, but after they had discussed the contents. The publication of periodicals eg in 1853 the Irish Presbyterian contained an influential article entitled *Do we need a revival?* But one could go back at least 30 years and quote other such articles and, from a Church of Ireland aspect, cite the letters of Earl of Roden re Reformation in Ireland.[56] Another witness was open air preaching - always engaged in by the Methodists but also Presbyterians under the encouragement of Rev Dr John Johnston (Tullylish, Banbridge). In 1858, Presbyterian ministers conducted 357 open air services with upwards of 50,000 hearing the gospel.[57] Personal witness to Christ ought to be remembered when one loving heart set another on fire . . . not forgetting Samuel Campbell's witness to his mother, sister and brother in Ahoghill. We must also note the means of grace of which it was said that the Holy Spirit used the ordinary means of grace in an extraordinary way. It was not so much great preachers or great preaching although there must have been both - it was preaching the great truths of the gospel with the free offer of salvation. Included in the teaching and preaching was the Shorter Catechism which was preparatory to an understanding of gospel truth.

(iv) United action

Christian evangelical unity was evident eg Mrs Colville steered clear of a discussion on Calvinism and directed James McQuilkin towards personal salvation and the prayer meeting in Kells avoided questions that might lead to controversy, but Christ and the cross was their absorbing topic. This unity was evident at the united prayer meetings when ministers and laymen of different denominations took part. Rev W S Eccles (Pastor at Banbridge) participated, with appreciation, in a prayer meeting in Newtownards.

The same pertains at the great open air meetings . . . Rev R M Henry (Academy Street Baptist Church) was among the speakers at a titanic open air meeting near the railway station in Armagh, attended by some 20,000. Many travelled by train, some even on the carriage roofs - they had to lie down when passing under bridges.

There was unity in essentials and charity in non-essentials. Later, differences arose re Baptism, Church Order, Ministry - Ministers and Lay.

Professor William Gibson, addressing a conference of the Evangelical Alliance, speaking of unity on the basis of broad evangelism, said, "It comes into the midst of us to strike a chord in unison with all those spiritual sympathies which have been awakened by the effusion of that marvellous grace so signally displayed in all our borders, and by which, to an extent unknown before, our hearts have been enlarged towards one another." [58]

Concerning the '59, all the causes, inspired by God, flow as tributaries into the cause . . . the Sovereign God. The '59 was all of grace and all of God.

THE CONSEQUENCES

Amongst the consequences we would note the following:

(i) Conversions

The Hon and Rev Baptist Noel, a clergyman of the establishment who had seceded and joined the Baptists [59] and participated in the Revival in Ulster, judged that there were at least 100,000 conversions to Christ.[60] I think, as I have argued elsewhere, that this figure can be justified.[61] However, we readily agree with the comment that the results are known only to God.

(ii) Christian Work

Service for Christ developed. What the Rt Hon Thomas Sinclair judged of Presbyterianism in 1909 would also have held true of most evangelical denominations as fruits of the Revival: "... a great increase of the sense of responsibility on the part of Church members in respect of active Christian work; an overflowing stream of candidates for the ministry, the high level of which lasted for many years; the creation of a new spirit of Christian liberality; a forward movement in philanthropic and missionary enterprise ..." [62] The growth of laity was one permanent result of the '59. [63]

(iii) Social Results

Many publicans were converted in the Revival and they voluntarily gave up their licences [64] ... the Temperance Movement received a boost. Take Connor parish as an example: of nine public houses, two were closed on the conversion of their owners and a third for want of business whilst the

quantity of drink now sold by the six that remained open was less than was formerly sold by one. [65] It was my research supervisor who pointed out to me that, in his judgement, the alcohol trade passed out of Protestant hands into Roman Catholic hands at the time of the Revival. Temperance for some led to total abstinence, the position adopted in the Baptist Church in 1904.[66] Other social results followed - crime decreased [67], the Twelfth of July Orange Celebrations were peaceful [68] and moral standards were improved.[69]

(iv) Spiritual Results

An immediate evidence of spiritual results was the need for new or additional church buildings among all evangelical denominations. Dr A R Scott writes: "In all it would appear that some thirty-five new congregations were erected and new churches built, while twenty-eight others built galleries or in some way extended or completely rebuilt their places of worship: a grand total of sixty-three new churches or enlargements, not to mention Brethren halls." [70] Of particular interest to Baptists, he cites Tandragee and Ballymena (new churches) and Banbridge and Great Victoria Street (under rebuilds and galleries). Two Reformed Presbyterian ministers, R M Henry and J G McVicar, became Baptists, the former became pastor of Academy Street, Belfast and the latter established Ballymena Baptist Church, "after holding meetings in the spacious granary of Mr James Taylor in Broughshane Street". [71] The congregation grew to between 120 and 130 members [72] in 1861, but in 1863, McVicar, and Henry also, threw in their lot with the Brethren movement. McVicar formed a religious society which is generally understood to have become the first Brethren Assembly in Ballymena. The secession left Hill Street Church with eleven members. Rev David McMeekin (High Kirk), referring to McVicar in 1908, interestingly wrote: " ... he never lost his position among them as that of a man of high Christian character . . . He might have been still greater and more influential if he had made fewer ecclesiastical changes during his lifetime." [73] From this point the congregation grew steadily, with one exception, until, in 2008, its strength was 350. [74]

Generally, the judgement of Rev William Craig (First Dromara) concerning results might be cited as descriptive of what happened:

1 Formalism has been succeeded by earnestness and devoutness.

2 Family worship is general.

3 True piety exemplified in attendance at church, at the Lord's Supper and prayer meetings.

4 Fruits of the Spirit evident in all classes.

5 Innumerable copies of God's Word were sold and many Bible Classes held.

6 Elders, teachers and converts held prayer meetings over a wide area. Collections for missions greatly increased. [75]

A darker picture of the revival is painted by the Pastor of Tobermore, R H Carson. Scott, in his doctoral thesis, describes it thus:

