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

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Irish Baptist Historical Society



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Editor

Pastor John Gault

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The Irish Baptist Historical Society

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to persons interested in the history
of the Baptist Churches in Ireland.

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CONTENTS

1	Editorial	1
2	Contributors	3
3	Ballymena Baptist Church: The First Fifty Years *John Gault*	5
4	John Bunyan: More Than a Dreamer *Harry Dowds*	24
5	Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland *David Luke*	55
6	"Swallowed up in the thoughts of a crucified …Redeemer": Andrew Fuller on the crucifixion of Jesus Christ *Michael A G Haykin*	74

EDITORIAL

The Historical Society Meetings in 2019 again proved to be both interesting and informative. Ballymena Baptist Church is the only Baptist Church in Ireland to have been born in the year of the 1859 Revival. Therefore, 2019 marked the 160th anniversary of the Church and in March we looked at the period 1859 - 1909. The sudden departure of Pastor McVicker and most of the members after only three years, the strenuous evangelistic efforts made in the town and surrounding areas and the long, steady ministry of Pastor Whiteside are only a few of the dramatic events that made up the first 50 years of the Church's life.

At our meeting in May Pastor Harry Dowds traced the life of John Bunyan from his birth to his death, highlighting his conversion, his ministry, the passions that dominated his life and the providences that moulded his life. In an age of spiritual giants such as John Owen, Thomas Watson, Richard Baxter and Matthew Henry none was greater than the Immortal Dreamer, John Bunyan.

In October Dr David Luke examined the question "Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland." The Norman arrival in Ireland in the late 12th century began a period of English rule in the country. Major events over the next five centuries which contributed to the political and spiritual condition of the Irish people were referred to.

Dr Luke then suggested ten factors that should be considered as contributing to the failure of the Reformation in Ireland.

In addition this year's Journal includes an article by Professor Michael Haykin, a long-time friend of the Historical Society, examining Andrew Fuller's view of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, that it has been the doctrine of the cross that "God, in all ages, has delighted to honour."

John Gault

CONTRIBUTORS

John Gault BA

John Gault and his wife, Hazel, have three children, Kathy, Graham and Martin and five grandchildren, Emma, Ciara, Reuben, Ezra and Martha. John studied at the Irish Baptist College and pastored Grace Baptist Church, Onchan, Isle of Man before moving to Larne where he was Pastor of Larne Baptist Church from September 1993 until September 2016. 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.

Harry Dowds

Harry Dowds was saved at the age of eight and, shortly after, was introduced to John Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' which created a love for that book and also for Bunyan's other writings. Harry, with his wife Christine, went on to serve the Lord as a children's evangelist for seven years with Bible Club Movement and was then called to pastor Central Craigavon Baptist Church. After seven years in Craigavon he was called to the church at Stonepark, Co Fermanagh where he has ministered for almost twenty-four

years.

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David Luke graduated from Queen's University Belfast with a degree in Modern History before working for the university as a researcher in Irish history. He then studied for a BD at the Irish Baptist College and went on to serve as pastor of Gilnahirk Baptist Church for sixteen years. In 2010 he was awarded a PhD by Queen's University Belfast for his thesis 'The Doctrine of Sanctification in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards'. Since 2013 he has served as Director of Postgraduate Studies at the Irish Baptist College where he teaches Historical Theology.

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Michael A G Haykin is the Chair and Professor of Church History at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky and also the Director of the Andrew Fuller Centre for Baptist Studies, located on the Southern Baptist campus. He has written widely in both Patristics and 18th century Anglophone Dissent. He is married to Alison and they live in Dundas, Ontario, Canada.

BALLYMENA
BAPTIST CHURCH

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS 1859-1909

JOHN GAULT

2019 marks the 160th anniversary of the 1859 Revival and also the 160th anniversary of the birth of Ballymena Baptist Church. Evangelical churches already in existence benefited greatly from the Revival; in the 50 years that followed 25 Baptist Churches were founded throughout Ireland but Ballymena is the only Baptist Church to be born in the year of the Revival and as such has a unique and fascinating history among our Association of Churches.

THE 1859 REVIVAL

The events of 1859 have been referred to by those who were eyewitnesses as "the wondrous awakening" (William Gibson, 'The Year of Grace') and "nothing at all approaching it has ever visited our country". (Coleraine Chronicle, 11 June 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" (John T Carson, 'God's River in Spate').

A number of factors can be seen to have had a contributing effect leading to the Revival.

Mrs Colville

In early 1856 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. The transformation in McQuilkin's life made an immediate and deep impression on those who knew him and in a short time three of his friends, Robert Carlisle, John Wallace and Jeremiah Meneely, were converted. The four young men belonged to Connor Presbyterian Church and their minister, Rev J H Moore, counselled them to do "something for God" and so they agreed to meet regularly to pray for the conversion of others in their village. The weekly prayer meetings in the old Schoolhouse in Kells began in September 1857 and soon the four young men were joined by others, their number rising to fifty by the end of 1858.

In addition Rev Moore set about arranging a network of prayer meetings in homes throughout his congregation until eventually there were around sixteen meetings every night.

Fulton Street Prayer Meeting, New York City

In the same month the Kells Prayer Meeting began another Prayer Meeting was commencing in Fulton Street, New York. Jeremiah Lanphier, a city missionary for the Dutch Reformed Church, invited others to join him in a noonday prayer meeting, commencing on 23 September 1857. Only six people attended the first meeting, but the number grew dramatically until, within six months, 10,000 businessmen were gathering daily for prayer leading to the a great spiritual awakening which would spread throughout the United States leading to countless multitudes of converts to Christ. Reports of events in America began to reach Ireland in the spring of 1858.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland sent Professor William Gibson and Rev William McClure to visit the centres of the Revival in America returning with thrilling reports of what they had seen.

Revival Reaches Ballymena

The first effect of the Kells Prayer Meeting was the conversion of Samuel Campbell on New Year's Day, 1858, thus beginning a great movement of the Spirit of God that would sweep through Northern Ireland and bring multitudes from death to life. In early 1859 accounts of the events in Kells and Connor were reaching Ballymena but there were no signs of spiritual movement in the town. In response to the events in the surrounding villages the Christians in Ballymena increased and intensified their prayers that God would visit Ballymena in power. In the middle of May the effects of the Revival were being felt. The Ballymena Observer, 28 May 1859, reported,

> ... the first notifiable cases of decided impression appeared in Ballymena on the morning of 16th ... it would be impossible to obtain the exact number of parties which have since been so visited within the town for cases are now to be found in every street and among all classes of people. There are at least two thousand people engaged in a series of prayer and praise meetings.

News of events in Ballymena 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 marvellous tidings reach us." (Coleraine Chronicle, 28 May 1859).

THE BIRTH OF BALLYMENA BAPTIST CHURCH

Although this was the first Baptist Church in the town of Ballymena, there had been a Baptist witness for many years in surrounding areas:

Grange

In the late 18th century the Presbyterian congregations at Grange and Duneane were under the ministry of a Mr Scott, who, because of questionable doctrinal inclinations, withdrew from the ministry in Grange in 1804. Dr Carson of Tobermore was called upon to help and in response sent a Mr Gray in 1807 to take oversight of the church. A year later the church was re-formed along Independent lines and in the following years a deepening concern and conviction grew among the congregation about the matter of believer's baptism. In 1810 Mr Samuel Clark was the first member of the church to be baptised by Dr Carson in Tobermore. By the middle of the century the church consisted of 53 members and was ministered to by two pastors and four deacons, chosen from among their own congregation. The 1859 Revival made a significant impact on Grange requiring the meeting house to be enlarged in 1867 to accommodate the growing congregation.

The church at Grange has strong connections with Ballymena Baptist Church, first of all in the part played in Pastor McVicker's conversion to Baptist Principles and then in enjoying the mutual benefits of the ministries of Pastors Eccles, Whiteside, Burrows and Hodgett.

Broughshane

There appears in the first Church Book a record written by Rev J Hunt Cooke of a little Baptist gathering that had been meeting in Broughshane prior to the Revival:

> In a small farmhouse about two miles out in the country (near Broughshane) there has been a little Baptist Church, never numbering more a dozen, chiefly members of one family, who have met weekly for upwards of twenty years past for the observance of the ordinances as

> Christ has appointed them. Ridiculed by their neighbours, they persevered, hoping and praying for a better state, and enjoying, we doubt not, the smile of the Great Head of the Church. With this exception the name "Baptist" was almost unknown here till the Revival of 1859.

Rev J G McVicker

During the religious excitement of 1859, a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Rev J G McVicker, who had laboured since 1853 in the village of Cullybackey as he witnessed scenes of religious excitement, being concerned about his own lack of assurance of salvation, prayed that God would make it clear and in June testified that he had been "born again". He became deeply involved in spiritual work and his preaching took on a new intensity. Towards the end of the summer he undertook to preach against a body of Baptists who worshipped at Grange Corner and to a large assembly gathered in a field he delivered a "flaming philippic" (bitter attack) strongly denouncing "the 'deluded dippers' who, by their controversial zeal, were interfering with the gracious work then in progress". On his way home he was joined by some Baptists from the Grange who had listened to his outburst, who talked with him and before he had reached home, had persuaded him of the error of his ways. He began to search the Scriptures along with James McQuilkin and was soon convinced that believer's baptism by immersion was the only baptism found in Scripture. In September 1859 he was baptised in the River Maine, near Cullybackey by Mr Jeremiah Meneely, one of the four men so prominently identified with the start of the Revival in Kells and Connor. Soon after his baptism the Presbytery separated Rev McVicker from his congregation and declared him outside its communion. Now without support or a home for himself, his wife and child, he returned to his father's home in Belfast.

Ballymena Baptist Church

In September Rev McVicker attended a meeting of the Evangelical

Alliance in Belfast where he was asked, "Have you an open door in Ballymena?" He replied, "I believe there are very many in that district who have confidence in me as a Christian and as a preacher of the gospel." "Then" it was said to him, "if you close a door that God has opened, take care lest He open no other".

On the following Saturday he returned to Ballymena and for four Lord's Days he preached "Christ and Him crucified" in the open air in the stable yard of the principal hotel in the town, as no suitable hall could be obtained. Large numbers came to hear, and the presence and power of the Lord was evident. A more suitable place to meet was sought and eventually a loft over a row of stables in Broughshane Street, capable of holding 400 people, was rented for £16 per annum and furnished with a desk and forms. Meeting together for worship entailed passing through a stable yard and climbing a steep ladder.

From the beginning of the meetings a few of their number met in a small room for the breaking of bread after the preaching of the gospel. As time went on others began to join them, forming the nucleus of Ballymena Baptist Church.

Since the Baptist witness was something new in the town and had appeared at a time of intense religious fervour, it was viewed by the established churches with great suspicion, and those associating themselves with the Baptists had to endure much opposition and ridicule, with vigorous debate being carried on by means of the letter columns in local newspapers for some time.

By October 1860 the church had grown to 90 members and Sunday congregations averaged from four to six hundred. In addition to Sunday Services, Mr McVicker preached at three or four other meetings during the week to large congregations in private houses, barns, schoolhouses or any other place convenient for people to gather. In reports submitted to the Baptist Irish Society in 1861, and reproduced in the "Irish Chronicle", Rev McVicker reports on 14 baptisms on the same day in March, 8 baptisms in July and between January and July 36 new members had been added to the church.

As numbers attending the services in 1859-60 continued to grow the need for a permanent place of worship became increasingly urgent. Looking to God for help and guidance, the church resolved to attempt to build a new chapel that could accommodate 500 people, which, they were advised would cost in the region of £1,000. In an attempt to raise funds Rev McVicker travelled to London to meet with C H Spurgeon who introduced him to a number of English Baptist Churches and laymen who could help. Encouragement and support came from English Baptists through their missionary arm, the Baptist Irish Society, and in May 1860 the English Baptists adopted Ballymena as a "station" and appointed Mr McVicker as an agent of the Society. Through the generous support of the Baptist Irish Society the church had, by February 1861, gathered together £600. A piece of ground was granted by Colonel Adair, acting on behalf of his father, Sir Robert Shafto Adair, at a yearly rent of £5. The site, which extended from Hill Street to Mount Street was 200 feet long and 90 feet wide and fronted both streets, providing enough land to build both a chapel and manse.

The Trust Deed for the church building stated: "The said premises to be used as a place of public Worship by the Society of Protestant Dissenters called Particular or Calvinistic Baptists".

The new chapel was opened for public worship in August 1861. Tickets for admission costing one shilling (five pence) were advertised in the Ballymena Observer dated 10 August which, together with collections at both services, were used to offset the outstanding debt, which, after the services, had been reduced to £200. The following report appeared in 'The Freeman':

> Ballymena, Ireland. The new chapel erected in this town for the church under the pastoral care of Rev J G McVicker was opened for religious services on the Lord's Day, August 25th. Sermons were preached both morning and evening by the Rev William Brock, of Bloomsbury Chapel, London. We are informed that the impression produced was such as to render the visit of Mr Brock one that will long be remembered with great thankfulness. The attendance was very large and consisted of many of the most distinguished of the inhabitants of the town and

neighbourhood of every section of the Christian Church.

After moving into the new building, the church continued to prosper. In September 1861 fifteen believers were baptised and the membership had grown to around 120, with the new building being filled on the Lord's Day.

In a letter to the Secretary of the Baptist Irish Society, dated 26 September 1861, Rev McVicker wrote,

> Almost exactly this time two years ago I was preaching in the open air in a stable yard. Now how great a difference! A church is gathered of between 120 and 130 members; a chapel, pronounced by Mr Brock to be one of the neatest and most commodious that he has ever opened, is finished and, except for £200, paid for. A large and growing congregation fills it on the Lord's Day. During the week I preach generally three times to large earnest congregations in villages or country districts. The Presbyterian ministers have closed the schoolhouses against me. I therefore preach in barns and cottages.

In July 1862 the church agreed to unite with the newly formed Irish Baptist Association (which was replaced by the Baptist Union of Ireland in 1895).

Rev McVicker's Departure

In 1862, as a consequence of controversial disputes with other clergymen and, more particularly, the influence of Brethren teaching in the town, Rev McVicker severed his connection with the Baptist Irish Society in May and later in the year resigned from the pastorate at Hill Street. Some of the leading members and trustees met with him in an attempt to persuade him to remain as pastor of the church. Their efforts, however, were in vain and Rev McVicker left the church and started a new work, taking with him the majority of the church membership ... only 11 members were left at Hill Street. It was reported in the Ballymena Observer, 13 December, that Rev McVicker had resigned his appointment and had united himself with a religious body commonly called the Plymouth Brethren. This

report was refuted in the next issue of the Observer, 20 December, when a notice appeared which read,

> ... the religious society ... under the superintendence of Rev J G McVicker do not hold all the tenets of the Plymouth Brethren and their church is not connected with that body nor with any other religious society on the face of the earth.

