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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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EDITORIAL

In 2022 the Historical Society was able to finally emerge from under the restraints of Covid. Although Crawford Gribben's lecture had to be delivered by Zoom because of illness within his family the other lectures throughout the year were able to be delivered in person to the appreciation of those in attendance.

In March Professor Crawford Gribben delivered a fascinating account of the tensions between Baptists and Brethrenism in the 19th century. After referring to Alexander Carson's somewhat unorthodox views and church practices, he then highlighted both similarities and differences of views between Carson and J.N. Darby. Most interesting was references to Carson's son James, who was a "vociferous critic of the Brethren" and his granddaughter, Margaret, who seems to have committed herself to the open Brethren, and may have financed the construction of a gospel hall in Portrush. As the history of the Carson family suggests, the relationship between Brethren and Baptists would remain ambiguous.

It is always of interest to Irish Baptists to be able to learn more of the history of local Baptist Churches. In May Jonny McCluskey traced the history of Carr Baptist Church. Although the work which became Carr Baptist Church began in the later 19th century it wasn't until 13 April 1972 that Carr constituted as a Church with 22 members. Many people, whose labours underly the present day Carr Baptist Church, particularly past members of

Milltown Baptist Church, the "mother church", were remembered with gratitude. Historical details of buildings, leadership, and growing ministries within the Church were remembered with a spirit of gratitude to God.

In October Pastor Edwin Ewart, with both biblical and historical precision, spoke on the subject of worship, which he says "... is both ancient and modern and one on which every Christian will doubtless have an opinion." After referring to "A Common Misunderstanding" and establishing a "Definition of Worship" Pastor Ewart traced the details and progression of worship in the Old Testament, among the first Christians, in the Middle Ages, in the Reformation, among Baptists, right up to the present day. After setting down "Five controlling principles (which) ought to guide worship in the contemporary church" the lecture ended with the words: "Soli Deo Gloria must be the banner over all that is done in worship services in the Church of Jesus Christ."

In addition to the public lectures Dr Davy Ellison has added an article to mark 130 years of the Irish Baptist College. The Irish Baptist College was founded on 4 October 1892 in No. 16 Harcourt Street in Dublin under the oversight of Hugh D. Brown. The history proceeds through 70 years of life in Dublin, the move to Belfast in 1964 and then to Moira in 2003. The record of the many changes over the years, the spiritual qualities of the tutors, the high standards of teaching, the numbers of graduates of the College who have carried the gospel throughout the world is both informative and inspiring and it is with gratitude to God that the College, after 130 years, maintains the vision "Magnifying Christ, Advancing the Gospel and Strengthening the Church."

John Gault

CONTRIBUTORS

Crawford Gribben MA PhD

Crawford Gribben has taught literature and history at the University of Manchester, Trinity College Dublin, and Queen's University Belfast. In recent years, his research has mostly focused on John Owen, but his most recent project is a study of the theology of John Nelson Darby. Crawford is a widely published author, including most recently *The Rise and Fall of Christian Ireland* (Oxford University Press, 2021) and *An Introduction to John Owen* (Crossway, 2020). He is married to Pauline and has been blessed with four children.

Jonathan McCluskey BEng

Jonathan's family were founding members of Carr Baptist Church and he has attended and worshipped there all his life. After his baptism in 1997 and being brought into membership, he served as a deacon and is currently serving as an elder. Jonathan also serves on the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland's Executive Committee and is a director of both the Northern and Southern Baptist Corporations since 2017. Jonathan is a qualified Civil Engineer and one of the directors of their family business. He is married to Abigail and they have two sons and a daughter.

Edwin Ewart BA BD MMin MTh MPhil

Edwin joined the Irish Baptist College staff in 2007 as Assistant Principal, taking up the role of Principal in 2010. Prior to his full-time position in the College he was in pastoral ministry for more than 20 years, serving in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. He teaches Biblical Theology, Homiletics and Ministry Studies. He is married to Alicen, and together they have three adult children.

S. D. Ellison BSc BD MTh PhD

Before being appointed as the Director of Training in 2019 Davy served as Interim Coordinator for Baptist Youth and ministered in a number of pastoral roles in Association churches. He serves as an elder in the Antrim church. Although his passion is the Old Testament, Davy teaches Biblical Studies across both Testaments. He is the author of *The Holy One of Israel: Exploring Isaiah* (Independent, 2019), *Five: The Solas of the Reformation* (Tulip Publishing, 2020) and a forthcoming title on meekness. He has also published with *Themelios*, *Semănătorul*, *The Round Tower Review* and *Midwestern Journal of Theology*. Additionally, Davy writes for historicaltheology.org, Evangelicals Now, The Gospel Coalition, For The Church and Servants of Grace. He is happily married to Tracy.