> "A criticism which demands attention is that of the Rev R H Carson, of Tobermore Baptist Church, in 1869, when he wrote to the Baptist Home Mission in London. 'The past year has been with us here one of great spiritual drought ... there may have been hindrances to success now that did not formerly exist. Indeed, I cannot think that the comparatively small results of the past few years may be traced, at least for the most part, to what we all regarded at the time as a great spiritual movement, the Revival of 1859. As it now appears and so far as we are concerned, that movement was anything but a blessing. Out of some 80 to 90 individuals at that time, scarcely one remains to us at this moment. And what is worse than their mere exclusion or withdrawal, their evil conduct, or their spiritual apathy while among us, did not fail to leave its mark behind.. I have often wished they could have all been taken away in one day. They have been our Achan in the camp, and till we see the last of them, or nearly so, I scarcely venture to hope for success. As regards attendance at Public Worship, I am thankful to say that it never was better, never, indeed, perhaps so good. In this respect I have everything to encourage me ... ' Support for these remarks is found in the trend of Baptist Church membership in Tobermore, which, in 1858, numbered 176; in 1860, 269; in 1865, 233; and in1869, 213. Despite this gloomy appraisal, the *Baptist Irish Society Chronicle* for 1869 contains the following reference: 'Tobermore is a name well known as the field of the late learned and beloved Dr Carson's labours. Here the church, under the fostering care of Mr Carson, is doing a good work for God's glory and the salvation of souls.' A fairer conclusion than Mr Carson's individual assessment would be the State of Religion report of the Synod of Ballymena and Coleraine for 1869. 'The Synod report that they received reports on the State of Religion from all Presbyteries under their care ... the attendance upon the Sanctuary is fully sustained, Sabbath School instruction ...

> receiving increasing attention ... number of prayer meetings and the attendance upon them has not changed materially since our last report ... The Sabbath is observed by our people with a large measure of respect, notwithstanding that the present times furnish special temptations to Sabbath desecration ... More than one Presbytery refers to the fruit of the Revival in 1859, and while they lament that there have been instances in which some who had begun to run well were soon hindered, at the same time they bear testimony to the consistent walk of others, and the strong faith in Christ by which some have been sustained on a bed of death ...' " [76]

COMMENT

1 An assessment of R H Carson's personality would be helpful. One would like to know when one reads the account of Tobermore, as cited, as to whether he was pessimistic in outlook. Or again, was he a controversialist, as was his father, Dr Alexander Carson - a controversial theologian? [77]

2 Carson's pessimistic judgement was not generally shared by Presbyterians, as seen not only from the Synod's Report quoted above, but also from the judgement of the author of *The Year of Grace*. Professor W D Killen, writing of William Gibson's work, records: "Dr Gibson contemplated a collection of facts establishing its permanent as well as its benign influences; but his sudden removal (in 1867) to a better world prevented the preparation of his intended vindication." [78]

3 The absence of Carson, because of illness, in the early days of the Revival, as Rev David Kingdon points out, "may help to explain why so many cases requiring discipline later occurred." [79] Some twenty years earlier, a similar situation pertained and the deacons reported to the Baptist Irish Society that "discipline has been greatly neglected and much corruption has found entrance among us." [80] Carson was aware that in a revival, some gathered "are sometimes found after all not to belong to Christ." [81] One is, therefore, led to ask that, in receiving people into the Church, were they all converted? Was there a clear distinction between those awakened in the Revival and those converted? Rev (later Professor) Thomas Witherow (Maghera), (quoted with approval by R A Beggs, re Dr Alexander Carson) [82], wrote: "Methodists and Baptists tried to turn it to denominational purposes but did not succeed to any great extent." [83] The Presbyterian minister of First Ahoghill knew of 700 awakened but there were only 202 new communicants in 1859. [84]

4 The 'falling away' or 'from grace' that required discipline in 1849 and 1869 was not to the same degree required in 1875 . . . but then there was a more tolerant attitude towards more trivial offences of members. In 1861 people were disciplined for swearing profanely and lying, walking in an Orange procession, stealing of apples, intoxication with strong drink and frequenting public houses. [85] It is in a series of lectures on Holiness that the theological note is sounded by Professor David Bebbington, that some viewed that "a person might possess a saving faith and yet subsequently lose it". [86] Did the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism play a part in Carson's judgement in Tobermore?

5 The nurture of converts is always important and Carson recognised this but he is very critical of Presbyterian ministers who sought to nurture Presbyterian converts in Presbyterian churches and, of course, baptism was an issue. [87] Instruction classes were formed for converts. His criticism of paedo-baptist ministers and "a foreign Baptist merely passing through the country" is totally different from W S Eccles and C H Spurgeon quoted earlier. The question of the nurture of converts had to be addressed and, in so doing, we remember that there are tares as well as wheat.

6 Rev David Kingdon asks as to whether the reaction that occurred in Tobermore after the Revival was duplicated elsewhere. One would be unwise to argue that there was no example anywhere else because research into the Revival is continuing. He suggests that Professor John M Barkley's contention that catechising had gradually declined which "may suggest that in the religious excitement of the Revival people lost their desire for solid doctrinal Christianity." [88] (Barkley's positive position re the fruits of the Revival is seen by his quotation from J E Davey. [89]) Regarding catechising, Scott in his thesis has convincingly established that the decline in catechising began prior to the Revival. [90]

The attention I have given to Tobermore is because I have seen it used to question the permanence of the results of the Revival, [91] but one cannot move from a particular situation to a general one and also dismiss what God did in 1859. We cannot have Tobermore with this 'gloomy appraisal', to quote Presbyterian historians A R Scott and R F G Holmes, and also note that there was a fruitful ingathering into the Church in 1875 ... the Moody period generally accepted as the second phase of the 1859 Revival [92] and then in the overflow of the Welsh Revival of 1904 onwards to Ulster (and Tobermore was one of the places) [93] ... and there was a United Mission (Baptist, Church of Ireland and Presbyterian) in 1908. Pastor L E Deens told the lecturer of the visit of the converts from Wales taking services in Dublin during the Revival and singing both on the quayside and on the ship on the journey home.