Yet this body was to become the first Brethren Assembly in the town. Rev McVicker continued to minister in Ballymena for some years before he went to London where he was connected with Clapton Hall for many years before his death in 1900.

In 1863 the Baptist Irish Society acknowledged his "sincerity and Christian devotedness" and expressed the hope that his labours would be blessed by God. In the Irish Baptist Magazine in January 1901 Pastor Thomas Whiteside wrote,

> We highly esteem, yea, we revere the name of John McVicker. He was one of the greatest and best of men, a man who was prepared to sacrifice anything and everything for his convictions, or for what he considered to be the Truth. But no man is infallible, the best of men are prone to err; and we have no hesitation in saying that this good man made a great mistake when he resigned the pastorate of the Baptist Church - a church which we believe to be nearer the Scriptures than any other.

PRESSING ON

Pastors

The pastors who served the church in the first fifty years of its life were:

John G McVicker	1859 - 1862
Charles T Keen	February 1863 - July 1864
W S Eccles	1864 - 1865
Samuel Rock	July 1868 - 1873
Robert K Eccles	December 1873 - April 1877

Henry Cocks	December 1877 - May 1879
Thomas Whiteside	June 1881 - December 1912

After the sudden departure of Rev McVicker and his followers the pulpit was occupied by Rev McDonald, who ministered to the small congregation remaining for six weeks during November and December 1862.

Rev Charles T Keen from Londonderry preached for three Sundays in February 1863 and was well received. With the concurrence of the Committee of the Baptist Irish Society, who agreed to contribute £120 towards the pastor's annual salary of £150. Rev Keen received and accepted a call to the pastorate in Ballymena.

In October 1863 the first new members since the departure of Mr McVicker were received ... Misses Martha and Margaret Logan of Galgorm Parks, were baptized on 20 October and received into membership. On 1 November Eliza Turtle and Sarah Ann Leckey were baptized and received into membership. Pastor Keen established over a dozen regular preaching stations, mostly in homes in Ballymena, and about a dozen more occasional stations in Ballymena, Broughshane, Portglenone and Cullybackey. He seems, however, to have been discouraged in the work, especially with the smallness of the evening congregation and on 17 July 1864 tendered his resignation and the following Sunday preached his farewell sermons at Ballymena in the morning and Carninney in the evening. By this time the membership had grown to 19, one particularly encouraging addition being Ann Milligan, who was baptised in December 1863, being over 70 years of age.

Following the resignation Rev Keen the church immediately and unanimously agreed to issue a call to Rev W S Eccles from Banbridge was duly accepted. Rev C J Middleditch, Secretary of the Irish Mission said of Rev Eccles that there was "no one who stood higher in the esteem of the Committee than Rev W S Eccles". After ministering for only a few months, however, during 1864-1865, he accepted a call to Grange Baptist Church. At intervals between

March 1866 and July 1868 Pastor Eccles' son, Robert preached with "considerable acceptance". He also held many meetings in country districts in barns and farm houses. The church invited and encouraged him to become their pastor but he declined because of his youth and left Ballymena in July 1868 to study medicine. At this point the church had 28 members.

On 19 July, Samuel Rock, who had been a teacher in Carrick, commenced his ministry. During Pastor Rock's time it was agreed to adopt "weekly offerings enclosed in envelopes" (in February 1869), ministry books of Psalms and Hymns were first introduced (in February 1871) and the first deacons to be appointed in (June 1871) were M Adams, J Allan, W McConnell, G Ramsey, G Rock and R Ross. From that date the diaconate has played a central and sometimes critical role in the life of the church. In June 1869 the pastor extended an invitation to C H Spurgeon to preach at Ballymena. The hoped-for meeting, however, didn't take place. Pastor Rock died in November 1873, being about 35 years old, his ministry having ended some time before.

The church then issued a unanimous and enthusiastic call to R K Eccles who had by then completed his medical studies. The call was accepted and on 4 December 1873 he was welcomed into the pastorate at Ballymena. Pastor Eccles enjoyed a fruitful ministry in and around Ballymena, preaching at numerous stations, and large Sunday Schools flourished in Ballymena and the surrounding district. During his three years in Ballymena many were saved, baptised and added to the church. When he left to take up pastoral duties in Abbey Street, Dublin, in May 1877, his departure was marked with many displays of deep regret and genuine affection. Dr Eccles left for his successor a list of between 40 to 50 preaching stations and four large Sunday Schools in Teeshan, Dungall, Craigywarren and Cullybackey.

The church's former pastor, W S Eccles, was asked to consider a return to Ballymena, but was unable to accept due to ill health. Instead he recommended Mr Martin Bacon from London, who had just completed his studies at Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle

College and was about to embark on further studies in Edinburgh. Mr Bacon accepted the invitation and served in an interim capacity from June to September 1877.

Mr Bacon's service came to an end with the induction of Mr Henry Cocks into the pastorate on 19 December 1877. Pastor Cocks ministered in Ballymena until May 1879 and in his brief record of his ministry in the Church Book, wrote, "We did our best for the prosperity of Zion, and now we leave the church for some other one to enter upon our labours". In June 1879 Mr Bacon again took up part-time pastoral duties as his studies permitted. In October 1879 and again in October 1880 invitations to the pastorate were issued but were declined. In October 1880, having completed his theological studies, Mr Bacon emigrated to Canada.

In April 1881, Thomas Whiteside, who had also trained at Spurgeon's College, and was then pastor of the church at Athlone, received a letter from the Secretary of the British and Irish Home Mission inviting him to go to Ballymena to preach for three Lord's Days, which he accepted and preached in Ballymena for the first time on 22 May 1881. At the first service a girl was converted and was soon afterwards baptised and added to the church. After the third Sunday a unanimous call was given and accepted and on 19 June 1881 Thomas Whiteside commenced what has been to date the longest pastorate in the church's history. Pastor Whiteside "by wisdom and sympathy, combined with loyalty and consistency" brought a renewed stability and strength to that church which had been "immersed in much that was not attractive when our brother was called to the pastorate" (The Irish Baptist Magazine, October 1889). Under Pastor Whiteside's ministry, in spite of some difficulties and discouragements, the church enjoyed steady progress. In his Annual Report of 1892 he referred to conversions, baptisms, encouraging attendances at Sunday services and flourishing Sunday Schools.

On 17 November 1892 a deputation from the Irish Baptist Home Mission met with the pastor and a number of church representatives to inform them that the Home Mission was considering removing

Pastor Whiteside from the pastorate in Ballymena. Following a Church Meeting, a letter, dated 27 November 1892, was sent to the Home Mission making clear, "it is our unanimous wish that Pastor Whiteside should be left among us". This was quickly followed by another letter, dated 4 December 1892, which confirmed and expressed in stronger terms the wish of the church that Pastor Whiteside should remain in Ballymena. The desire of the church was granted and Pastor Whiteside continued his ministry until his retirement.

Services

By August 1861, he handful of friends meeting to break bread in a loft in October 1859 had grown to over 120 members gathering for worship in a newly built chapel. Just over a year later, however, with the departure of Rev McVicker and most of the young church, the membership had fallen very sharply and suddenly to only 11 members, these being James O'Neil, Mrs O'Neil, Miss O'Neil, Sam McClarty, Hannah McClarty, Robert Ross, David Gaston, John Dickson, Mary McKey, John Allaw and Andrew McKee.

The membership of 11 in 1862 had grown to 19 within a year which then increased to 28 in 1868 mainly under the preaching of W S Eccles. The church experienced a period of particular fruitfulness under the ministry of R K Eccles, which saw the membership grow from 36 in 1873 to 187 in 1876.

One interesting part of the church programme in the late 19th century was what were called "Soirees" ... what we might call today "Church Socials". These seem to have been important and exceptionally popular events in the life of the church, with, according to the church records, large numbers attending. On 4 December 1875 "six hundred sat down to tea", and throughout 1876 the following meetings are recorded:

9 June	"Midsummer Tea Meeting. Very good attendance; about 350"

12 June	"The Sunday School Tea Meeting. About 350 children present"
6 December	"The third anniversary of Dr Eccles' settlement in Ballymena the church held its usual soiree. Above four hundred sat down to tea"
7 December	"The Sunday School tea meeting. Above three hundred children were present."

The Church Accounts for April - December 1876 give an interesting insight into this aspect of the life of the church:

Missions	£2 0s 0d
Coal Account	£2 5s 3d
Wine Account	£1 8s 0d
Soirees	£9 13s 8d

A bill from Isaac Fleming Esq for the tea meeting on 6 December 1876 has been recorded as:

100 fruit and 24 plain loaves	£3 9s 6d
Boiler and carriage	£1 5s 9d
Printing tickets	6s 0d
Hire of tea things	8s 9d
Tea, sugar and oranges	£2 0s 11d
Total	£7 10s 11d

Mission

The history of Ballymena Baptist Church has been marked from its beginning with an enthusiasm to make Christ known. The great awakening to spiritual realities that occurred in 1859 opened up many invitations and opportunities to preach the gospel to eager

listeners. Rev McVicker's ministry extended into the surrounding districts where he regularly preached to "large earnest congregations...mostly in cottages or barns". In addition, a number of young men, members of the church, who lived at distances of 8 to 10 miles from the town, preached regularly in their own localities.

The following preaching stations, recorded in the Church Book, were commenced during the ministry of Charles T Keen, 1863-1864:

> Stated. David Logan's, Robert Logan's, Thomas Logan's, J O'Neill's, James Milligan's, James Murdock's, Chris Cowan's, Mrs Walker's, Mrs Swann's, Mr McQuillan's, Mr Smith's, all in Galgorm Parks; Dan Irvine's, Carninney; James O'Neill's, Kildowney; Parade Schoolhouse, near R Ross's. Occasional. Baptist Chapel; Grange, Mr Milligan's, near Portglenone; Mrs Smith's, Galgorm Parks, Mrs Minnice's, Galgorm Parks, Courthouse, Broughshane; Mill Street, Ballymena; Robert Black's, Church Street; Robert Jones', Alexander Street; Mrs Dempsey's, Ballymoney Street; Mrs Wilson's, John Street; Mr Ross, Clougher; Mr Andrew's, Galgorm Village; McClarty's, Cullybackey; U P Meetinghouse, Cullybackey; Sarah Blair's, John Street

When Dr Eccles left the pastorate in April 1877 he listed in the Church Book 51 substations he had preached the gospel regularly or occasionally.

The work of teaching children God's Word was carried out primarily by means of Sunday Schools, there originally being two schools, one on a Sunday morning at 10.30am and one in the evening at 4pm. Sunday Schools were also organised in surrounding areas, one such being held in a house near Cullybackey having 100 members in the late 1860s.

Dr Eccles lists the Sunday Schools at his departure in April 1877 as Meeting House 10.30 and 4 o'clock, Teeshan, Dungall, Craigiewarren and Cullybackey all at 4 o'clock.

As well as reaching out into the community the church sought also to recognise and commend those within the congregation who showed the necessary abilities and attitudes to qualify them for pastoral or missionary ministry. The first of many who would

emerge from Ballymena Baptist Church to serve God in various parts of the world was one of the eleven remaining members after Rev McVicker's departure. John Dickson, from Broughshane, left for Glasgow on 2 November 1863 to commence training for the Christian ministry at the Educational Institution associated with the Baptist Association of Scotland and after completing his training he was accepted by the Baptist Irish Society first as an evangelist and then as a pastor. He pastored churches at Donaghmore and Lisnagleer, before spending the last three years of his life as pastor of Coleraine Baptist Church. After a long illness he died on 29 September 1894, aged 57. The Church Records show that on 5 October 1897 two young men, Lamont and Owens, left Ballymena to travel to London to commence training for the ministry.

Premises

In writing to the Secretary of the Baptist Irish Society in 1861 Mr Brock said,

> It has been my pleasure to preach at the opening of the chapel in Ballymena, and I write to assure the contributors that their subscriptions have been well applied. I have never seen a place of worship with which on all accounts I have been so satisfied. For the sum of £1,100 our friends have provided themselves with a commodious and well-placed sanctuary, capable of considerable enlargement at small cost.

Pastor J W Freeman, writing in 1900, said: "The property at Ballymena is unique, a remarkably fine Chapel and Manse built of black limestone."

For a long time after 1861 it seems there were very few alterations or improvements to the original structure. Some renovation work was carried out in early 1890 but by the turn of the century the church building was in need of extensive repairs and renovations. Particularly pressing was the need for a more efficient heating system as, up to this time, the building had been heated by two large and temperamental stoves. In the Centenary Services of 1959 Pastor

Harvey, referring to the stoves, remembered "those who sat near them were roasted and those away from them were frozen".

Turn of the Century

Meetings continued to be held in the surrounding districts through the last decades of the 19th century and into the opening decades of the 20th century. Pastor Whiteside wrote of his labours in 1910, "The one thing, above all others, we desire is the conversion of souls" but also "conversions are few and far between" revealing the continuing concern for and efforts to reach a lost world, but also the difficult spiritual climate of the times.

During the closing years of the 19th century there was a gradual decline in the numbers of church members. The membership of 187 in 1876 had fallen dramatically to 81 by 1880 and continued to decline reaching a low of 58 in 1908. The opening years of the 20th century seem to have been particularly spiritually hard, members were being lost through death, transfer, falling away and by the proselytising work of other churches. A particular cause of annoyance to the church was the number of members leaving to join the Brethren. In the July 1907 issue of the Irish Baptist Magazine, Pastor Whiteside lamented, "Brethrenism has been the bane of this church almost since its formation".

The following year, however, brought much needed relief and encouragement. Towards the end of 1908 the district of Ballymena enjoyed what Pastor Whiteside reported as "a real religious awakening". It was hoped among earnest Christians in the town that this would usher in a fuller, greater movement of the Spirit. In the Irish Baptist Magazine, April 1909, Pastor Whiteside wrote, "Ballymena was the centre of the great Revival of '59, and we are expecting and praying for another Revival this year." months later he reported, "A goodly number of our own congregation for whose salvation we longed and prayed, were brought to decision for Christ, and a good many outsiders were also converted.". (Irish Baptist Magazine, July 1909)

From the dramatic birth of Ballymena Baptist Church, through

the years which followed in which the church experienced many trials and much adversity, the church reached its half century with the steady, solid and faithful pastorate of Thomas Whiteside.