BAPTIST OR BRETHREN? PRIMITIVISM, RESTORATIONISM, AND THE LEGACIES OF ALEXANDER CARSON[1]

CRAWFORD GRIBBEN

In the immediate aftermath of the 1859 revival, Irish Baptists were very concerned by the sudden growth of a new religious movement—the so-called "Plymouth Brethren." In the early 1860s, whether curious or hostile, Baptist writers struggled to know what to make of these *arrivistes*. Even ministers were divided on what the new movement represented. Some among their number found the new movement attractive. In 1862, John G. McVicar, who had

[1] This lecture was presented to the Society on 24 March 2022.

recently left the ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church to form the first Baptist congregation in Ballymena, county Antrim, "resigned his appointment and united himself with a religious body commonly called the 'Plymouth Brethren,'" the tenets of which were "but little known" in the neighbourhood.[2] His defection made other Baptist ministers wary of the new movement. The response of John Brown, a Baptist pastor from Conlig, county Down, might have been more typical. In June 1863, he visited a number of congregations in the north-west of Ireland, and reported on their condition to a Strict Baptist magazine in England. He discovered that the Baptist congregation in Letterkenny, county Donegal, had been organised in rather unusual ways. Lacking a pastor, it was led by "two intelligent and worthy members of the church." The fellowship met on open communion principles, which Brown did not share, but he felt able to break bread with them because the only non-baptised communicant was not attending the service. Brown preached to the church after communion, and again in the evening. This liturgical structure—in which the sermon followed the breaking of bread—was distinctive. Brown explained to his English readers that the church had adopted these unusual practices through the influence of "the late excellent Dr [Alexander] Carson." Later in the same week, Brown visited the church in Londonderry. Emerging out of the recent revival, this congregation had split "in consequence of some diversity of sentiment about church government," but was since reunited. However, Brown noted, the congregation refused any distinctive denominational name: "they do not call themselves Strict Communionists, nor even Baptists, having a strong objection to all sectarian names; but they hold that a personal profession of faith is essential to Christian baptism, and that faith and baptism are indispensably necessary to church communion." This congregation had a different genealogy. Brown traced its ideas to those of "the

[2] "Ballymena, Ireland," *The Earthen Vessel*, 1 January 1863, p. 26. For more on McVicar, see Crawford Gribben, "'The worst sect a Christian man can meet': Opposition to the Plymouth Brethren in Ireland and Scotland, 1859–1900," *Scottish Studies Review* 3:2 (2002), pp. 34–53.

venerable A[lexander] McLean," one of the leaders of the Scotch Baptists, even as he noted that the Londonderry fellowship diverged from McLean's influence in allowing the Lord's Supper to be "lawfully dispensed by an unofficial administrator in the absence of ordained elders." Brown then moved on to Portstewart, where he had a "little conversation" with a group of Christians who looked very much like the lay-led, open communion Baptists whom he had encountered in Londonderry and Donegal. But he noted one important difference. Although these brethren were prepared to break bread with those who had not been baptised as believers, they "would not receive any one who does not believe in the *eternal Sonship of Christ*." Addressing the readers of *The Earthen Vessel*, an English Strict Baptist magazine that published work by those who actively denied the eternal Sonship of Christ, Brown complained that the Portstewart Brethren were making a "term of communion which the Scriptures nowhere make a term." He lamented that, on this point, the Brethren were "as orthodox as the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, though I hope they do not carry the matter so high as the Athanasian Creed, which declares this to be a part of the 'Catholic faith,'" and to be maintained upon the pain of damnation. Across counties Donegal and Londonderry, he feared, Baptists and Brethren might be distinguished only by the fact that the latter insisted on an orthodox Trinitarian faith.[3]

Brown's comments show how difficult it was in the aftermath of the revival to determine the boundaries of the Baptist and Brethren movements. Whatever their preferred descriptor, the congregations that he visited looked very much alike. And this was true of other congregations in the same area. In 1852, a correspondent in *The Baptist Magazine* noted that the church in Tobermore, county Londonderry, in which Alexander Carson had

[3] John Brown, "Ireland," *The Earthen Vessel*, 1 August 1863, p. 199. On *The Earthen Vessel*, see Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists, 1771–1892: From John Gill to C.H. Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006), pp. 284–86.

served as pastor, organised its meetings to take account of the fact that some of its members travelled a great distance to attend. This explained, among other things, why Sunday services lasted four hours, and included a fifteen-minute intermission.[4] In Coleraine, the service began with psalm-singing, continued with Bible reading and preaching, and moved into the breaking of bread. The initial service lasted two hours. But it was followed by a time of "mutual exhortation," in which laymen were allowed to offer their own thoughts on Scripture—a tradition that the correspondent traced back to the Scotch Baptists. This morning service—which must have stretched close to three hours in duration—was followed by another in the evening.[5] In 1862, a contributor to *The Earthen Vessel* alluded to the earlier report of the liturgical structure of the services in Coleraine, but offered a different point of comparison, informing its readers that,