Initially Baptist churches fared reasonably well for, whilst in 1903 there were 2773 members in 38 churches as cited above, in the 1861 census there were 4165 and in the 1871 census, 4643. This latter increase of 478 is remarkable but so too is the decrease of 1870 between 1871 and 1903. Why this decrease? Death, emigration, return to former denominations, especially the Brethren ... "Irish Baptists suffered losses to Brethrenism." [94]

Secondly, in the years 1866 to 1872, twenty-five pastors and evangelists manned 110 outstations [95] and this was because of the remarkable interest in the gospel among ordinary people. This is also seen in the Presbyterian minister of Second Donegore who preached on Sunday evenings and during the week in fourteen centres. [96]

There are some lessons that evangelicals might learn . . . all of them in the context that our Sovereign God sends revival through the Holy Spirit to exalt our Lord Jesus Christ.

(i) The primacy of Prayer ... but a praying that is also active in work for the Kingdom.

(ii) The Preaching and Teaching of the great doctrines of the faith.

(iii) The Proclamation of the Apostolic Gospel exalting the finished work of Christ on the cross and freely offering salvation to lost sinners.

(iv) A Practical Unity in essentials amongst evangelicals and brotherly respect in non-essentials.

(v) A Patient Waiting for God to revive His church. Therefore "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap."

Of the story of the Day of Pentecost, Dr James Reid said:

"It is impossible to read the narrative and not to wish
that God would do it again."

and it is equally impossible to read or reflect on the 1859 Revival and not to wish and pray that God would do it again.

* * *

NOTES

1 Gibson W : The Year of Grace. A History of the Ulster Revival of 1859 (1860) (Gibson was Professor of Christian Ethics in the Presbyterian College, Belfast)

2 Op cit, p 403

3 Orr J E : The Second Evangelical Awakening (1949) This book was the fruit of his DPhil thesis for the University of Oxford.

cf also, The Event of the Century (1989) which Dr Orr completed shortly before his death. This deals mainly with the 1857-8 Awakening in America.

4 Thompson, Joshua : Century of Grace. The Baptist Union of Ireland: A Short History 1895 - 1995, p 12 (cf Scott A R : The Ulster Revival of 1859, p 188 where Baptists are quoted as 4165)

cf p 3 "... from the beginnings in mid-seventeenth century, the Irish Baptist churches favoured combined efforts ... The outward expression of their interdependence was the Irish Baptist Association. It functioned throughout the eighteenth century, lapsing around 1821, being revived again in 1862 and continuing until 1895 when its name was changed to the Baptist Union of Ireland." In 1999, the Baptist Union became the Association of Baptist Churches.

5 Gibson W : op cit, pp 2ff [cf Bailie W D : The Six Mile Water Revival of 1625 (1976 Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland (*hereafter PHSI*))]

6 Ibid, p 2

7 Thompson, Joseph : First Ahoghill Congregation from 1654, pp 25-32 for brief outline of the 1625 Revival

8 Reid J S : History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (1867) Vol 1, p 128

9 Blair R : The Life of Mr Robert Blair containing his Autobiography from 1593 to 1636 (1848), p 83

10 Reid J S : op cit, pp 389-390

11 Thompson, Joseph : The Evangelical Society of Ulster BPHSI (Bulletin of PHSI) No17 (1988)

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13 Darragh P M : Epidemiological Observations on Episodes of Communicable Psychogenic Illness PhD (QUB) 2 Vols, pp 495-502

14 Carson J T : God's River in Spate, p 7

15 Moore S J : The Great Revival in Ireland 1859, p 8

16 Dill S M : The Revival at Ballymena in 1859, p 1

17 Canning J A : 2nd Presbyterian Church, Coleraine

18 Carson J T : op cit, p 18

19 For Six Mile Water Revival : Bailie W D : op cit cited above. cf Bibliography
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For 1859 : Darragh P M : op cit above (PhD, QUB)
Patton W D : James McCush: The Making of a Reputation (PhD, QUB 1993)
William Richey : Connor and Coleraine
Mooney, Daniel : Revivals (Sermon preached in Parish Church of Ballymena (1859)
plus standard histories

20 Ballymena Observer, quoted Thompson, Joseph : First Ahoghill Congregation from 1654, pp 147-148

21 Weir J : The Ulster Awakening, p 20 cf J E Orr : op cit, p 38

22 Henry J : A Door that Opened - Rev John Galway McVicker and the Founding of Ballymena Baptist Church, pp 14ff

23 Weir J : op cit, p 19

24 Rodgers R : Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal, Vol 1 1968-69, pp 38ff (thereafter IBHSJ)

25 McMeekin D : Memories of '59 or The Revival Movement (1908), pp 31-33

26 Rodgers R : op cit, pp 38-39 His footnote No 15 locates Boville's autobiography as being in the hands of the Boville family, Grange, Co Antrim.

27 Brownlow North was Episcopalian but when living in Scotland he worshipped with the Church of Scotland. Their General Assembly appointed him as an evangelist.