In early 1900 Pastor J W Freeman of Athlone wrote, "We do not think any of our men work with greater earnestness than the pastor of Ballymena. Someone said 'he is the only man in the whole denomination who can preach a truly wonderful discourse compiled altogether of Scripture'".

After the death of Pastor Simpson of Clough in May 1904, Pastor Whiteside provided pastoral oversight for a time until his health was seriously affected causing him to lay aside his pastoral duties for some time.

Pastor Whiteside retired from the pastorate in 1912 but, upon the invitation of the Irish Baptist Home Mission, continued to preach in the Grange and Clough churches on alternate Lord's Days, traveling by bicycle. He preached his last sermon at Clough on 14 September 1919 and less than two months later, on 1 December, he died at the age of 76. Pastor Harvey, who followed Pastor Whiteside, commended his predecessor as being a "saintly man and a great worker in the gospel".

Out of the many lessons that can be learned from the first fifty years of Ballymena Baptist Church perhaps the most striking is the character of the ministry of Pastor Whiteside.

The first six pastorates in the life of the church covered only twenty years, pastors leaving for a variety of reasons, some because the work was too hard, others because their ministries were very fruitful while Pastor Whiteside served for a period of thirty one years, persevering through all seasons, times of plenty and times of need, encouragements and discouragements. His faithfulness, dependability, commitment, consistency and devotion stand before us as a wonderful example of Christian character that we should each strive to emulate as we seek to honour and exalt the Name of Jesus Christ.

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JOHN BUNYAN

MORE THAN A DREAMER

HARRY DOWDS

INTRODUCTION

Seventeenth Century England provides us with a landscape marred with turmoil and trouble. This was the century that saw two civil wars on English soil, the plague that stalked the country and the Great Fire of London as well as the execution of King Charles I. In the midst of this there was the titanic struggle for religious liberty and the persecution that it occasioned. Little wonder that, in the estimation of historian Christopher Hill, the central part of it was "... the most turbulent, seditious and factious sixty years of recorded English history".[1] True, there was a brief period of respite; in the words of Dr Martin Lloyd Jones: "The great period during Cromwell's Protectorate ... was one of the most amazing epochs in the whole history of this country. To me it certainly was one of the most glorious."[2]

However, that was an uneasy peace as evidenced by the treatment of Cromwell's disinterred corpse after the restoration of the monarchy.

It was, however, also an era when giants were in the land, spiritual giants that is. Mighty men of God such as Richard Sibbes, Jeremiah Burroughs, Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffen, Benjamin Keach, Thomas Godwin, Stephen Charnock, John Owen, Thomas Watson, Thomas Manton, Richard Baxter, Matthew Henry, and the list goes on. Among these giants however none was greater than the Immortal Dreamer, John Bunyan.

John Bunyan is undoubtedly the most famous Christian of that age, indeed probably of any age in England and his admirers are legion. His writings have been hugely influential and are among the best selling in the world. Indeed, his 'Pilgrim's Progress' has been reputed to be the bestselling book next to the Bible. In the 19th century it was reckoned that virtually every home in England had two books, the Bible and 'The Pilgrim's Progress'. Of course, it goes without saying that both the book and its author were held in high esteem by Christians. Take, for example, the statement of C H Spurgeon:

> Next to the Bible, the book that I value most is John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. I believe I have read through at least a hundred times. It is a volume of which I never seem to tire; and the secret of its freshness is that it is so largely compiled from the Scriptures.[3]

Perhaps even more striking is the impact author and his book had on secular writers and thinkers; illustrations of this are multitude:

> "Literature presents no more original personality than that of John Bunyan, the greatest master of allegory that ever has existed." (Thomas Budd Shaw)[4]

George Bernard Shaw went further expressing the opinion that Bunyan excelled Shakespeare as a master of prose.[5] The influence in literature has been immense, think of Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair', now where did he get that title from? Or Dickens's subtitle to Oliver Twist, 'The Parish Boys Progress'. With others the influence has

been more overt. Louise M Alcott has a poetic preface to 'Little Women' which she acknowledges was 'adapted from John Bunyan', and you are not too far into the novel until you have an extended dialogue that begins:

> Do you not remember how you used to play Pilgrim's Progress when you were little things?" Mrs March asked. "Nothing delighted you more than to have me tie my piece bags on your backs for burdens.[6]

Perhaps the most backhanded compliment came from Nathaniel Hawthorne when he published his parody of Bunyan's work entitled 'The Celestial Railroad'.

However, all of these references highlight a problem with regard to Bunyan. He is like an artist who has produced an outstanding masterpiece and as a consequence all his other wonderful works are forgotten by the majority of people. Bunyan's Pilgrim is indeed a masterpiece, but how many know that he published 15 books before it and as many as 42 after it (there are disputes about the authenticity of a few). More than that Bunyan was also much more than an author.

As we seek to learn more about this spiritual giant, we will have a brief overview of his life before considering the passions that dominated his life and the providences that moulded his life.

HIS LIFE

It was in the latter part of 1628 that Thomas & Margaret Bunyan were granted the gift of their first child, a son who they named John. We don't know the exact date of birth but his name was included in the baptismal register in the local parish church on 30 November 1628, fifteen months later John was joined by a little sister, Margaret, and three years after that a brother, William. Little is known about his parents other than the bare facts that they lived in Elstow, a village not far from Bedford, Bedfordshire. Thomas was a brazier, commonly known as a tinker, and would work at the forge beside their small cottage and also wend his way around the villages and

homes in the area mending pots & pans, farming implements and doing other light metal work. This was not the most appealing trade. In John's words: "My father's house being of that rank that is meanest and most despised of all the families in the land."[7]

Thomas appears to have been uneducated, evidenced by the fact that he did not sign his own will but merely made his mark with a thumb print. There is no indication of him having any true Christian faith and there are even indications that he had a detrimental influence on his young son which Bunyan later seemed to allude to when as reflecting on his pre-conversion days he wrote: "... I wished with all my heart that I might be a little child again, that my father might learn me to speak again without this wicked way of swearing."[8]

Looking back on his youth many years later John would with shame relate:

> It was my delight to be taken captive by the devil at his will (2 Tim.2:26), being filled with all unrighteousness ... from a child I had but few equals ... both for cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God.[9]

We know little about Bunyan's father and we know less about his mother; she is virtually nothing more than a name to us but there is perhaps an indication of their spiritual state in one of his earlier books, 'Christian Behaviour', where he wrote, "The Lord, if it be his will, convert our poor parents, that they with us, may be the children of God."[10]

In spite of their background and slender resources they did manage to send their son to school albeit for a limited period and with apparently limited effect.

> But yet, notwithstanding the meanness and inconsiderableness of my parents it pleased God to put it into their hearts to put me to school, to learn both to read and to write; the which I also attained, according to the rate of other poor men's children; although to my shame I confess, I did soon lose the little I learned.[11]

He also was trained in his father's profession and for much of his life that was his trade. It was an onerous task, carrying on his back his portable anvil (discovered in 1905, bearing his name and weighing 60lb) plus a bag of tools. Although even in his own day he was disparagingly known as 'the tinker' he undoubtedly was a skilled workman because remarkably he made his own violin out of metal! While in prison he also made a flute from the leg of a stool which could be replaced if anyone came to investigate the source of the music in the prison. This also reveals another of his abilities and loves, he was very musical.

While still a child he was conscious of his sin. He had deeply troubling thoughts and at times distressing dreams which caused him to fear he would be with those "who are bound down with chains and bonds of eternal darkness, 'unto the judgement of the great day'."[12]

But these fears and dreams were soon forgotten and he says:

> I let loose the reins to my lust and delighted in all the transgressions against the law of God, so that, until I came to the state of marriage, I was the very ringleader of all the youth that kept me company, into all manner of vice and ungodliness.[13]

Yet in all his sinfulness God was watching over him. Twice he was rescued from drowning and once in a foolish, cruel act of bravado he plunged his fingers into a vipers mouth and tore it's fangs out but survived without hurt. As he later acknowledged, "Had God not been merciful to me, I might by my desperateness have brought myself to mine end."[14]

As John was pursuing his sinful course in his mid-teens tragedy suddenly came with a double blow; a virulent epidemic struck Elstow and the surrounding district. His mother fell ill and soon died and was buried on 10 June 1644 when John was only fifteen. Then shortly afterwards his sister Margaret also contracted the disease and died; she was only thirteen. Understandably he was devastated, but as if to rub salt into the wounds his father married again a month

later. This served to throw John into even greater sin, he later wrote:

> In these days the thought of religion was very grievous to me; I could not endure it myself, nor that any other should ... Then I said to God, 'Depart from me for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways'. (Job 21:14)[15]

At the time these events were occurring one of the most important battles in British Military history took place. The civil war had erupted in 1642 and now on 2 July 1644 the Parliamentary Army with Lieutenant-General Oliver Cromwell won a resounding victory over the Royalist forces at Marsden Hill. Whether this had a direct influence on him or not in October of that year Bunyan did what a lot of young men have done before and since, he went off to join the army.

John was a soldier for almost three years and, although he did not see active service, he did experience a remarkable providential deliverance. He was to be involved in a siege of a town but at the last minute another man wanted to go in his place. While on sentinel duty at the siege he was shot in the head and died. There's no doubt that the time spent in the army would have helped encourage John's unbridled ways, even in the New Model Army (although Bunyan didn't serve in it) sin was to be found the most frequent being swearing, drunkenness and plundering.[16] But there was much to benefit him. As a new recruit he would have received a copy of 'The Soldiers Pocket Bible' which was a small booklet containing 150 Bible verses and instructions for Christian soldiers. He may well also have been given a copy of 'The Geneva Bible' and would have had to attend two church services on the Lord's Day, a service on Thursday and Bible reading and prayer before each day's duties.

In July 1647 he was demobbed from the army and took up his trade as a tinker once more. Tumultuous events unfolded in the country culminating in the execution of King Charles I on 30 January 1649. But for John a much happier event took place early in that same year - he was married. We know virtually nothing about his

bride, not even her name, but the supposition is that it was Mary because that was the name given to their first child and the custom was for the first daughter to be named after her mother. We do know she was an orphan in impoverished circumstances, but her father had been godly man as Bunyan put it:

> My mercy was to light upon a wife whose father was counted godly. This woman and I ... came together as poor as poor might be, not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon between us.[17]

Mary's father may not have left her any money but he bequeathed her something that would prove to be far more valuable; two important books, 'The Plain Man's Pathway To Heaven' by Arthur Dent and 'The Practice Of Piety' by Lewis Bayly.

John was still a profane blasphemer but his new bride was bold enough to gently reprove him and he did take heed and began to change his behaviour. They also began to read her father's books together. His conscience was pricked and he felt he had to change, and change he did.

> I fell in very eagerly with the religion of the times, to wit, to go to church twice a day, and that too with the foremost and there should very devoutly both say and sing as others did yet retaining my wicked life.[18]

One Sunday the minister, Christopher Hall, preached about the evil of breaking the Sabbath day and as he preached John felt deeply convicted, he made his way home in that state "... with a great burden on my spirit".[19] The guilt, however, soon wore off and by the time he had dinner he had forgotten it and went off to the village green to enjoy a game of tipcat. It came his turn to bat but as he did, he seemed to hear a voice saying: "Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven or have thy sins and go to hell?"[20]

He felt as if the Lord Jesus was looking down on him with displeasure. This was the commencement of a tremendous spiritual struggle that would go on for a number of years. At times he would plunge into sin so that on one occasion as he was talking outside the

shop of a woman who was herself known for her profanity she came out and rebuked him, saying:

> ...that I was the ungodliest fellow for swearing that she had ever heard in all her life, and that by so doing was able to spoil all the youth in the town.[21]

This prompted renewed efforts of self-reformation, he read his Bible more, attended church and even controlled his swearing to such a degree that his "neighbours were amazed at this my conversion from prodigious profaneness into something like a religious life".[22]

He gave up bell-ringing and dancing both of which he greatly loved and: "I thought I pleased God as well as any man in England".[23]

All this was to be overturned in a most unexpected way. He was in Bedford working and saw a group of ladies sitting out in the sunshine and he heard them talking of the things of God. Being, as he describes himself, a brisk talker he approached them to join the conversation but as he listened he

> ... heard, but I understood not; for they were far above, out of my reach, for their talk was about a new birth and the work of God in their hearts ... they spake as if joy did make them speak ... they were to me as if they had found a new world.[24]

As a consequence he says, "... my own heart began to shake" and now he entered into the most intense struggle. He took himself to the Bible with renewed intensity. "The Bible was precious to me in those days ... I was then never out of the Bible by reading and meditation."[25]

He also returned to the Bedford ladies frequently to listen to their talk and converse with them. He wrestled with doubts: Was he among the elect? Had he committed the unpardonable sin? Was he too late for salvation? Was his faith real? We don't know how

long this continued but it was a period of years and at its depths he felt he would rather be a dog or a toad or a horse because they had no soul to perish. It was about this time that he somehow managed to obtain a very worn and battered copy of Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians and this was to have an immense impact on him.

He was introduced by the ladies he met with to the pastor of the Independent Church in Bedford, John Gifford, the man who many think was the inspiration for Mr Evangelist in Pilgrims Progress. This remarkable pastor was of incalculable help to the struggling young man: "At this time also I sat under the ministry of holy My Gifford whose doctrine, by God's grace, was much for my stability." [26]

So the struggle went on ... at times he would feel a sense of elation believing he was saved and then would be plagued with doubts and temptations as when, for a period, he had the persistent thought bombarding him "Sell him! Sell him!" that is, sell Christ. Eventually though, peace came. While walking through a field one day the thought came as if into his soul: "Thy righteousness is in heaven" he realised that:

> Jesus Christ at God's right hand is my righteousness, so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, he lacks my righteousness, for that was just before him. I saw moreover that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse, for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, the same yesterday, today and forever.[27]

There is no doubt that at some point prior to this experience John had truly come to Christ by faith but at this point he entered into assurance of his salvation, indeed, this experience may be reflected in 'The Pilgrim's Progress' as Christian as he entered through the wicket gate but is still burdened until he arrives at the Cross and the burden is removed and then: "Christian gave three leaps for joy and went on singing,

Thus far did I come laden with my sin,
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,
Till I came hither. What a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
Must here the burden fall off my back?
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack?
Blest cross! Blest sepulchre! Blest rather be
The man that there was put to shame for me!"[28]

He was at this stage a regular attendee at the Independent Church in Bedford and was baptised on profession of his faith and not long after he joined the church and is listed as their twenty-sixth member. His spiritual development was rapid and he was soon asked to 'speak a word of exhortation' to the church. From that first sermon they understood that here was no ordinary preacher. "They not only seemed to be, but did solemnly protest, as in the sight of the great God, they were both affected and comforted, and gave thanks to the Father of mercies for the grace bestowed upon me."[29]

Soon he was preaching regularly, not just in Bedford where he now lived, but around the surrounding district and his fame was spreading.