> the Baptist Church at Coleraine holds much in common with the 'Plymouth Brethren.' Like them they practice weekly communion and open communion. Their doctrine is that they are under solemn obligation to receive into fellowship all whom Christ receives ... The Baptists in Coleraine, like the Plymouth Brethren, are strenuously opposed to all creeds and confessions of faith except the Bible alone, and, consequently ... much latitude of sentiment used to prevail among them ... Till lately, they practiced the unrestricted exercise of gifts of the members in public worship ... The Church in Coleraine, like the Brethren, do not consider the presence of a pastor essential to the Lord's Supper.[6]

The similarities between the two movements were systemic. In fact, as another contributor noted, the church in Banbridge was

[4] "Irish chronicle," *The Baptist Magazine*, 1 October 1852, p. 641.
[5] "Irish chronicle," *The Baptist Magazine*, 1 October 1852, p. 642.
[6] Thomas George Bell, "The Plymouth Brethren: Letter VII," *The Earthen Vessel*, 1 June 1863, pp. 137–38.

the only Irish Baptist congregation not to practice weekly communion.[7] Creedless, practising weekly communion, without any requirement for oversight by an ordained minister, and often on open communion principles, Baptist and Brethren congregations could not always be easily distinguished.

These comments in *The Earthen Vessel* reveal the extent to which, in the aftermath of the 1859 revival, the Baptist and Brethren movements were growing in complex and mutually complicating ways. In England, Brethren and Strict Baptists had emerged from a revival of high Calvinism in Oxford in the 1820s. These groups appropriated different parts of the legacy of eighteenth-century high Calvinism—including the denial of the moral law as the Christian's rule of life, and premillennialism—and so were regularly identified as high Calvinists.[8] The leaders of these groups often knew each other. For example, J.C. Philpot was converted through the ministry of J.N. Darby, and was recommended by Darby for ministry in the Church of England, which he eventually abandoned to become the leader of the *Gospel Standard* group of Strict and Particular Baptists.[9] In Ireland, as we will see, both groups identified with the legacy of Alexander Carson, but adhered only to aspects of his churchmanship. Both groups harnessed the power of the revival by offering liberty for the ministry of lay people. And both groups were divided over the question of whether believer's baptism should be a prerequisite for fellowship within the church. The most obvious difference between these groups was that, in the mid-nineteenth century, Brethren did not share a single position on baptism. After the division of the movement, in the later 1840s, those who followed Darby into the "exclusive" section tended to share his commitment to the baptism of believers' infants, while those who continued to share fellowship with George Müller, R.C. Chapman and other

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[7] Thomas George Bell, "The Plymouth Brethren: Letter V," *The Earthen Vessel*, 1 May 1863, p. 113.

[8] Compare Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, with Crawford Gribben, *J.N. Darby and the birth of dispensationalism*, forthcoming.

[9] Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists*, p. 291.

"open" leaders tended to share their commitment to believer's baptism.[10] But there were important exceptions to this rule. Among exclusive brethren, C.H. Mackintosh and G.V. Wigram defended believer's baptism, while among open brethren, Walter Scott continued to defend "household baptism." In both sections of the brethren movement, these differences about baptism were not regarded as a test of faith. It was only in the 1890s that open assemblies in the north of Ireland and in Scotland moved to the more familiar position of requiring believer's baptism for "fellowship" (their preferred term for membership) and for participation in the Lord's Supper.[11] Exclusives continued to allow a variety of practices. When, on an unknown occasion, an enquirer asked Darby what Wigram held as to baptism, Darby replied, "Madam, he holds his tongue."[12]

I

Alexander Carson (c 1776–1844) was not at all reticent in his teaching about baptism. In popular evangelical lore, Carson is remembered for his primitivism, his commitment to recover the churchmanship of the New Testament, and for his movement from Presbyterian to Congregationalist and Baptist convictions. The development of Carson's thought can be traced in his publications. His *Reasons for separating from the General Synod of Ulster* (1805) was followed by his conversion to the principle of believer's baptism (c 1806), and eventually to the publication of *Baptism in its mode and subjects* (1831). However, Carson's "Baptist" church was not what came to be typical of the Irish Baptist movement with which it is

[10] Like several other open brethren leaders, Muller and Chapman had been Particular Baptist ministers before identifying with the new movement; see Gribben, *J.N. Darby and the birth of dispensationalism*, forthcoming.