28 Simpson J : Annals of my Life, pp 677-678 (appendix: Narrative of Revivals of Religion pp 658ff) cf Authentic records of Revival edit William Reid, article by Simpson re Portrush pp 81-112)

29 Carson J T : op cit, p 36 Gibson W : op cit, pp 68-70 for account of Revival in Irish Society School

30 Carson J T : op cit, pp 40-41 List of ministers etc p 41

31 Flanagan J J : Coleraine Baptist Church 1795 - 2002, pp 10-11

32 Guiness H G : Ministers and Medical Men in Ireland, pp 177ff for full text of Carson's letter. For identification as a Baptist see Emerson N D : The Church of Ireland and the 1859 Revival, p 13

33 Gibson W : op cit pp 228-235

34 Ibid, p 233

35 Ibid, p 277 Here he cites Rev J D Martin's brief statement as " a specimen of the work in the rural districts of the same county".

36 Kingdon D P : Irish Baptists and the Revival of 1859 with special reference to Tobermore, p 27 IBHSJ Vol 1 1968-69 pp 19-30 cf Scott A R : op cit, pp 202-203

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Calvin and the Holy Spirit

Stafford Carson

I grew up in a Pentecostal church in the days before the Charismatic Movement really took off and a common mantra heard in those circles at that time was that the Holy Spirit was the forgotten Member of the Trinity. The understanding was that most churches talked about God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son, but that in the majority of churches there was little reference to the Holy Spirit. Apparently the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit was overlooked by mainstream Christianity in general and by evangelicalism in particular and Pentecostal churches, by giving a more central role to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in their preaching and worship, were trying to redress the imbalance. It was from its beginnings in the Azusa Street Revival in the early years of the 20th century that there was a new interest in the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Welsh evangelist, George Jeffreys, came to Ireland in 1915 and, as a result of his ministry, Elim Pentecostal Churches were planted, firstly in Monaghan, and then in a number of towns and villages across the North of Ireland.

The good people who attended these meetings were aware of a reality and an enthusiasm that they had not seen elsewhere ... and they rejoiced in a new sense of God's presence in their worship. Then, in the 1960s, people in the mainline denominations developed an interest in the gifts and ministry of the Holy Spirit, many of them claiming to have a new experience of the Holy Spirit and to have known the Spirit's work in their lives in new and wonderful ways. I remember as a teenager attending meetings here in Belfast where Presbyterians and Anglicans were worshipping together with their Pentecostal brothers and sisters and where the so-called revelatory gifts of the Spirit were in evidence. Things have moved on at a fast pace since then. Today, charismatic churches and fellowships dominate the ecclesiastical landscape, and the growth of the church in Africa and Asia and South America is characterized by all the features we associate with charismatic

churches. In his important book on world Christianity Philip Jenkins points out how Christianity will continue to expand in the global south, but the question that remains unanswered is whether it will be Catholic Christianity or Charismatic Christianity. We need to recognise that we now live in a world where many Christians rejoice in the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

When I came to an understanding of reformed theology and began reading some of the older reformed writers, I discovered that the original claim about the Holy Spirit being the forgotten member of the Trinity in non-Pentecostal and reformed churches was largely untrue. It may have been true that traditional reformed worship lacked the energy and the vitality (and the excesses!) of Pentecostal or charismatic worship, but a careful look at the theology of the Reformation revealed a very clear and profound appreciation for the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. That understanding of the person and work of the Spirit is seen very clearly in the thinking and theology of John Calvin . . . and I would go further and say that even now the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that is believed and taught in reformed churches is richer and deeper than that which is found among those who profess to emphasise the importance of the Spirit's work and ministry.

In fact, those who think that the Holy Spirit has only been discovered in the 20th century are guilty, at best, of historical short-sightedness and, at worst, of the heresy of modernity. They have forgotten that it was with good reason that John Calvin was described as 'the theologian of the Holy Spirit'. While his work has been recognised, the Spirit Himself remains to many Christians an anonymous, faceless aspect of the Divine Being. Perhaps it would be better to say that the Holy Spirit is the 'unknown' rather than the 'forgotten' person of the Trinity and that is why a return to the theology of John Calvin can be so helpful and necessary for the church today.

While John Calvin may be best known for his doctrine of predestination and election (although Augustine and Luther wrote more than he did about that subject) he was even more committed to the theology of the Holy Spirit.

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), who was an outstanding churchman and politician in the Netherlands, becoming its prime minister, credited Calvin with being one of the greatest commentators on the Holy Spirit.

"The doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit is a gift from John Calvin to the Church of Christ," Kuyper said in 'The Work of the Holy Spirit'. "He did not, of course, invent it. The whole of it lay spread out on the pages of Scripture with a clearness and fulness of utterance which one would think would secure that even he who ran should read it; and doubtless he who ran did read it, and it has fed the soul of the true believer in all ages."

Kuyper added, "Luther rose to proclaim justification by faith, and Calvin to set forth with his marvellous balance the whole doctrine of the work of the Spirit in applying salvation to the soul."

I believe that the theology of John Calvin has a contemporary relevance for Christians and for the church today and I want to point out a number of areas where we need to listen to Calvin again, and how that by listening to what he said and wrote, some of our current confusion and ignorance with regard to the Holy Spirit can be clarified and we can come to an enriched understanding of our faith.

I want to look at the following areas: Calvin's understanding of the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in salvation, in the doctrine of assurance, in our understanding of Scripture, and finally with regard to the sacraments.

1 The work of the Spirit in salvation

The title given to Book 3 of Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion is this: *The Way in Which we Receive the Grace of Christ: What Benefits Come to Us From it, and What Effects Follow.* In the latter half of Book 2 of the Institutes, Calvin has dealt with the finished work of Christ, the once-for-all accomplishment of salvation. Then in Book 3 he understands himself to be concerned with the application or the personal appropriation of salvation. It's about 'the grace of Christ', its 'benefits' and 'consequent effects' and the way, or the mode, or the manner, in which believers receive this grace, the manner in which this salvation is appropriated.