In 1655, John, along with the other members of the Bedford church suffered a great blow, their beloved pastor John Gifford, a man little over fifty, fell ill and died. In early 1656 his successor, John Burton, himself a member of the church was appointed and he was to prove a great help to the fledgling preacher. At this time his gifts as a writer began to be shown. He was deeply troubled by the doctrines of the Quakers, especially their suggestion that the Bible was not the final word of God and their claim that everyone has the Spirit of God dwelling in them who was an 'inner light' to illuminate and instruct them. Bunyan took up pen and paper to deal with errors and produced a 40,000 word book, 'Some Gospel Truths Opened'. John Burton wrote a foreword to it in which he commented concerning the author:

> This man is not chosen out of an earthly, but out of the heavenly university ... He hath through grace taken these three heavenly degrees, to wit, union with Christ, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and experience of the temptations, which do more fit a man for preaching the gospel than all the university learning and degrees that can be had.[30]

Over the next three years he would publish another three books and his reputation both as a preacher and an author was increasing.

In the midst of all this activity he was struck in 1658 by another heavy blow. His wife had given birth to their fourth child but the joy of having a new son, Thomas, was muted as Mary gradually weakened and died. She could have been little more than twenty-eight. We can only imagine John's grief. He now had four children, the eldest of whom, Mary, had been born blind and the youngest just a baby and he knew these children needed a mother and he needed a wife and just short of a year later he married again and found in Elizabeth a young women who was undoubtedly God's provision for him.

Great changes had come about in England, Oliver Cromwell had died in 1658 and his son, Richard, who had been appointed his successor proved inadequate for the task. By 1660 the monarchy was restored and Charles II was on the throne. Within weeks the change was felt and the Independent church in Bedford were put out of the parish church building which they had occupied for seven years. John was to preach on 12 November 1660 and, as he made his way to the venue, he knew he was under surveillance and that a warrant had been issued for his arrest. Friends suggested that he should cancel the meeting but he refused:

> No I will not stir, neither will I have the meeting dismissed for this ... Come, be of good cheer, let us not be daunted; our cause is good, we need not be ashamed of it, to preach God's word is so good a work that we shall be well rewarded if we suffer for that.[31]

He was indeed arrested and was dragged through a charade of a trial during which he was made the offer that if would desist from

preaching he would be freed, his response was, "If you release me today, I will preach again tomorrow.". At this time Elizabeth was pregnant with their first child but the shock and trauma of her husband's arrest caused a premature birth and the baby died. This was the beginning of twelve long years of imprisonment for John. Initially he enjoyed a measure of liberty at times as his kindly jailer would allow him to leave the prison and on one occasion he even travelled as far as London. This was short lived, however, because the authorities were made aware of the jailer's laxity and threatened him severely and so the conditions became much more onerous for John. Prison conditions in that era were far removed from what they are today and are not at all reflected in the artistic representations of Bunyan in his prison cell that were later circulated:

> "Many of the prisons were fit only for beasts. Sanitation, even at best, was extremely rudimentary, and often it did not exist at all ... the discomfort because of the filth and stench of the gaols might afflict even moderately fortunate prisoners ..."[32]

Elizabeth was heroic in her endeavours to have her husband released but all to no avail, there were those who were determined to have Bunyan silenced and would not be moved by any appeals. At one point she was asked whether her husband would cease preaching, her reply was clear: "My lord, he dares not leave preaching as long as he can speak."[33]

When she had pursued all avenues for his release and failed she burst into tears, she explained to John that these were not tears of self-pity but for his persecutors:

> ... to think of the sad account such poor creatures will give at the coming of the Lord, when they shall there answer for all things whatsoever they have done in the body whether it be good or whether it be bad.[34]

Little wonder Bunyan's major biographer said of her: "Elizabeth Bunyan was simply an English peasant woman, could she have

spoken with more dignity had she been a crowned queen?"[35]

This imprisonment brought indescribable pain for John even though he had been prepared for it:

> ... if ever I would suffer rightly I must pass a sentence of death upon everything that can properly be called a thing is this life, even to reckon myself, my wife, my children, my health, my enjoyments, and all, as dead to me, and myself as dead to them.

When it came to it, the parting was bitter:

> ... the parting with my wife and poor children hath oft been to me in this place as the pulling of my flesh from my bones ... especially my poor blind child, who, lay nearer my heart than all I had besides; O the thoughts of the hardship I thought my blind one might go under, would break my heart to pieces ... O I saw in this condition I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet thought I, I must do it, I must do it.[36]

In the midst of his grief he knew the comfort of God:

> I did meet my God sweetly in the prison again, comforting me and satisfying me that it was his will and mind that I should be there ... Let the rage and malice of men be never so great, they can do no more, nor go further, than God permits them; but when they have done their worst, 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God'.[37]

Indeed he went so far as to write: "I have often said, were it lawful, I could pray for greater trouble, for the greater comforts sake."[38]

His enemies may have thought to silence him but in fact the years of imprisonment proved to be incredibly fruitful. During this time he became a spiritual counsellor to those who visited him as he recounts in 'The Life and Death of Mr Badman'. He also continued preaching to those who were confined with him. In 1662 sixty people who had gathered to worship were arrested and marched to Bedford jail and there Bunyan preached to them. One present later

wrote:

> In the midst of the hurry which so many new comers occasioned, I have heard Mr Bunyan both preach and pray with that mighty Spirit of faith and plerophory (fullness) of Divine assistance, that has made me stand and wonder.[39]

Added to this he somehow managed to write and his output was quite astonishing. Prior to his arrest he had written four books but during his time in prison he produced eleven covering a wide range of themes and genres ... some were lengthy poems while others were doctrinal or dealt with Christian experience but perhaps the best known is his autobiographical 'Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners' which was to become a classic in Christian literature. It was also at this time that the seeds for his most influential work were sown. While he was writing another book, probably 'The Heavenly Footman', ideas for 'The Pilgrim's Progress' began to take shape although at that time he had no thoughts of publishing it, it was merely for his own diversion:

> "When at first I took my pen in hand
> Thus for to write I did not understand
> That I at all should make a little book
> In such a mode. Nay I had undertook
> To make another, which, when almost done,
> Before I was aware, I this begun ...
> ...Neither did I but vacant seasons spend
> In this my scribble; nor did I intend
> But to divert myself in doing this,
> From worser thoughts, which make me do amiss."[40]

In 1662 the dreadful Act of Uniformity had been passed but on 15 March 1672, King Charles II exercised his royal prerogative and announced the Declaration of Religious Indulgence which meant that hundreds of men and women were freed from prison and among them was John Bunyan. Included in the Declaration was the

granting of licences for Dissenting places of worship and licences for preachers to officiate at their services and John was also licensed. Just month prior to this on 21 December 1671 the church in Bedford had met and agreed to: "... call forth and appoint our brother John Bunyan to the pastoral office or eldership".

Now John was free and could take up his pastoral responsibilities and on the same day he was licensed, 9 May 1672, a barn the church had taken possession of was also licensed as their place of meeting. The new pastor gave himself tirelessly to his work. He had been a popular preacher before his imprisonment with hundreds attending his ministry and now his popularity grew and he was in great demand but he managed to keep writing and in a short time had two more books in print. Storm clouds were gathering again however and in March 1673 Parliament repealed the Declaration of Indulgence and the Test Act was introduced under which no one could hold any civil or military office without conforming to the established church. This was followed on 3 February 1675 with a proclamation that retracted the licenses granted to dissenting preachers and anyone caught officiating at a service that deviated from the state church liturgy was liable to a fine of £20 and £40 for a second offence. Four weeks later a warrant was issued for the arrest of John Bunyan and he was already in trouble for disobeying an order a year earlier to attend his local parish church and receive the sacrament there. He now became a pastor on the run and preaching at clandestine meetings at every opportunity. Eventually, at the close of 1676 he returned to Bedford and by the end of that year he was in prison again. His imprisonment was short, he was released in June 1677, but it still gave him time to complete 'The Pilgrim's Progress' and another wonderful book, 'Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ'. Christian's story was published in 1678 and went through six reprints in the author's lifetime. The remainder of his life was spent, preaching, pastoring and writing. It was said that, with just one day's notice that John Bunyan was to preach, crowds would pack the building to capacity. At seven o'clock in the morning, regardless of the weather, 1200 would gather to hear him preach, Charles Doe speaks of an occasion

when 3000 gathered and Bunyan had to be pulled over the people to get to the pulpit.

By August 1688 John Bunyan was a household name, he had survived prison and had just recovered from a serious illness and, although just short of sixty, he seemed to be at the peak of his powers. He had completed the manuscript of 'The Excellency of a Broken Heart' and was preparing to make the sixty-mile trip to London to preach. Before leaving, a young man who had fallen out with his father begged him to call to see his father in Reading to try to bring about reconciliation between father and son. Bunyan agreed even though it meant his journey would be much longer. The visit to Reading was successful and from there he continued his journey to London. It wasn't long until he was engulfed in a tremendous storm but he kept on his way and arrived late that night at the home of John Strudwick. His host was greatly concerned about his condition and immediately got him into a warm bed and for several days he was very unwell but the fever seemed to abate and John was determined to fulfil his preaching engagement. He preached from John 1:13 and as he drew to a conclusion he exhorted the congregation: "Consider that the holy God is your Father, and let this oblige you to live like the children of God, that you may look your Father in the face with comfort another day."[41]

He returned to John Strudwick's home where the illness struck even more severely and all in the home could tell the end was near. He spent ten days burning with fever and then the end of his pilgrimage came on Friday, 31 August 1688. Sadly, it does not seem that his beloved Elizabeth was with him but those who were in the midst of many tears heard his last words, spoken with great difficulty:

> Weep not for me but for yourselves ... I go to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will, no doubt through the mediation of his blessed Son, receive me, though a sinner; where I hope we ere long shall meet and sing the new song and remain everlastingly happy, world without end.[42]

There is no record of his funeral other than the bare facts that he was buried in 'Baptist Corner' at Bunhill Fields graveyard, not far from his close friend John Owen, the great theologian who frequently had Bunyan preach in his own pulpit and who famously replied when asked disdainfully by Charles II: "Why do you listen to a tinker prate?" He replied: "Had I the tinkers abilities, please your Majesty, I would gladly relinquish all my learning."[43]

THE PASSIONS THAT DOMINATED HIS LIFE

I use the term 'passion' with a degree of reticence because it has been so overused in these days to the extent it has become demeaned but with Bunyan no other term seems adequate, he was a man of burning passion in five areas.

The Bible

For him there was no book like the Bible, he was utterly saturated in it. In the words of Spurgeon:

> Read anything of his, and you will see that it is almost like reading the Bible itself. He has studied our Authorised Version, which will never be bettered, as I judge, till Christ shall come; he has read it till his whole being was saturated with scripture; and, though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his Pilgrim's Progress – that sweetest of all prose poems – without continually making us feel and say, "Why, this man is a living Bible!" Prick him anywhere; and you will find that his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his soul is full of the Word of God.[44]

That is not only true of Pilgrim's Progress, for example, George Offor estimates that in his 'The Saints Knowledge Of Christ's Love', there are four hundred and forty distinct references to scripture. He practiced the counsel he gave to others, "Daily bring thy heart and the Word of God together, that thy heart may be levelled by it, and also filled with it."[45]

But Bunyan's knowledge and use of scripture flowed from his

conviction about its authority - the Bible is to be obeyed. When being interrogated by his accusers he was asked by Sir John Kelynge: "Do you come to church – you know what I mean, to the parish church?" His response was clear: "No, I do not because I do not find it commanded in the Word of God that I should."[46] He urged:

> Be well acquainted with the Word, and the general rules of holiness; to wit, the moral law ... The law is cast behind the back of many, when it should be carried in the hand and the heart, that we might do it, to the end that the gospel which we profess might be glorified in the world.[47]

The Bible must also be dealt with carefully and correctly: "Let me die with the Philistines rather than deal corruptly with the Word of God."[48] He issued the warning:

> Let ministers therefore look to this, and take heed, lest instead of making their notions stoop to the Word, they make the Scriptures stoop to their notions.[49]

It was utterly indispensable to him, in one of his controversies with the Quakers of his day when a woman, Ann Blackley, urged him to throw away the scriptures, his answer was: "No! For then the devil would be too hard for me!"

Not only was he convinced of the authority of scripture, he was also convinced of their sufficiency:

> The scriptures spoken by the holy men of God are a sufficient rule to instruct to salvation them that do assuredly believe and close in with what they hold forth.[50]

He develops and applies this truth very powerfully in the latter part of 'A Few Sighs from Hell', an exposition of Luke 16:19-32.

God

Flowing from his passion for the Bible is his passion for God. The God he found revealed in the Bible is truly breath-taking as he

explains in the opening sentences of his 'Exposition of the First Ten Chapters of Genesis':

> God is a Spirit, infinite, incomprehensible, perfect and unspeakably glorious in his being, attributes, and works ... In his attributes of wisdom, power, justice, holiness, mercy etc. He is also inconceivably perfect and infinite, not to be comprehended by things in earth, or things in heaven; known in the perfection of his being only to himself. The seraphim cannot behold him, but through a veil; no man can see him in his perfection and live.[51]

This God is a God who is to be feared. One writer has stated: "If we single out the predominant tone of Bunyan's sermons, we would have to give priority to fear."[52] That is perhaps putting it too strongly, but certainly the fear of God is a major theme in his writings and is most fully developed in his 'Treatise on the Fear of God'. There he writes:

> The presence of a king is dreadful to the subject, yea, though he carries it never so condescendingly; if then there be so much glory and dread in the presence of the king, what fear and dread must there be, think you, in the presence of the eternal God?[53]

Or as he put it in 'The Saint's Knowledge of Christ's Love': "Greatness should beget fear, greatness should beget reverence: Now who so great as our God; and so, who to be feared like him!"[54]

Among all the cast of characters that populate Bunyan's wonderful allegory, 'The Holy War', none is more important than Mr Godly Fear. He is described as a man of courage, conduct and valour and Bunyan writes of him: "I have wished sometimes that that man had had the whole rule of the town of Mansoul."[55] But this fear of God is a grace to be cherished:

> It seems to me this grace of fear is the darling grace, the grace that God sets his heart upon at the highest rate. As it were he embraces and hugs, and lays the man in his bosom that hath, and grows strong, in this grace

of the fear of God.[56]

Yet this is not a servile fear, the terror of a wrathful and vengeful judge, rather it is fear shot through with love. This is particularly true of God as viewed in Christ and Bunyan's expressions of love are deeply moving:

> Yet I saw my sin most barbarous, and a filthy crime ... that I had horribly abused the Son of God: wherefore I felt my soul greatly to love and pity him, and my bowels to yearn towards him; for I saw he was still my friend, and did reward me good for evil; yea, the love and affection that then did burn within to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ did work, at that time, such a strong and hot desire of revengement upon myself for the abuse I had done unto him, that, to speak as then I thought, had I had a thousand gallons of blood within my veins, I could freely then have spilt it all at the command and feet of this my Lord and Saviour.[57]

Love for God in Christ is inevitable if we understand the love of God in Christ:

> God is love, Christ is God: therefore Christ is love, love naturally. Love therefore is essential to his being. He may as well cease to be, as cease to love.[58]

His estimation of the Person of Christ is conveyed in the titles of some of his books: Christ a Complete Saviour; The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate; Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ; The Saint's Knowledge of Christ's Love; to mention but a few.

The Souls of Men

Bunyan yearned over the souls of men. His view of the state and value of the soul found fullest expression in 'The Greatness of the Soul and the Unspeakableness of the Loss thereof'. It was a theme he returned to in other works:

> He that would know what a soul is, let him read in letters of blood the

> price and purchase of a soul. It was not for a light, a little, an inconsiderable thing, that Christ Jesus underwent what he suffered when he was in the world and gave himself a ransom for souls. No, no! The soul is a great, a vast thing, notwithstanding it is so little set by of some.[59]

It was this conviction that led to the writing of one of his most powerful works, 'A Few Sighs from Hell', or 'The Groans of a Damned Soul', an exposition of Luke 16:19-31.

Preaching

Because of these convictions Bunyan was both passionate about and passionate in his preaching. He suffered because of his refusal to desist from preaching not because he was unreasonably stubborn but because of his convictions about preaching. He was convinced that he was called to preach because of his evident giftedness for the task and because of the affirmation of this gift by the call of the church. He expressed his view to the Clerk of the Peace, Paul Cobb:

> Wycliffe saith, that he which leaveth off preaching and hearing the Word of God for fear of excommunication of men, he is already excommunicated of God, and shall in the day of judgement be counted a traitor to Christ.[60]

He was pre-eminently a preacher and the bulk of his writing flowed out of his preaching, that's why his practice was not to write his sermons and then preach them, but to preach his sermons and then write them and so they developed into books.

> My heart has been so wrapped up in this excellent work, that I counted myself more blessed and honoured of God by this than if he had made me the emperor of the Christian world, or the lord of all the glory of the earth without it.[61]

His preaching throbbed with evangelistic passion:

> I did often say in my heart before the Lord, that if to be hanged up presently before their eyes would be a means to awaken them, and confirm them in the truth, I gladly should be contented.[62]

> In my preaching I have really been in pain, and have, as it were, travailed to bring forth children to God; neither could I be satisfied unless some fruits did appear in my work. If I were fruitless it mattered not who commended me; but if I were fruitful, I cared not who did condemn.[63]

Pastor

John was also a passionate Pastor who cared deeply for his flock:

> If any of those who were awakened by my ministry do after fall back, as sometimes too many did, I can truly say that their loss hath been more to me than if one of my own children, begotten of my body, had been going to its grave.[64]

He commented: "A minister's love to his flock is seen in his praying for them."[65] It is recorded about him that:

> He took great care to visit the sick, and strengthen them against the suggestions of the tempter, which at such times are very prevalent ... Another part of his time he spent in reconciling differences, by which he hindered many mischiefs, and saved some families from ruin; and in such fallings out, he was uneasy, till he found a means of reconciliation, and became a peace maker.[66]

Little wonder then, as we have seen that on the last journey he made in this life he lengthened it considerably in his effort to reconcile an estranged father and son. He had a high view of, and a burning desire to cultivate, church fellowship:

> Church fellowship rightly managed, is the glory of the world. No place, no community, no fellowship, is bespangled with those beauties as is a church rightly knit together to their head, and lovingly serving one another.[67]

Virtually the last words he spoke from the pulpit were:

> Dost thou see a soul that has the image of God in him? Love him, love him; say, This man and I must go to heaven one day; serve one another, do good for one another; and if any wrong you, pray to God to right you, and love the brotherhood.[68]

It is perhaps this desire that led him to hold and espouse views regarding the place and practice of baptism which occasioned great controversy. He held to both open communion and open church membership and explained his position in three works, 'A Confession of my Faith'; 'Differences in Judgement about Water Baptism - No Bar to Communion'; and 'Peaceable Principles and True'. In these, perhaps unwittingly, he does seem to lessen the importance of baptism and appears to view it as being primarily for the benefit it conveyed to the one baptised, as he put it in answer to the question, Why then were they baptised? "That their own faith by that figure might be strengthened in the death and resurrection of Christ."[69]

It's also interesting that while he was baptised as a believer he himself makes little mention of it and there is no record of either of his wives being baptised and most, if not all of his children including those with his second wife, Elizabeth, were baptised as infants in the local parish church. Added to that when he had the Bedford church licensed it was not as a Baptist church but as Congregational.

THE PROVIDENCES THAT MOULDED HIS LIFE

As we examine the life of this wonderful man of God there are many lessons to learn from the providential dealings of God with him. Firstly there is what we could call the natural providences, that is to say, the natural abilities with which God blessed him, his tremendous imagination coupled with his powers of observation. Lord Macaulay observed:

> We are not afraid to say that though there were many clever men in

> England during the latter half of the seventeenth century, there were only two minds which possessed the imaginative faculty to a very eminent degree. One of those minds produced the Paradise Lost, and the other the Pilgrim's Progress.[70]

It was this combination of imagination and observation that was able to produce the marvellous array of unforgettable characters in 'The Pilgrim's Progress' and 'The Holy War'. They are also evidenced in Bunyan's book of poems for children in which he draws spiritual lessons from objects as common place as an egg, a frog, a spider and even a sheet of white paper. But along with these abilities was his astounding retention, he had the most amazing memory, especially for scripture, and he was able to draw from his memory the most obscure verses of scripture and employ them in a perfectly apt way.

Then there are the apparently insignificant providences in his life. Think of the books he encountered. It seems that, prior to his conversion, he read the hugely popular 'chap books' that were in circulation. These were cheap pamphlets that told stories of dragons, ogres, giants and knights and two of them, 'George on Horseback' and 'Bevis of Southampton', are mentioned in 'A Few Sighs from Hell'. These undoubtedly came to sanctified good use in the allegories he would eventually write. Then there are the two books that came with his poverty stricken first wife, 'The Plain Man's Pathway' and 'The Practice of Piety'. The influence of these books is clearly seen in Bunyan's own preaching and writing. This is true not just in his theology but even in the form of much if his writing 'The Plain Man's Pathway' is written in the form of a dialogue and this is the literary device used by Bunyan in much of 'The Pilgrim's Progress' and his 'Life and Death of Mr Badman' is in the form of a dialogue between two individuals, Wiseman and Attentive. Then there is also the old badly tattered copy of Luther's commentary on Galatians that somehow came into his possession and of which he wrote:

> I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians, excepting the Holy Bible, before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience.[71]

But what tremendous results were to flow from the seemingly insignificant occurrence of him overhearing some aged ladies sitting in the sunshine talking about the things of God, how different his life would have been if they had been gossiping about their neighbours!

Above all these things, however, and overarching all his life is the fact of his providential sufferings. He endured the harrowing sufferings of life, the death of his mother followed so quickly by the death of his sister. Then as a young man the birth of his beloved daughter Mary who came into the world blind and, still as a very young man, the death of his wife, who was no more than twenty-eight, just after she had given birth to their fourth child. Added to all of that when he was arrested his second wife Elizabeth, who was expecting their first child, went into premature labour and the baby died. He knew much of the sufferings of life and without doubt this served to make his heart tender. Towards the end of his life he would say:

> If thou canst hear and bear the rod of affliction which God shall lay upon thee, remember this lesson – thou art beaten that thou mayest be better ... The school of affliction is the school of light ... In times of affliction we commonly meet with the sweetest experiences of the love of God.[72]

If the sufferings of life were intense for him, even more so were the sufferings of faith. He endured immense emotional, psychological and spiritual buffetings as he was being brought to faith and this all served to prepare him to be the physician for souls that he became. Most intense of all, however, was his suffering for faith. He himself famously affirmed:

> I have determined, the Almighty God being my help and shield, yet to

> suffer, if frail life might continue so long, even till the moss shall grow on my eyebrows, rather than thus to violate my faith and principles.[73]

But in all of these sufferings he saw the hand of God:

> The times, then, and the seasons, even for the sufferings of the people of God, are not in the hands of their enemies, but in the hand of God.[74]

> Since the rod is God's as well as the child, let us not look upon our troubles as if they came from, and were managed only be hell."[75]

He testified concerning his time in prison:

> I never had in all my life so great an inlet into the Word of God as now; those Scriptures that I saw nothing in before, are made in this place to shine upon me; Jesus Christ also was never more real and apparent than now, here I have seen him and felt him indeed ... Were it lawful, I could pray for greater trouble, for the greater comforts sake.[76]

It is beyond question that were it not for the providential sufferings of John Bunyan we would never have had the benefits that flowed from his agile mind that seemed to spark and flash with spiritual electricity.

Various attempts have been made to identify individuals that crossed Bunyan's path who could have provided the template for some of the memorable characters in Pilgrim's Progress. The fact is, however, that the author himself seems to epitomise some of them very clearly. There are two that stand out above them all, firstly, in the first part of Pilgrim's Progress there is the man in the picture at Mr Interpreter's house. He had:

> ... eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written on his lips, the world was behind his back. It stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head.

When he asks what the picture meant Christian is told:

> The man whose picture this is, is one of a thousand: he can beget children, travail in birth with children, and nurse them himself when they are born.[77]

Then at the end of the second part of the book we read about Mr Stand-Fast:

> When Mr Stand-fast had thus set things in order, and the time come for him to haste him away, he also went down to the river. Now there was a great calm at that time in the river; wherefore Mr Stand-fast, when he was about half-way in, stood and talked to his companions ... This river has been a terror to many; yea, the thoughts of it also have often frightened me. Now, methinks I stand easy ... the thoughts of what I going to, and of the conduct that waits for me on the other side, doth lie as a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey, my toilsome days are ended. I am going now to see the head that was crowned with thorns and that face that was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith; but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with him in whose company I delight myself ... Now, while he was thus in discourse, his countenance changed, his strong man bowed under him; and after he had said, take me, for I come unto thee, he ceased to be seen of them.[78]

How we thank God for the wonderful tinker, dreamer and preacher, John Bunyan, the man in the picture, one in a thousand, and the true Mr Stand-Fast.

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WHY THE REFORMATION FAILED IN IRELAND

DAVID LUKE

The failure of the Reformation in Ireland has been widely recognised by historians. They have found it more difficult, however, to agree about the reason for its failure. In order to begin to understand why it failed it is necessary to sketch some of the historical background in order to understand attempts to introduce the Reformation in Ireland.

THE BACKGROUND

The Norman arrival in Ireland in the late twelfth century began a period of English rule in the country. In 1155 Henry II was granted the title Dominus Hiberniae, Lord of Ireland, by Pope Adrian IV (the only Englishman ever to have been appointed Pope). With this title he was given authority to subdue the semi-autonomous Irish Church and bring it under greater papal control. Ireland, technically, became a fiefdom of the papacy under English control.

Ireland at this stage was not a single nation but a collection of rival kingdoms. One estimate is that there were around sixty

different jurisdictions in Ireland. Over the course of the next four centuries England sought to gain ever greater control over Ireland. It did this through a pattern of shifting alliances, local agreements and military conquest.

By the reign of Henry VIII in the sixteenth century English control of Ireland was still largely limited to the area around Dublin known as the 'Colony' or 'the Pale.' Another large swathe of Ireland known as 'the lordship', which was mostly in the south and south west, was under English influence but ruled by Old English lords. These were men of Norman descent who, while describing themselves as English, ran largely autonomous earldoms. Their allegiance to the English crown was, at best, unreliable. The rest of Ireland, the Midlands, the West and the North were still under the rule of Gaelic Irish chieftains.

Henry VIII

By the 1530s after unrest in Ireland Henry VIII moved to exercise greater authority in Ireland. This was in part to stop disturbances in Ireland and in part to assert greater control over the Irish Church which would parallel the control he had by then gained over the English Church. In 1541 the Irish Parliament passed a law-making Henry King of Ireland and by 1547 his supremacy in the Irish Church was complete. Over the next sixty years or so, through a mixture of carrot and stick, the whole of Ireland was brought under the control of the English Crown.

The idea that Henry was a reformer of the church is really a piece of popular historical revisionism. He had little interest the reform of the church, rather he was interested in the control of the church and the exploitation of its wealth. He flirted with Protestant doctrines for a time but hated Lutheranism and remained Catholic in his theology until his death.

Edward VI and Mary

It was not until the succession of Edward VI in 1547 that Protestantism was established first as the religion of England and

then of Ireland in 1549. Edward and his advisers initially had little interest in reforming the Irish Church as they had enough to deal with in England. When they did seek its reform, such reforms were limited and often resisted. With the end of his short reign and the succession of the Catholic Mary in 1553 Edward's reforms were overthrown in both England and Ireland. Once again Ireland became Catholic. Unrelated to Mary's religious policy came her policy of plantation in Ireland. In an attempt to bring Ireland under increasing Crown control Mary began to plant groups of English settlers in Ireland. These groups were planted either as model communities or, more often, rebellious locals were uprooted, dispersed and replaced by English settlers. The policy met with mixed results and was a complete disaster in Ulster, the most Gaelic of the Irish provinces. This policy of plantation started by a Catholic monarch would, ironically, become the mainstay of Protestantism in Ireland for centuries to come.

Elizabeth I

With the death of Mary ecclesiastical policy shifted once again. Elizabeth I became Queen of England and Ireland in 1558 and once again Protestantism was restored in both kingdoms with Elizabeth as the Supreme Governor of the Church. Although Protestantism was the only legally recognised religion in Ireland, and there were severe penalties on the statute book for anyone who did not conform, Elizabeth's administration initially tolerated those Catholics who dissented.