With that concern, restated in the opening words of Book 3, the very next sentence reads like this: "First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value to us."

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of that sentence for Calvin's doctrine of salvation as a whole. Positioned as it is at the opening of Book 3, it expresses what is most fundamental for him, the consideration that underlies all other considerations within the application of redemption. This most deeply decisive consideration, put negatively here, is that Christ not remain 'outside us', that we are not to be 'separated from him' . . . or if we are to express it positively, as Calvin presently does, that "we grow into one body with him".

It is interesting and noteworthy that as his point of departure for all that he will say in Book 3, he begins by bringing into view and highlighting the union

that exists between Christ and believers. So central and pivotal is this union for the application of redemption that, again expressing it negatively, he can even say that without it the saving work of Christ "remains useless and of no value".

This union, he immediately goes on to make clear, is 'obtained by faith', as it does not exist apart from, or prior to, faith, but is given with faith and is inseparable from faith. This mention of faith, and the key role accorded to it, prompts Calvin, still within this opening section, to touch on what would become a central question in subsequent discussions about the *ordo salutis*, or the order of salvation. That question was about the origin of faith and eventually gave rise in Reformed theology to the doctrine of regeneration in the narrower sense. We observe, says Calvin, "that not all indiscriminately embrace that communion with Christ which is offered through the gospel".

Why is that? Why is it that some people respond in faith to the gospel and others do not? It is not because of some differentiating factor on our side. The answer is not to be found by looking into ourselves or contemplating the mystery of human freedom and human willing. Rather, consistent with his uniform teaching elsewhere about the total inability of the human will because of sin, we must, says Calvin, 'climb higher' and consider 'the secret energy of the Spirit'. When he writes like that, talking about the secret energy of the Spirit, he almost sounds charismatic! For Calvin, faith is Spirit-worked, sovereignly and efficaciously . . . it is dependent on the energy and dynamic work of the Holy Spirit.

Union with Christ, then, is forged by the Spirit's working faith in us, a faith that puts on Christ, as he quotes Galatians 3:27: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." It is a faith that embraces Christ as He is offered in the gospel. Faith is the bond of that union seen from our side. "To sum up", he says, "the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself." Subsequently, Calvin will categorise this union as both "spiritual" and "mystical".

So this, at its core, is Calvin's *ordo salutis*, union with Christ by Spirit-worked faith, and from that overall vantage point at the beginning of Book 3, we come to understand that justification is by faith alone because union with Christ is by faith alone, and it is that union which brings with it justification.

This union is one of the gospel's greatest mysteries. One commentator points out that there at least seven instances in the Institutes where Calvin uses the Latin word *arcanus* or *incomprehensibilis* to refer to union with Christ. This doctrine of union with Christ shapes Calvin's understanding of

regeneration, faith, justification, sanctification, assurance, election and the church. He could scarcely speak of any doctrine apart from union and communion with Christ.

Union and communion with Christ is realized only through Spirit-worked faith. It is actual union and communion, not because believers participate in the essence of Christ's nature, but because the Spirit unites believers so intimately to Christ that they become flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone. Indeed, the spiritual union with Christ that the Holy Spirit forges within us is even closer than physical union. Calvin puts it this way:

> "Let us know the unity that we have with the Lord Jesus Christ; to wit, that he wills to have a common life with us, and that what he has should be ours; nay, that he even wishes to dwell in us, not in imagination, but in effect; not in earthly fashion, but spiritually; and that whatever may befall, he so labours by the virtue of his Holy Spirit that we are united with him more closely than are the limbs with the body."

The culmination of this complete and entire union with Christ in both body and soul will be fully realized in our resurrection from the dead on the judgment day.

Thus Christ and the Holy Spirit work together for our salvation . . . though distinct, they are inseparable.

Calvin moves easily from saying "The Spirit dwelling in us" to "Christ dwelling in us". (3.2.39) Jesus Christ is the unique bearer and bestower of the Spirit. Every action of the Spirit is, in essence, the action of Christ. The Spirit bestows nothing on us of a saving nature but through the Spirit. That is clear from his title of chapter 1 of Book 3: *"The Things Spoken concerning Christ Profit Us by the Secret Working of the Spirit."* Christ works salvation through the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit works salvation for Christ in sinners' hearts. Calvin quotes 1 Peter 1:2. We "have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood."

Calvin says, "By these words He explains that, in order that the shedding of His sacred blood may not be nullified, our souls are cleansed by the secret watering of the Spirit." (3.1.1) The Holy Spirit is thus the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to Himself.

Calvin says that the Holy Spirit is the root and the seed of heavenly life within us. That is why, he says, when the prophets and apostles look forward to the

advancement of Christ's kingdom and the fact that God will make disciples of those who were previously destitute and empty of heavenly doctrine, they describe it in terms of a richer outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The events of Pentecost, when the gospel breaks out from the small group of disciples gathered in the Upper Room and people from every nation hear the praises of God in their own language, happen as a direct result of the fulfilment of Joel's prophesy where God promises "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." It is the Spirit who separates us from the world and gathers us unto the hope of the eternal inheritance.

That is why, in discussing the whole question of salvation, Calvin says it is useful to note what titles are applied to the Holy Spirit in Scripture. These titles help us to understand the importance of the role of the Spirit in our salvation.

The Spirit is called the Spirit of adoption because He is the witness to us of the way God the Father has embraced us in his Son, Jesus Christ, in order to become a father to us. So when we come to God in prayer, we come without fear because it is the Spirit who supplies us with the very words that we may use. We may cry "Abba, Father" because of the work and ministry of the Spirit.

The Spirit is also called the seal and guarantee of our inheritance. In our pilgrimage through this world, the Spirit assures us that our salvation is safe in God's unfailing care and Calvin is eager to refer to the Spirit by the Bible's own words . . . the Spirit is water and the spring . . . the Spirit is oil and fire. By his secret watering, the Spirit makes us fruitful, enabling us to bring forth the fruits of righteousness in our lives. The image of water is also appropriate because of His power to cleanse and purify us. As fire, the Spirit enflames our hearts with the love of God and with zealous devotion for Christ.

> "For by the inspiration of his power he so breathes divine life into us that we are no longer actuated by ourselves, but are ruled by his action and prompting. Accordingly, whatever good things are in us are the fruits of his grace; and without him our gifts are darkness of mind and perversity of heart." (3.1.3)

So with regard to the application of redemption, the Spirit has an enormous role, according to Calvin. As personal comforter, seal, and earnest, the Holy Spirit assures the believer of his adoption. Commenting on Romans 8:16, Calvin says,

> "The Spirit of God gives us such a testimony, that when he is our guide and teacher our spirit is made sure of the adoption of

God; for our mind of itself, without the preceding testimony of the Spirit, could not convey to us this assurance."

So Calvin reasons along these lines:

(i) The purpose of election embraces salvation.

(ii) The elect are not chosen for anything in themselves, but only in Christ.

(iii) Since the elect are in Christ, the assurance of their election and salvation can never be found in themselves, or even in the Father apart from Christ.

(iv) Rather, their assurance is to be found in Christ. So it follows that communion with him is vital.

2 The Spirit's role with regard to assurance

When it comes to the doctrine of assurance of salvation and how believers may know that they are truly united to Christ, Calvin's answer again centres on the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who applies Christ and his benefits to the hearts and lives of guilty, elect sinners, assuring them that Christ belongs to them and they to Him. The Holy Spirit especially confirms within them the reliability of God's promises in Christ. So personal assurance is never divorced from the election of God the Father, the redemption of the Son, the application of the Spirit, and the instrumental means of saving faith.

The Holy Spirit's work underlies all assurance of salvation, without detracting from the role of Christ for, as the Spirit of Christ, he assures the believer by leading him to Christ and His benefits and by bringing those benefits to fruition in the believer (3.2.34)

The unity of Christ and the Spirit has sweeping implications for the doctrine of assurance. Some recent scholars have minimised Calvin's emphasis on the necessity of the Spirit's work in assuring a believer of God's promises. The ground of assurance supposedly is God's promises, in Christ and/or in the Word of God, whereas the cause of assurance is the Spirit who works in the heart. Others, however, have argued that this distinction is too simplistic, since the Spirit always works as the Spirit of Christ. Hence the objective and subjective elements in assurance cannot be so readily separated. Objective salvation in Christ is bound to subjective sealing by the Spirit . . . so it is Christ, in and through His Spirit, who is the ground of our faith.

For Calvin, a believer's objective reliance upon God's promises as the primary ground for assurance must be subjectively sealed by the Holy Spirit for true assurance. The unbeliever or reprobate may claim God's promises without experiencing the feeling or consciousness of those promises. The Spirit often works in the reprobate, but in an inferior manner. They may be momentarily illumined so that they seem to have a beginning of faith; nevertheless, Calvin says that they "never receive anything but a confused awareness of grace" (3.2.11).

On the other hand, the elect are regenerated with incorruptible seed. (3.2.41) They receive subjective benefits that the reprobate will never taste. They alone receive the promises of God as truth in the inward parts. They alone receive the testimony that can be called 'the enlightening of the Spirit'. They alone receive experiential, intuitive knowledge of God as He offers Himself to them in Christ. (1.4.1; 2.6.4,19) Calvin says that the elect alone come to be "ravished and wholly kindled to love God; [they] are borne up to heaven itself [and] admitted to the most hidden treasures of God". (3.2.41)

> "The Spirit, strictly speaking, seals forgiveness of sins in the elect alone, so that they apply it by special faith to their own use." (3.2.11)

The elect alone come to know special faith and a special inward testimony.

When distinguishing the elect from the reprobate, Calvin speaks more about what the Spirit does in us than what Christ does for us. That is because it is here that the line of demarcation is sharper. He speaks much of inward experience, of feeling, of enlightenment, of perception, and even of 'violent emotion'. This may sound surprising to some of us within the reformed family. Calvin may even sound a bit too charismatic or Pentecostal for our liking but I think we need to recognise the intensely experiential nature of Calvin's doctrine of faith and assurance. He is aware of the dangers of excessive introspection, but he also recognises that the promises of God are only efficient when they are brought by the Spirit within the scope, experience and obedience of faith. (3.1.1)

If we were to summarise Calvin's position on the believer's assurance of faith then it is a case of all three members of the Trinity being involved. The election of the Father, the work of Christ and the application of the Holy Spirit are all complementary. Christ is an overwhelming, foundational and primary source of assurance for the believer precisely because of the Spirit's application of Christ and His benefits to him as one elected by the Father. No one can ever be assured of Christ without the Spirit. (3.2.35) The Holy

Spirit reveals to the believer through His Word that God is a well-disposed Father, and enables him to embrace Christ's promises by faith and with assurance.