When in 1570 the Pope declared Elizabeth to be a heretic and released anyone from any oaths of allegiance given to her there was a significant policy shift. Anyone who was a Catholic was seen now as a threat to national security. There then followed periods when anti-Catholic legislation was enforced, albeit inconsistently. The need for such legislation seemed to be all the more necessary given the turbulent state of Ireland where there was much resistance to English rule, most notably in Ulster. Amidst this unrest a number of Irish leaders sought to cement alliances with Catholic Spain, the

foremost enemy of Protestant England. Religion and politics were driving England and Ireland further apart.

In an attempt to strengthen the foothold of Protestantism in Ireland during Elizabeth's reign, Trinity College was established in Dublin in 1592. It was founded to give men a sound Protestant education and to prepare them for ministry. Its first forty years were dominated by leading English clergy of Puritan sympathies. This meant that the outlook of the College and its graduates was strongly predestinarian.

In 1602 a translation of the New Testament into Irish was published. Nicholas Walsh, one of the bishops in the Church of Ireland, who also translated prayer books and catechisms into Irish started this work. It had taken almost thirty years to complete the translation and it was hoped that it would break the hold of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

By the end of the Tudor period Ireland was effectively under the control of the English Crown but the Reformation of the church had not yet been fully implemented.

Religious Policy of James I

In 1603 James VI of Scotland became King James I of England and Ireland. At the outset of his reign, in 1605, he was confronted by the Gunpowder Plot which led to an initial hardening of attitudes to Catholicism in England. This, along with the Flight of the Earls, the last of the Ulster Chieftains, in 1607 led Irish Protestants to hope that James would take a tough line and impose a strong Protestant settlement in Ireland. Yet, while the English government was initially happy to go along with a policy of coercion in Ireland, once the heat had gone out of the Gunpowder Plot it was more inclined to seek more peaceful means. They did this, not least, because they had one eye on international relations and did not want to provoke Spain. The Catholic Church on the continent reciprocated with a more conciliatory attitude towards James as a legitimate earthly monarch. Gradually the policy of coercion in Ireland gave way to one of de facto tolerance.

The result of this tolerance by the English Crown along with the failure of the Reformation to take root in Ireland led Irish Protestants to feel more embattled. They became more stridently anti-Catholic in their outlook and sought, where possible, to take more stringent measures against Catholics who were found to be in breach of the law. For example, in 1612, the Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor, Cornelius O'Devany, then aged about 80, was hung drawn and quartered for treason. In 1613 the Irish Parliament, now packed with new English settlers, further strengthened the recusancy laws in the belief that only coercion could now bring Protestantism to Ireland.

The Plantation of Ulster

Colonisation of the province of Ulster was started by private individuals from England and Scotland in 1606. The Flight of the Earls in 1607 opened further opportunities for Plantation and in 1609 it became official English policy as James was persuaded that this would civilise Ulster. Under this policy he gave control of large parts of Ulster to his supporters from both England and Scotland.

To underpin the Plantation:

- All settlers had to be English speaking and Protestant.
- Irish Catholic landowners were removed from their lands and resettled.
- No Irish tenants were allowed on the land. All land was to be settled with non-native tenants and could not be resold to the native Irish.
- Plantations were to be concentrated around new towns and English garrisons.
- The Irish Church was granted all lands and buildings previously owned by the Catholic Church.

The Plantation, however, introduced new ecclesiastical tensions

in Ulster. The majority of the new settlers were Scots Presbyterians rather than Anglicans. This created unease amongst the Irish Anglican hierarchy. As a result, the English became more concerned about their dissent while at the same time adopting a more tolerant attitude to Catholicism. This created the perception amongst many Irish Protestants that the English government was tougher on loyal Protestants than upon disloyal Catholics. The result was a further hardening of anti-Catholic sentiments amongst Protestants.

Charles I and Ireland

Charles I came to the throne in 1625. Finding himself at war with Spain, Charles attempted to raise money. He also wished to stop Ireland becoming a back door for a Spanish invasion. Consequently, in 1628, he offered some concessions to Irish Catholics in return for money for the upkeep of his army. These concessions, fifty-one in total, were known as 'the Graces.' Irish Protestants were alarmed by this new development and under the leadership of the new Archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher, they compiled a statement, 'Judgement of the Arch-Bishops and Bishops of Ireland'. It began,

> The religion of the papists is superstitious and idolatrous; their faith and doctrine erroneous and heretical; their church in respect of both, apostatical; to give them therefore a toleration, or to consent that they may freely exercise their religion, and profess their faith and doctrine, is a grievous sin.

'The Graces' came to nothing when the Irish Parliament (including its Catholic members) refused to confirm them. The move had alarmed Irish Protestants, however, and led Ussher and others to seek greater enforcement of conformity to the Irish church.

The arrival in Ireland of Thomas Wentworth as Lord Deputy in 1632 and John Bramall as Bishop of Derry in 1634 changed the religious landscape again. Their policy was that the church was now to become a long term agent for the evangelism of Ireland and it was

to be re-organised along Laudian lines.[1] In 1635 Bramall pushed for the Church of Ireland, which was governed by the strictly Calvinistic Irish Articles of 1615 to adopt the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. Ussher resisted but managed only a compromise with the adoption of the Thirty-Nine Articles but not the removal of the Irish Articles. In reality, Ussher had been defeated and he retired to pursue more scholarly recreations whilst Bramall became leader of the church in all but name.

A new Court of High Commission, established in 1636 with a view to tackling Catholicism and halting the growth of Presbyterianism, added further to Protestant grievances. Once more it seemed that it was used more to punish Presbyterian dissenters than Catholic recusants. If Wentworth saw the imposition of conformity amongst Catholics as a long-term goal but one that could not be achieved until the right infrastructure was in place this was not a strategy that Irish Protestants understood.

Despite perceived leniency directed towards Catholics it did little to woo them. Instead, they continued to smart over the failure of Charles to implement 'the Graces'. At the same time Catholicism in Ireland did not stand still or go into decline. Instead, it prospered through the work of European missionaries coming into Ireland and keeping Catholicism vibrant.

Also, amongst Ulster Presbyterians resentment towards Wentworth grew. This was initially because of his attempts to make them conform. The antipathy was further encouraged when Wentworth became the King's chief trouble shooter in Scotland where there were strong links with Ulster Presbyterians. By 1641 Ireland was seething with religious discontent on all sides.

The 1641 Rebellion

What tipped the scales towards rebellion in Ireland in 1641 was a poor harvest and talk in the Long Parliament of invading Ireland to eradicate Catholicism. This proposal was made in an attempt to undermine any threat of an Irish Catholic army being raised in support of King Charles as England teetered on the brink of civil

war. Amidst this uncertainty a group of Irish Catholic gentry conceived a plan to seize Dublin Castle and other strategic centres in Ireland, remove Planters and in this way force a weakened King to make concessions to Catholics.

The rebels, it seems, had originally considered a fairly bloodless coup d'état relying upon the element of surprise rather than force. If that was the case, events soon spiralled out of control. Very soon atrocities multiplied on both sides. Protestant settlers were attacked, driven from their homes and murdered, with an estimated 12,000 settlers dying, mostly from cold and malnutrition, along with an unknown but sizable number of Catholics.

By 1642 the rebellion had burned itself out. Amidst the confusion and distraction caused by the English political crisis that would lead to the Civil War a new Catholic government of Ireland, known as the Confederation of Kilkenny, was established. A more regular war then ensued between Irish Catholic and Protestant settler forces. The Confederates received modest help from European Catholic nations. They also received considerable support from the Papacy, as Pope Urban VII sought to restore Catholicism in Ireland. The involvement of the Papacy, however, only fuelled internal divisions in the Confederation which ultimately helped to undermine it.

In 1649 Oliver Cromwell invaded Ireland and by 1653 his forces had crushed the Confederation leading to the confiscation of Catholic lands and the virtual destruction of the Catholic Church. For the remainder of the Interregnum the religious politics of Ireland reflected the same tensions there were in England between the various sects who made up the Parliamentary coalition.

Several of the leading figures in Cromwell's Irish Army and administration were Baptist. Indeed, baptism became a hotly contested issue in Cromwellian Ireland. By 1653 there were a number of Baptist churches established in Ireland in Dublin, Waterford, Clonmel, Kilkenny, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Wexford, Kerry and there was an attempt to establish a congregation in Carrickfergus.

Cromwell's policy in Ireland would subsequently become a byword for barbarism. It has been suggested that his punitive policy directed against Catholics missed a golden opportunity for their evangelisation. This was noted at the time by John Owen, Cromwell's chaplain in Ireland, who stated:

> How is it that Jesus Christ is only in Ireland as a lion staining all his garments with the blood of his enemies; and none to hold him out as the lamb sprinkled with his own blood to his friends?

Restoration Ireland

With the Restoration of the monarchy under Charles II came the restoration of the pre-Civil War church. The Church of Ireland became the established church once more and Dissenters, especially Presbyterians, continued to labour under disabilities such as exclusion from public office.

Catholic loyalists had their lands restored but the majority of the land confiscated under Cromwell continued in New English hands. Yet, whilst this was a great grievance, for all practical purposes Catholicism was tolerated and the infrastructure of the Catholic Church destroyed under Cromwell was quietly restored. Irish institutions gradually came under Anglican control once more as the English Crown sought to consolidate its rule in Ireland. Generally, the reign of Charles was one of comparative stability and prosperity in Ireland.

The events surrounding the proposed succession of James to the throne once more raised Catholic hopes and Protestant fears. Under James II Irish Catholics enjoyed some concrete advances, such as the admission of Catholics to public offices and, in 1689, the reversal of the land confiscations of the 1650s. The defeat of James during the Williamite Wars, however, dealt a crushing blow to Catholics from which they would not recover for over a century.

The Penal Laws

With the defeat of James Catholics and Dissenters now faced a harsh series of measures introduced by the Irish Parliament which sought both to punish Catholic rebels and to cement English Protestant rule. These are known as the Penal Laws and mark the beginning of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland.

These laws included:

- A ban on Catholics and Dissenters from Parliament and holding public office or army commissions.
- Their exclusion from the law and judiciary.
- Catholics were forbidden to marry Protestants.
- A ban on Catholics studying at Trinity College.
- A ban on Catholics sending their children abroad to be educated.
- A ban on Catholics inheriting Protestant land.
- A ban on Catholic churches being built of stone.
- A ban on Catholics becoming teachers.
- There were also several laws regarding the transfer of land which offered incentives to those who converted to Protestantism.

With the introduction of these laws Ireland remained quiet for nearly a century. The legacy of these events, however, would continue to shape the religious landscape of Ireland in the subsequent centuries, right down to the present day.

ASSESSING THE FAILURE OF THE IRISH REFORMATION

This brings us back to our central question of why the Reformation failed to take hold in Ireland. Until the late twentieth century there were broadly two views about why the Reformation failed in Ireland. Not surprisingly these two views reflected the religious divide on the

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island! For Catholic writers the Reformation failed because of the peculiar attachment of Irish Catholics to the natural faith of their ancestors. For Protestants the failure of the Reformation was due to the ignorant obduracy of Irish Catholics who remained almost uniquely impervious to the Gospel. With developments in modern Irish historiography, including the historiography of the Reformation in Ireland, such readings have been seen as partisan, hopelessly simplistic and deterministic in their approach.

As we consider why the Reformation failed in Ireland we need to think about a much more complex picture. In doing so we need to heed the warning of the great Irish historian Roy Foster who says "when faced with the complications and confrontations of Irish history ... there is an understandable temptation to simplify the story by adherence to one big idea." The danger with that, as he goes on to note, is that this is often "at the cost of misunderstanding a great deal about what was actually happening".[2]

The reality is that there is no simple cause and effect explanation of why the Reformation failed in Ireland. For, as one historian has recently noted, despite the advances in the study of the Irish Reformation in the last fifty years:

> the historiography of the Irish Reformation is much more modest, is constructed from a relatively meagre body of evidence and provides only a fragmentary and incomplete picture of the religious upheavals of the period.[3]

Based upon this 'fragmentary and incomplete picture of the religious upheavals' in Ireland I want to suggest ten factors that we need to consider as contributing to the failure of the Reformation in Ireland.

The English Reformation

The English Reformation was the longest running of all the European Reformations. It began piecemeal under Henry; leapt forward under Edward; was stopped under Mary; was reintroduced

under Elizabeth and James in a way that failed to satisfy many; seemed, in some respects, to be reversed under Charles leading to twenty years of uncertainty during the Civil War; it was finally established during the Restoration but once again in a form that left many unhappy; and only took its final form during the reign of William. The Reformation in England lasted for around one hundred and sixty years which were one hundred and sixty years of uncertainty.

Since the introduction of the Reformation in Ireland was dependent upon the Reformation in England it reflected the tensions and uncertainties of the English Reformation. The protracted and conflicting nature of the English Reformation seriously undermined attempts to introduce it in Ireland.

The interaction of political and religious concerns

At the outset, Henry's attempts to introduce the Reformation into Ireland reflected his goals for reformation in England: power and wealth rather than genuine church reform. As Felicity Heal has written recently the first thing that we must understand about the Reformation in Ireland is that it was 'incontrovertibly political'.[4] This set a pattern for what occurred over the next century and a half where all attempts to introduce reformation to Ireland reflected political concerns. In reality the introduction of the Reformation in Ireland was always subservient to English political concerns. There was more interest in the economic exploitation of Ireland than in introducing Protestantism.

One consequence of this was that policies implementing reform were often piecemeal and seldom applied with any consistency. Even penal laws were used more for protecting English political and economic interests than for promoting Protestantism amongst the Catholic population. Furthermore, since large parts of Ireland were not under English control the government and the Old English aristocracy was often hostile and the government lacked the political infrastructure to impose Protestantism.

Protestantism was a foreign faith

There was little indigenous Protestantism. By 1600 contemporary estimates were that there were only between 100 and 120 native Irish Protestants in an island whose population was around 1.4 million. Protestantism came from England and tended to be imposed along with English law. It has been noted often that Ireland did not get a Protestant Reformation but an English Protestant Reformation.

In the eyes of some historians the Reformation failed to take hold because it was always tainted with colonialism. Irish historian Crawford Gribben goes so far as to state:

> In the institutions of its day, the Irish reformation was rooted in the betrayal of the Irish people as the English government thought that the demonstration of English culture was more important than the clear communication of the gospel.[5]

One consequence of this was that Catholicism became a rallying point for both those Old English and Irish who were disaffected with English rule for a whole range of reasons including land seizures. Although this 'faith and fatherland' approach did not gather widespread acceptance it did help to sow the seeds for the later idea of Catholic/Irish identity.