3 The role of the Holy Spirit in our understanding of Scripture

Another area which continues to be relevant in the contemporary church is the relationship between Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Calvin's understanding of the Holy Spirit was far different from how many Christians use that phrase today. He believed in an inextricable connection between Scripture and the Spirit ie that the Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, did not contradict or embellish the Bible. Nonetheless, he insisted, Scripture could be understood only by a Christian whose mind and heart had been subdued by the Spirit in accordance with Scripture. Calvin deals with those whom he calls fanatics who separate the Spirit of God from the Word of God and elevate the former in their experience over the latter. He writes in Book 1 of the Institutes:

> "I would like to know from them what this spirit is by whose inspiration they are borne up so high that they dare despise the Scriptural doctrine as childish and mean ... by a heinous sacrilege these rascals tear apart those things which the prophet [Isaiah 59:21] joined together." (1.9.1)

He goes on:

> "We ought zealously to apply ourselves both to read and to hearken to the Scripture if indeed we want to receive any gain and benefit from the Spirit of God." (1.9.2)
>
> "The Holy Spirit so inheres in His truth, which He expresses in Scripture, that only when its proper reverence and dignity are given to the Word does the Holy Spirit show forth his power ... By a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit so that the perfect religion of the Word may abide in our minds when the Spirit, who causes us to contemplate God's grace, shines." (1.9.3)

So Calvin argues in this section that the Spirit without the Word is a delusion, and the Word without the Spirit is dead . . . so Word and Spirit ever belong together and must never be separated.
The Holy Spirit speaking in Holy Scripture is the believer's final and ultimate authority in all matters of belief and behaviour but the inner witness of the

Holy Spirit, working by and with the Word in his heart, Calvin argued, confirms to the believer that the Bible is God's Word. That is to say, the Christian's confidence in Holy Scripture as the Word of God is produced by the Holy Spirit who graciously bears witness in the believer's heart at regeneration to the truthfulness of God's Word being proclaimed to him. Calvin writes that the "credibility of doctrine is not established until we are persuaded beyond doubt that God is its Author. Thus the highest proof of Scripture derives in general form from the fact that God in person speaks in it."

He continues:

> "If we desire to provide in the best way for our consciences – that they may not be perpetually beset by the instability of doubt or vacillation, and that they may not also boggle at the smaller quibbles – we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reason, judgments, or conjectures, that is, in the secret testimony of the Spirit." (1.7.4)

Calvin said it was pointless (the word he used was 'backward') to attempt to prove Scripture's authority "through disputation". He forsook what he called "dexterity or eloquence" even though he believed that the "clamourous voices" of sceptics could be easily silenced. His reasoning was that even with superior debating ability, until God "imprinted on their heart that certainty that piety requires", unbelievers would "stand by opinion alone". Calvin argued that . . .

> "... the testimony of the Spirit is more excellent than all reason. For as God alone is a fit witness of himself in his Word, so also the Word will not find acceptance in men's hearts before it is sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit therefore who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded." (1.7.4)

Calvin believed that it was not . . .

> "... right to subject [Scripture] to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit. Therefore illumined by his power, we believe neither by our own or by anyone else's judgment that Scripture is from God; but above human judgment we affirm with utter

> certainty (just as if we were gazing upon the majesty of God himself) that it has flowed to us from the very mouth of God by the ministry of men." (1.7.5)

In short, Calvin's view relates the Spirit's testimonial work directly to the authority of the Word of God and not to its proofs. Robert Reymond argues that this is different from B B Warfield's understanding of Calvin. He says that Warfield understood Book 1, Chapter 8 of the Institutes as setting forth a list of evidentiary proofs by which the witnessing Spirit leads us to conclude that the Bible is divine. So he takes up these proofs into a 'probability argument' and makes them become the direct ground of our faith in Scripture. So Warfield relates the Spirit's testimony directly to these characteristics of Scripture as proofs and not to the divine authorship of Scripture.

The data that Calvin presents in 1.8 to establish the credibility of the Bible is almost entirely drawn from the Scripture itself. He writes about 'the very heavenly majesty', the 'beautiful agreement of all the parts", the "incontestable miracles', and the 'confirmed prophecy of the Old Testament'. He also mentions evidences not drawn directly from Scripture, such as the indestructibility of Scripture throughout the ages, its wide acceptance by the nations, and martyrs willing to die for it. But these are by no means the primary thrust of the chapter. It is the Holy Spirit who illumines the human mind and brings conviction to it, directly by means of the Word of God, with the proofs being 'secondary aids to our feebleness'.

Here is how he puts it in 1.8.13:

> "There are other reasons [than the ones mentioned in 1.8] neither few nor weak, for which the dignity and majesty of Scripture are not only affirmed in godly hearts, but brilliantly vindicated against the wiles of its disparagers; yet of themselves, these are not strong enough to provide firm faith, until our Heavenly Father, revealing his majesty there, lifts reverence for Scripture beyond the realm of controversy. Therefore Scripture will ultimately suffice for a saving knowledge of God only when its certainty is founded upon the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit."

In short, Calvin's view relates the Spirit's testimonial work directly to the authority of the Word of God and not to its proofs. Here is how Louis Berkhof explains it:

> "The testimony of the Holy Spirit is simply the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the sinner by which He removes the

> blindness of sin, so that the erstwhile blind man who had no eyes for the sublime character of the Word of God, now clearly sees and appreciates the marks of its divine nature, and receives immediate certainty respecting the divine origin of Scripture. ... The testimony of the Holy Spirit is therefore ... not so much the final ground of faith, but rather the means of faith. The final ground of faith is Scripture only, or better still, the authority of God which is impressed upon the believer in the testimony of Scripture ... but the testimony of the Holy Spirit is the moving cause of faith. We believe Scripture, not because of, but through the testimony of the Holy Spirit."

So Calvin understood that we come to receive the Scriptures as the Word of God that has authority through the work and testimony of the Holy Spirit.

4 The role of the Spirit in the sacraments

The role of the Holy Spirit is so vital in understanding the sacraments and especially the Lord's Supper. Only by appreciating fully the work of the Spirit can we avoid falling into the mistakes that have dogged both Catholic and evangelical misunderstandings of the Supper. I am very grateful to my friend and colleague Sinclair Ferguson for the way in which he describes this in his excellent book on the Holy Spirit.

It is not by the church's administration or merely by the activity of our memories that we enjoy communion with Christ. It is through the Spirit that we are brought into communion with the crucified, risen and exalted Christ. Christ is not localised in the bread and wine as Catholic theology teaches, nor is He absent from the Supper so that our highest activity is remembering Him, which is the memorialist view. Rather, Christ is known through the elements by the Spirit. There is a genuine communion with Christ in the Supper. Just as in the preaching of the Word He is present, not in the Bible locally, or by believing, but by the ministry of the Spirit so he is also present in the Supper, not in the bread and wine, but by the power of the Spirit. The body and blood of Christ are not enclosed in the elements, since Christ is at the right hand of the Father, but by the power of the Spirit we are brought into His presence and He stands among us. I think that it is in this context that we should understand Revelation 3:20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." John, in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, believed that this is the kind of fellowship that the church might enjoy with her Saviour.

No theologian has sought to understand this presence of Christ by his Spirit in the sacrament more thoroughly than Calvin and yet even in his strongest expressions of the meaning of the Supper, an admission of mystery remains.

> "Even though it seems unbelievable that Christ's flesh, separated from us by such distance, penetrates to us, so that it becomes our food, let us remember how far the secret power of the Holy Spirit towers above all our senses, and how foolish it is to measure his immeasurableness by our measure. What, then, our mind does not comprehend, let faith conceive: that the Spirit truly unites things separated in space. Now, that sacred partaking of his flesh and blood, by which Christ pours his life into us, as if it penetrated into our bones and marrow, he also testifies and seals in the Supper - not by presenting a vain and empty sign, but by manifesting there the effectiveness of his Spirit to fulfil what he promises. And truly he offers and shows the reality there signified to all that sit at that spiritual banquet, although it is received with benefit by believers alone, who accept such great generosity with true faith and gratefulness of heart." (4.17.10)

Such thinking permeates Calvin's teaching. Christ comes to his people in the very body in which he was incarnate, crucified, buried, resurrected, ascended and is now glorified. Life is thus "infused into us from the substance of his flesh". (4.17.4)

Calvin's language has evoked radically different reactions within the reformed family. Charles Hodge, R L Dabney and William Cunningham all reacted negatively to his teaching in this area. They questioned it as seriously mistaken or simply incomprehensible, while others have greeted it as his deepest sacramental insight.

There is no doubt that Calvin's language is much more realistic than much evangelical teaching on the Lord's Supper has been accustomed to be and, as a result, his exposition is thought to be excessively material. But then, as Sinclair Ferguson says, the same could surely be said of the language of John 6:51-58 or, for that matter, 1 Corinthians 10:16. If we are uncomfortable with Calvin's language, then that may mask a discomfort with the language of Scripture itself.

What is often overlooked in this discussion is the role and power which Calvin attributes to the Holy Spirit. Fundamental to his thinking about the Lord's Supper is the outworking of the correlation between Christ ascending the Spirit descending. The Spirit descends in order to raise us up into

fellowship with Christ. Similarly, in the Supper, the Spirit comes, as it were, to close the gap between Christ in heaven and the believer on earth and to give communion with the exalted Saviour.

But the other question which Calvin is asking is this: With what Christ does the believer commune at the table? His answer is: Christ clothed in the humanity in which he suffered, died and was buried, rose again, and is now ascended in glory. There is no other Christ than the enfleshed Word. In the Supper, we commune with the person of Christ in the mystery of the hypostatic union. We do so spiritually, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Calvin does not need to be interpreted as saying more than this, and we should not say less than this, otherwise we deny the reality of the fellowship of which the New Testament speaks or we may risk denying the continuing reality of the humanity of the glorified Christ. Once we take seriously the truth of the bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ, Calvin's theology of the sacrament becomes less puzzling. Although, as Calvin himself admits it, the truth it represents remains mysterious . . . but the mystery is no greater than it is with other aspects of the Spirit's work.

What then is the role of the Spirit in the Lord's Supper? It can be described in the words of John 16 : 14. The Spirit will take from what is Christ's and make it known to His disciples. He does this fundamentally through apostolic revelation. Nothing is revealed in the Supper that is not already made known in the Scriptures but in the Supper there is visual representation and a simple and specific focus on the broken body and poured-out blood of Christ. This takes us to the heart of the matter and to the centre of the Spirit's ministry. It is to illumine the person and work of Christ. No new revelation is given. No other Christ is made known. We do not get a different or a better Christ in the Supper from the Christ we get in the Word . . . but we may well get the same Christ better as the Spirit ministers by the testimony of the physical emblems being joined to the Word.

Basing their thinking on an allegorical understanding of the Song of Solomon, Christian writers in the past have spoken of the 'kiss' of Christ. This is the secret ministry of the Spirit. Just as the action of a kiss communicates and symbolises love, so the physical emblems which point to a crucified and risen Saviour are employed by the Spirit working in the heart to communicate to Christ's people the love he has for them. The Supper is used in the hands of the Spirit to minister peace, joy, love and assurance. There can be a foretaste of the fullness of the presence of Christ which the believer anticipates as he proclaims Christ's death until He comes. When Christ comes, the regenerating work of the Spirit will be fully consummated and the

full reality expressed by the symbols will be present.

So here is a brief snapshot of Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who unites us to Christ by faith and who grants us assurance of salvation. It is the Spirit who authenticates the Bible as the Word of God and who in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper makes Christ's presence real to us. This doctrine of the Spirit is full and rounded and nuanced. No one can ever say that with regard to John Calvin the Holy Spirit is the forgotten or unknown member of the Trinity.