Protestantism was under siege

As noted above it took a long time for English rule to roll out over all of Ireland. English Protestants were a minority among an often-hostile people and, as a result, they developed a siege mentality. This sense of siege was often deepened by the failure of successive English administrations to fully implement the Reformation and to enact penal laws consistently.

One result of this was that English Protestants became more interested in maintaining the religious establishment than spreading the gospel. The lack of Protestant clergy also meant that English Protestants could do little else than try to survive. Ireland was often the last resort for many whose Puritanism meant they could not find

a position in England. Alongside this, while Trinity College sought to address the shortage of clergy, it produced too few graduates to meet the needs of the Church.

Predestinarianism

Many of the leading figures in Ireland under Elizabeth were staunch Puritans. Under the influence of James Ussher, they developed a robust predestinarian theology with the idea of double predestination being a prominent feature. This is reflected in the Irish Articles of 1615.

This strong double-predestinarian approach helped some Protestant clergy rationalise what they perceived to be the resistance of Irish Catholics in the face of their message. In their minds Irish Catholics did not believe because they were not amongst the elect. As a result evangelism was replaced by attempts at coercion which sometimes brought conformity but without producing real change in the hearts of the people.

Racism

This siege mentality and predestinarian ethic was further allied to a deeply held sense of English racism. The English had deeply embedded racist attitudes about the Irish dating back as far as the twelfth century. In1581 one English observer noted that the Irish were:

> not Christian, civil human creatures, but rather savages or brute beasts ... [i]f hell were open and all the evil spirits abroad, they could never be worse than these Irish rogues - rather dogs or worse than dogs.

This was not an uncommon view of the Irish amongst the English.

This opinion that the Irish were sub-human meant that in the eyes of many trying to evangelise them was a waste of time. This sense of the cultural superiority of the English was reinforced by the insistence that Protestant clergy work in the English rather than Irish medium. For a nation which prided itself in having the Bible in its

own language the same gift was not as important for the Irish. The few attempts to work in Irish were often half hearted, tended to be driven by individuals and were often frowned upon at an official level.

Daily Realities

A common feature of the earlier historiography of the Irish Reformation was that the Catholics in Ireland were particularly resistant to the Gospel. Yet, in fact, they were no different from Catholics in other parts of Europe and they held many of the same criticisms of the Catholic Church. Why then did they not leave Catholicism? The reality was that they had to live amongst Catholic people and they relied upon the relationships they had with those in the Catholic community to maintain their daily existence. Those who were tempted to become Protestants were often subjected to intimidation. There were incentives to become Protestant but often these were only incentives for wealthy Catholics whilst poorer Catholics faced a different proposition.

Counter-Reformation

The English government was paranoid about Spain using Ireland as a backdoor through which to attack England. When this did not happen, they mistook the political quiet for religious conformity. Yet, while it was often quiet politically the forces of the Catholic Counter-Reformation were at work in Ireland. Many Catholics sent their sons to train for the priesthood in Europe and they then returned to carry on their ministry in Ireland. Here they helped to nurture a Catholic faith that was already embedded among the Irish population.

Also, whilst the Catholic Church was not officially recognised its structure stayed largely intact allowing it to continue functioning as a church. There was also support from the continent of Europe through the activities of the Jesuits and successive Popes.

Protestant Divisions

Although Protestants were comparatively small in number and, united in their mutual hatred of Catholicism, they were often hopelessly divided. In the 1630s the Church of Ireland became divided between Laudians and Puritans. During the Cromwellian era the church in Ireland reflected the unsettled state of Protestantism in England and Scotland. After the Restoration, Protestant Dissenters, especially Presbyterians in the north, were targeted by the Church of Ireland. The Penal Laws of the eighteenth century helped to cement the divisions between the Church of Ireland and other Protestant denominations. Protestants were often more consumed with these divisions than making common cause against Catholicism.

Violence

Throughout the long Reformation in England and Ireland there was much bloodshed. Between the reign of Henry VIII and the end of the reign of William III one estimate is that there were more than 700 Irish Catholic martyrs. Among Protestants there was a great fear that a return to Catholicism would mean a return to the policies of 'Bloody Mary'. The savage slaughter of Protestants in 1641 seemed to confirm such fears. The spectre of violence continued to drive a wedge between Protestantism and Catholicism. The violence carried out in the name of religion would live long in Irish memories and is indeed part of our story today.

CONCLUSION

The actual reasons that the Reformation failed to take hold in Ireland involves a combination of these ten factors. How exactly they combined to bring about that failure will continue to occupy historians for some time to come. Whatever the exact combination the failure of the Reformation in Ireland shaped the history of this island and helped create a stumbling block for evangelism in subsequent generations.

The American novelist, William Faulkner, who it is believed was

of Irish descent, famously wrote that "The past is never dead. It's not even past.". That is certainly the case in Ireland whereas those who are seeking to proclaim Christ's kingdom we continue to live in, with, and through the past.

NOTES

1 This policy took its name from William Laud who became Archbishop of Canterbury, 1633. He was Arminian in his views, favoured a more uniform church with stricter clerical control and he placed more emphasis on ceremony and ritual.

2 R F Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up*, (London: Penguin, 2001), p xviii

3 James Murray, *Enforcing the English Reformation in Ireland: Clerical Resistance and Political Conflict in the Diocese of Dublin*, 1534-1590 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p7

4 Quoted in Murray, Ibid p11

5 *The Irish Puritans: James Ussher and the Reformation of the Church* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2003), p17

FURTHER READING

There are few modern surveys of the Reformation in Ireland and it usually only warrants a few lines in general studies of the Reformation. Much of the most important recent work in the field has been in the form of research articles which are not always easily accessible to the general reader. Anyone wanting to explore this subject further alongside reading general histories of Ireland in this period might consider reading the following works and mining their bibliographies.

Alan Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland*, 1590-1641. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997

Crawford Gribben, *The Irish Puritans: James Ussher and the Reformation of the Church.* Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2003

W Ian P Hazlett, *The Reformation in Britain and Ireland: An Introduction.* London: T&T Clark, 2003

Henry Jeffries, *The Irish Church and the Tudor Reformations.* Dublin:

Four Courts Press, 2010

James Murray, *Enforcing the English Reformation in Ireland.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009

"SWALLOWED UP IN THE THOUGHTS OF A CRUCIFIED ... REDEEMER"

ANDREW FULLER ON THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST

MICHAEL A G HAYKIN

INTRODUCTION

There is now a broad consensus among numerous students of eighteenth-century transatlantic Christianity that British historian David Bebbington was largely correct in identifying crucicentrism, or an intense focus on the cross-work of the Lord Jesus, as one of four leading characteristics of Evangelicalism in the long eighteenth century.[1] If this scholarly agreement is correct regarding crucicentrism, and I believe it is, then there is no doubt that the East Anglian Baptist Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) was a quintessential Evangelical.[2] As his close friend and confidant John Ryland Jr (1753-1825) once noted with regard to Fuller in the year following the latter's death:

> He never seemed to be so much in his element, as when dwelling on the doctrine of the atonement. Like the Apostle Paul, he was

> determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. This doctrine rejoiced his own soul, and this he used to exhibit to others as of the greatest importance; comprising all the salvation of a needy sinner, and all the desire of a new-born soul.[3]

Fuller had been born in Wicken, a small agricultural village in Cambridgeshire, and grew up in the local Particular Baptist church at nearby Soham. After his conversion in November of 1769, he was baptized the following spring and became a member of the Soham church. Called in 1774 to the pastorate of this work, Fuller stayed until 1782, when he became the pastor of the Particular Baptist congregation at Kettering, Northamptonshire, where he served until his death in 1815. His time at the Soham pastorate was a particularly decisive period for the shaping of Fuller's theological perspective. It was during this period that he began a life-long study of the works of the New England divine Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), which, along with his humble submission to the authority of the infallible Scriptures and the fearless exercise of his mind, enabled him to become, in the words of Timothy George, "the most influential Baptist theologian between John Bunyan" in the seventeenth century and our own day.[4]

"THE PRINCIPAL GLORY OF CHRISTIANITY"

There were a number of major opponents of the preaching of the cross in the eighteenth century. The Deist Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was one such antagonist.5 Raised a Quaker, Paine became a warm advocate and brilliant popularizer of a variety of radical causes - the abolition of slavery, the American and French Revolutions, and Deism.[6] By the time he came to write the first part of his 'The Age of Reason' in 1794, though, he expressed his disapproval of all religious systems thus:

> I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life ... I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish Church, by the Roman Church, by the Greek Church, by the Turkish Church, by the Protestant Church, nor by any church

> that I know of. My own mind is my own church.[7]

As for the atoning work of Christ, Paine claimed that his rejection of it dated from his childhood:

> I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation of, who was a great devotee of the church, upon the subject of what is calledby the death of the Son of God. After the sermon was ended, I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man, that killed his son, when he could not revenge himself any other way; and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons. This was not one of those kind of thoughts that had anything in it of childish levity; it was to me a serious reflection, arising from the idea I had that God was too good to do such an action, and alsoalmighty to beany necessity of doing it. I believe in the same manner to this moment; and I moreover believe, that any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child, cannot be a true system.[8]

Over against this spurning of the cross as God's means of salvation, Fuller maintained in 1802 that just as the sun is absolutely vital for the maintenance of the solar system, so "the doctrine of the cross is to the system of the gospel; it is the life of it".[9] The atoning death of Christ, Fuller forthrightly declared twelve years later in 1814, the year before his death, is nothing less than "the life-blood of the gospel system".[10] From another perspective, the preaching and teaching of Christ crucified can be compared to "a golden link which, if laid hold of, draws with it the whole chain of evangelical truth".[11] In sum, the cross is "the grand peculiarity and the principal glory of Christianity", and all but equivalent to the gospel itself: "the doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ ... is, by way of eminency, called the gospel".[12]

Given this view of Christ's death, it is no surprise to find

Fuller asserting that it has been the doctrine of the cross that "God, in all ages, has delighted to honour". Wherever times of spiritual vitality and vigour have been enjoyed by the church - "times of great revival", as Fuller termed them - there the atoning work of Christ has held an exalted place. Fuller noted that this was the doctrine that was central to the Reformation and to which the Reformers gave a place of prominence. It was the leading theme of the Puritans and Fuller's spiritual forebears, the Nonconformists of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[13] In his own day, the missionary triumphs of the Moravian missionaries in the West Indies and among the Inuit in Greenland had been triumphs of the cross: the "doctrine of the atonement by the death of Christ ... forms the great subject of their ministry".[14]

Thus, if a church or denomination follows Paine and rejects the doctrine of the cross, it is little better than what Fuller bluntly called "a dead, putrid mass". Do away with the atoning work of Christ, and

> the whole ceremonial of the Old Testament appears to us little more than a dead mass of uninteresting matter: prophecy loses all that is interesting and endearing; the gospel is annihilated, or ceases to be that good news to lost sinners which it professes to be; practical religion is divested of its most powerful motives, the evangelical dispensation of its peculiar glory, and heaven itself of its most transporting joys.[15]

Why was it, for instance, that so many Anglican parish churches of Fuller's day were so poorly attended? To Fuller the answer was obvious: "the generality of the clergy do not preach the doctrine of the cross ... There is nothing in their preaching that interests the hearts or reaches the consciences of the people."[16] The perspective taken on the cross was, therefore, a major dividing line between a Christianity that was genuinely biblical and one that was nominal.

> We may be Christians by education, may be well versed in Christianity as a science, may be able to converse, and preach, and

> write, in defense of it; but if Christ crucified be not that to us which food is to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, we are dead while we live. We may err on other subjects and survive, though it be in a maimed state; but to err in this is to contract a disease in the vitals, the ordinary effect of which is death.[17]

Consequently, in a letter that Fuller wrote in 1796 the Baptist pastor declared that he could not acknowledge as a fellow believer anyone who did not "rely upon his [ie Christ's] atoning sacrifice for acceptance with God".[18]

"AN EXTRAORDINARY INTERPOSITION OF INFINITE WISDOM AND LOVE"

That Christ died as a substitute for sinful men and women was thus a fact that Fuller joyfully proclaimed throughout his ministry as a pastor-theologian. In 1790, reflecting on Isaiah 53, Fuller declared in a funeral sermon: Christ "bore the wrath due to our sin. The shaft of vengeance" - and the context indicates that Fuller had in mind the divine vengeance - "spent itself in his heart".[19] Thirteen years later he told his close friend and confidant, John Ryland Jr (1753—1825): "Whether Christ laid down his life as a substitute for sinners, was never a question with me. All my hope rests upon it; and the sum of my delight in preaching the gospel consists in it.". And the previous year Fuller had declared to the Socinian author Joseph Priestley that "Christ, in laying down his life for us, actually died as our substitute; endured the curse of the Divine law, that we might escape it; was delivered for our offences, that we might be delivered from the wrath to come; and all this while we were yet enemies."[20]

However, Fuller was also concerned to stress that, in believing thus about Christ's death, he did not wish to understand its substitutionary nature in strictly commercial terms where Christ suffers the exact amount necessary to pay for the debt of the elect. Fuller had no problems with talking about Christ's death as "the price of our redemption", but he was fearful that there were some English Calvinists who had taken, and were taking, the imagery too

far.[21] If the atonement is conceived as a purely commercial transaction, then once Christ has paid the penalty, sinners can demand their salvation as their due and legal right. In essence, this understanding of the atonement made God man's debtor. "In pecuniary satisfactions", Fuller emphasized, "if the creditor be but paid, whether it be by the debtor, or by a surety on his behalf, he has received his due, and no room is left for remission or for grace". But, he argued, it is not so with what took place at the cross. While Fuller certainly did not consider it inadmissible to describe sins as debts, to do so was to use metaphorical language. From Fuller's perspective, sins are crimes committed against God's law. Divine forgiveness of them on the basis of Christ's death, therefore, is from start to finish an act of pure grace, "an extraordinary interposition of infinite wisdom and love".[22] As the pastor-theologian stated in a letter that he wrote to Ryland in the spring of 1803:

> Christ merited, deserved, or if you please, purchased our redemption: but it was not with such a kind of purchase as that wherein a creditor, for value received of a surety, liberates a debtor, which renders the deliverance an act of justice and not of grace. [Were it so,] whatever grace there might have been in the provision of the surety, there would be no room for the creditor to be said to have freely forgiven the debt. ... But as the penalty, though fully borne, was borne by a substitute, we can have no claim for deliverance, except what arises from promise, that is from grace: we have no more claim than if Christ had not died; but can only plead mercy in his name.[23]

From the mid-1790s onwards, Fuller frequently employed what is now known as the governmental theory of the atonement in talking about the death of Christ. This perspective on the cross was first propounded by the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and had received a warm welcome in New England among those heirs of Jonathan Edwards who comprised what came to be known as the New Divinity movement.[24] This movement regarded sin primarily as the flouting of the moral rule of God who is the governor of the

universe. In order to maintain the honour of his government, God therefore has to punish sin. However, since God is also a God of benevolence and mercy, he finds a way whereby sin can be punished and the honour and majesty of his government upheld: Christ lays down his life, displaying God's holy aversion to sin and his unalterable determination to punish it. It is noteworthy that although Fuller began to use this way of speaking about the cross in the late 1790s,[25] he never abandoned the use of the imagery of substitution with regard to the atonement and employed it to the end of his life.[26]

"EVERY ... SPIRITUAL BLESSING ... OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST"

Fuller's writings are replete with reflection on the blessings wrought by Christ's death. He was insistent that the cross is the only way for sinners to be reconciled to a holy God. When Fuller was asked in 1798 to draw up a brief account of his early spiritual pilgrimage, Fuller noted that at the time of his conversion he was brought to the conviction that "God would be perfectly just in sending me to hell, and that to hell I must go unless I were saved of mere grace". "Mere grace", he went on to explain, entailed the relinquishing of "every false confidence" and trusting solely in the death of Christ for one's salvation. The laying down of his life on the cross, he wrote on another occasion, is "the only hope of a lost world, the only medium of acceptance with God, and the only admissible plea in our approaches before him".[27]

The Baptist pastor never tired of emphasizing, moreover, that inner peace and heart-purification from the stain of indwelling sin is to be found only in the experiential knowledge of Christ crucified. "The blood of Jesus", Fuller observed in remarks on the incident of Christ washing his disciples' feet, is "a fountain set open for sin and uncleanness".[28] The gift of the indwelling Spirit of God in the believer is also given solely on the basis of the death of Christ. As Fuller put it in his rebuttal of Thomas Paine:

> [T]he death of Christ ...[is] a subject which has occupied much attention among divines. Some have asserted that Christ by his satisfaction accomplished this only, "That God now, consistently with the honour of his justice, may pardon (returning) sinners if he willeth so to do." This is, doubtless, true, as far as it goes; but it makes no provision for the return of the sinner. This scheme, therefore, leaves the sinner to perish in impenitence and unbelief, and the Saviour without any security of seeing of the travail of his soul. For how can a sinner return without the power of the Holy Spirit? And the Holy Spirit, equally with every other spiritual blessing, is given in consideration of the death of Christ.[29]

Furthermore, it is at the cross that "the powers of darkness [are] stripped naked", Satan "foiled by the woman's Seed, and his schemes exposed to the derision of the universe".[30] And in the church "all our peace with one another is the price of his blood". Where there is agreement about the doctrine of the cross, "there will be great bearing & forbearing with each other in things of less moment".[31]

The last time that Fuller presided at the celebration of the Lord's Supper in his Kettering congregation on 22 March 1815, he was quite ill. But John Ryland recalled that Fuller spoke with particular solemnity, which made a lasting and deep impact upon those present, for it seemed to them that Fuller was "swallowed up in the thoughts of a crucified, risen and exalted Redeemer". 32 On a number of occasions when Fuller was quite ill and thought himself to be on the brink of death, he had reminded his friends that the only ground of hope which he had was the death of Jesus on his behalf. In the autumn of 1801, when he was ill with what he called an "almost continual cough" and "an almost continual fever", he wrote to a good friend, John Sutcliff (1752 - 1814), the pastor of the Baptist work in Olney, Buckinghamshire, that he was calm in the face of his possible demise.

> My mind is calm and tolerably happy. I know whom I have believed [cf 2 Timothy 1:12]. I have no misgivings as to the ground on which I stand: all the misgivings I have regard myself.

> I am a poor, polluted creature, and have been but an unprofitable servant. I could have no hope but in a Saviour, who came to save the chief of sinners.[33]

Eleven years later, when he was once again very ill, he told Sutcliff: "I have no transports, but a steady hope of eternal life on the ground of my Saviour's death".[34]

And when he did come to die in 1815, the last letter that he sent to his other close friend, John Ryland, contained similar sentiments as these two to Sutcliff. After quoting a portion of 2 Timothy 1:12, Fuller went on to say:

> I am a poor, guilty creature; but Christ is an almighty Saviour. I have preached and written much against the abuse of the doctrine of grace; but that doctrine is all my salvation and all my desire. I have no other hope, than from salvation by mere sovereign, efficacious grace, through the atonement of my Lord and Saviour. With this hope, I can go into eternity with composure.[35]

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NOTES

1 On the crucicentrism of eighteenth-century Evangelicalism, see David W Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 14-17. For scholarly approval of what has come to be called the "Bebbington quadrilateral," see, for instance, James M Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1991), 7–8; I Howard Marshall, "Are Evangelicals Fundamentalists?", *Vox Evangelica*, 22 (1992): 8–10; Derek J. Tidball, *Who are the Evangelicals? Tracing the roots of the modern movements* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 14, 99; Robert Letham, "Is Evangelicalism Christian?", *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 67 (1995): 4–8; John Wolffe, "Introduction" to his ed, *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal. Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780–1980* (London: SPCK, 1995), 4; G A Rawlyk, *Is Jesus Your Personal Saviour? In Search of Canadian Evangelicalism in the 1990s* (Montreal, QC/Kingston, ÓN: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 9, 118–126.

For critique of the Bebbington quadrilateral, see D A Carson, *The Gagging of God. Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 449–451; and the essays in Michael A G Haykin and Kenneth J Stewart, ed, *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nottingham, England: Apollos/Inter-Varsity Press, 2008).

2 For the life and ministry of Fuller, see especially Peter J Morden, *The Life and Thought of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)* (Milton Keynes, England: Paternoster, 2015). For a briefer study, see Gilbert S Laws, *Andrew Fuller: Pastor, Theologian, Ropeholder* (London: Carey Press, 1942); John Piper, *Andrew Fuller: Holy Faith, Worthy Gospel, World Mission* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016). Also see the excellent study of Fuller's theology, known in his own day as Fullerism', by E F Clipsham, "Andrew Fuller and Fullerism: A Study in Evangelical Calvinism," *The Baptist Quarterly*, 20 (1963–1964): 99–114, 146–154, 214–225, 268–276.

3 John Ryland Jr, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope Illustrated; in the Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew*

Fuller (1st ed; London: Button & Son, 1816), 580.

4 Endorsement of Peter J Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754–1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2003). I am indebted to Jeremy Walker, "'On the Side of God': Andrew Fuller's Pastoral Theology" in *The Power of God* ([London]: Westminster Conference, 2015), 8, for this reference.

5 Another prominent critic whose views Fuller refuted was the Socinian Joseph Priestley (1733–1804). See Andrew Fuller, *The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems examined and Compared, as to their Moral Tendency* (The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, ed Joseph Belcher [1845 ed; repr Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988], II, 108–242). The three-volume set of Fuller's writings will be cited as Complete Works with the appropriate volume and pagination. On Fuller's rebuttal of Priestley's Socinianism, see Michael A G Haykin, "A Socinian and Calvinist Compared: Joseph Priestley and Andrew Fuller on the Propriety of Prayer to Christ," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis/Dutch Review of Church History*, 73 (1993): 178–198.

6 Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason, introd Philip S Foner* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, Inc, 1974), 50. On the life and thought of Paine, see David Powell, *Tom Paine: The Greatest Exile* (London/Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985); Ian Dyck, ed, *Citizen of the World, Essays on Thomas Paine* (New York: St Martin's Press, Inc, 1988); Jack Fruchtman, Jr, Thomas Paine: Apostle of Freedom (New York, NY: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1994); Harlow Giles Unger, *Thomas Paine and the Clarion Call for American Independence* (New York, NY: De Capo Press, 2019).

7 Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*, Part I, Chapter 1, in Moncure Daniel Conway, ed, *The Writings of Thomas Paine* (New York, NY/London: G P Putnam's Sons, 1896), 4:22.

8 Paine, *Age of Reason*, Part I, Chapter 13, in Conway, ed, *Writings of Thomas Paine*, 4:64–65. For Fuller's rebuttal of Paine, see Andrew Fuller, *The Gospel Its Own Witness* (Complete Works, II, 1–107). For Fuller's response to Paine on the atonement, see

especially *Gospel Its Own Witness* (Complete Works, II, 74–84) and below. Also see Michael A G Haykin, "'The Oracles of God': Andrew Fuller's Response to Deism" in Michael A G Haykin, ed, *'At the Pure Fountain of Thy Word': Andrew Fuller as an Apologist* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK/Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2004), 122–138.

9 Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems* (Complete Works, II, 182).

10 Andrew Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity* (Complete Works, I, 687). See also Andrew Fuller, *Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures* (Complete Works, II, 753): "The doctrine of the atonement is, in itself, the life of the gospel system."

11 Andrew Fuller, *The Common Salvation* (Complete Works, I, 411). For a similar comment, see Fuller's statement in his *God's Approbation of our Labours Necessary to the Hope of Success* (1801) (Complete Works, I, 190): "Christ crucified is the central point, in which all the lines of evangelical truth meet and are united. There is not a doctrine in the Scriptures but what bears an important elation to it." See also Andrew Fuller, *Conformity to the Death of Christ* (Complete Works, I, 310); idem *The Great Question Answered* (Complete Works, III, 546).

12 Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems* (Complete Works, II, 181); idem *The Believer's Review of His State* (Complete Works, I, 303).

13 Fuller, *God's Approbation of our Labours* (Complete Works, I, 190); idem *The Common Salvation* (Complete Works, I, 412); idem *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems* (Complete Works, II, 121); idem *Decline of the Dissenting Interest* (Complete Works, III, 486).

14 Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems* (Complete Works, II, 128).

15 Andrew Fuller, *Christian Steadfastness* (Complete Works, I, 527); Fuller, *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems* (Complete Works, II, 191–192).

16 Fuller, *Decline of the Dissenting Interest* (Complete Works, III, 487).

17 Fuller, *Letters on Systematic Divinity* (Complete Works, I, 691).

18 Andrew Fuller, *Agreement in Sentiment the Bond of Christian Union* (Complete Works, III, 490).

19 Andrew Fuller, *Christ our Substitute in Death and Judgment* (Complete Works, I, 476).

20 Andrew Fuller, *Six Letters to Dr Ryland respecting the Controversy with the Rev A Booth* (Complete Works, II, 706); idem *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems* (Complete Works, II, 217). Fuller's *Three Conversations: Imputation, Substitution, and Particular Redemption* (Complete Works, II, 687) has a statement almost identical to that found in Six Letters to Dr Ryland.

21 Fuller, *Three Conversations* (Complete Works, II, 688); idem *The Gospel Its Own Witness* (Complete Works, II, 81).

22 Andrew Fuller, *Antinomianism Contrasted with the Religion Taught and Exemplified in the Holy Scriptures* (Complete Works, II, 757). See also Andrew Fuller, *Three Conversations* (Complete Works, II, 688–689); idem *The Lord's Prayer* (Complete Works, I, 582); idem *The Deity of Christ* (Complete Works, III, 693); idem *Gospel Its Own Witness* (Complete Works, II, 82–83, footnote).

23 Andrew Fuller, Letter to John Ryland, 6 March 1803 (cited Ryland, *Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller*, 389–390). Some of the punctuation has been added to make this text read more easily. See also the discussion of Fuller's position in this regard by Bart D Box, "The Atonement in the Thought of Andrew Fuller" (PhD thesis, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 171–173.

24 For the thinking of this movement about the atonement, see especially Frank Hugh Foster, *A Genetic History of New England Theology* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1907), 107–269; Dorus Paul Rudisill, *The Doctrine of the Atonement in Jonathan Edwards and His Successors* (New York, NY: Poseidon Books, Inc, 1971); William Breitenbach, "The Consistent Calvinism of the New Divinity Movement," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 41 (1984): 247–255; Allen C Guelzo, "Jonathan Edwards and the New

Divinity: Change and Continuity in New England Calvinism, 1758–1858" in Charles G Dennison and Richard C Gamble, ed, *Pressing Toward the Mark. Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia, PA: The Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 160–162; idem *Edwards on the Will. A Century of American Theological Debate* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 129–135. See also the substantial list of secondary studies on Jonathan Edwards' thinking about the atonement in Brandon James Crawford, "Divine Love as the Organizing Principle of Jonathan Edwards's Doctrine of Atonement," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 62, no.3 (September 2019): 563–564, n1.

25 See Michael A G Haykin, "Particular Redemption in the Writings of Andrew Fuller (1754–1815)" in David Bebbington, ed, *The Gospel in the World: International Baptist Studies* (Studies in Baptist History and Thought, vol 1; Carlisle, Cumbria/Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2002), 118–122.

26 See, for instance, Fuller, *Future Perfection of the Church* (Complete Works, I, 250); idem *Justification* (Complete Works, I, 280); idem *Believer's Review* (Complete Works, I, 303). See also the argument of Box, "Atonement in the Thought of Andrew Fuller."

27 Andrew Fuller, *Truth the Object of Angelical Research* (Complete Works, I, 665).

28 Andrew Fuller, *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet* (Complete Works, I, 657).

29 Fuller, *Gospel Its Own Witness* (Complete Works, II, 82–83, footnote). See also Andrew Fuller, *The Future Perfection of the Church* (Complete Works, I, 251–252).

30 Fuller, *Truth the Object of Angelical Research* (Complete Works, I, 665).

31 Andrew Fuller, *A Peaceful Disposition* (Complete Works, I, 538); idem Letter to Christopher Anderson, 26 March 1805 (Baptist Missionary Society Archives, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford).

32 Ryland, *Life and Death of the Reverend Andrew Fuller*, 580.

33 Andrew Fuller, *Letter to John Sutcliff, 1 September 1801* (Letters of Andrew Fuller, typescript transcript, Angus Library, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford).

34 Andrew Fuller, *Letter to John Sutcliff, 31 May 1812* (Letters of Andrew Fuller).

35 Andrew Fuller, Letter to John Ryland, Jr., 28 April 1815, in John Ryland Jr, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope illustrated; in the Life and Death of the Rev Andrew Fuller* (2nd ed; London: Button & Son, 1818), 355.

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