[11] Crawford Gribben, "The church of God in Belfast: *Needed Truth*, the Vernalites, and the Howard Street Christians, 1890-1924," *Brethren Historical Review* 14 (2018), pp. 120–48.

[12] W.B. Neatby, *A history of the Plymouth Brethren* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1901), p. 238.

often identified. The church in Tobermore practiced open communion as well as open membership.[13] Individuals did not need to be baptised as believers either to share in the breaking of bread or to become members of the church. The only requirement of admission to membership was a credible profession of faith.[14] But the church in Tobermore was unlike later Irish Baptist churches in other respects, too. The church practised weekly communion, and encouraged exhortation by various brethren, in addition to the pastor's sermon. For all that some of his views were Calvinist, Carson was not "Reformed." While preaching for the Baptist Missionary Society, he did not associate with English Baptists, but with the very different tradition of "Scotch Baptists." For his views of saving faith were Sandemanian.[15] In fact, in the early part of the nineteenth century, Carson's church was part of an international Sandemanian network. This is evident from the letter from the church that appeared in *The first part of an epistolary correspondence between Christian Churches in America and Europe* (1820). This publication collected correspondence from churches in Tobermore, Londonderry, Ballygawley, Crilly (Tyrone), Camown Green (Omagh), Monaghan, Sligo, Kilkenny, Waterford, and Mount Pleasant (Dublin), as well as from two churches in Cork, and others in North America. The churches represented in this correspondence held different views of baptism, its relation to communion, office and gift in the church, and of more exotic practices such as foot-washing and holy kissing. The letter from the Tobermore church explained its order of worship:

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[13] Joshua Thompson, "The communion controversy and Irish Baptists," *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal* 20 (1987–88), pp. 26–35.

[14] *The first part of an epistolary correspondence between Christian Churches in America and Europe* (1820), reprinted as *Letters concerning their principles and order from assemblies of believers in 1818–1820* (privately printed, 1889), Manchester, John Rylands Library, Christian Brethren Archive 2092, pp. 54–56.

[15] John Jin Gill, "The evangelicalism of Alexander Carson" (unpublished PhD thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), pp. 137–53.

> The order in which we observe the ordinances, on the first day of the week, is as follows: - Salutation, singing, reading the scriptures, prayer, singing, admission or exclusion, if necessary, the Lord's supper, singing, fellowship, exhortation, teaching, prayer, singing, prayer. But we do not consider ourselves bound to this order any further than we find it fixed in the scriptures. We have no meetings on any day but the first day of the week, nor any meetings but one on that day.[16]

The Tobermore letter also prioritised catholicity over believer's baptism:

> We all deem that the man who has been received by Jesus, ought not to be rejected by us; and that if he feed his people by his ordinances, it would be criminal in us, as far as lies in our power, to join in confederacy to starve the weakest of them. we think, that the man who has been admitted to the fellowship of the general assembly and church of the first born, is undoubtedly worthy of a seat with us.[17]

The congregations that were represented in *The first part of an epistolary correspondence* reflected a vigorous culture of religious dissent.

In the 1830s, Darby became aware of these cultures of dissent, and attempted to connect them: "I hear the north [of Ireland] is dotted with little bodies, meeting as you do, though I do not know where they are," he wrote to one correspondent.[18] "Many little bodies springing up, things are assuming a new shape, though unformed."[19] For these networks were the seedbed out of which the Irish Baptist and Brethren movements would grow. Both

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[16] *Letters concerning their principles and order from assemblies of believers in 1818–1820*, p. 55.

[17] *Letters concerning their principles and order from assemblies of believers in 1818–1820*, p. 55.

[18] J.N. Darby, *Letters of J.N.D.*, 3 vols (London: Morrish, 1914), 1: 21.

[19] Darby, *Letters*, 1:28.

movements could legitimately trace their origins to this network of primitivist congregations. In 1862, Brown discovered that the Baptist church in Letterkenny continued to remember its links to this network.[20] But Carson's Sandemanian network was eventually incorporated into the telling of Brethren history, too. Brethren appropriated its correspondence for themselves: *The first part of an epistolary correspondence* (1820) was reprinted by Brethren as *Letters concerning their principles and order from assemblies of believers in 1818–1820* (1889)—for by then at least one of the listed churches, located at Camown Green, had evolved into a Brethren assembly.[21]

II

These primitivist and restorationist ideals evolved across three generations of Alexander Carson's family. Alexander and Margaret Carson had 13 children, several of whom remained closely identified with their father's work. After Alexander's death (1844), his sons preserved his memory while playing down some of his more eccentric beliefs. They achieved this by identifying their father's legacy with that of the Reformed denominations in order to criticise a newer community of ecclesiastical primitivists. George Ledlie Carson (1803–1838) was a surgeon and Baptist minister in Coleraine. James Crawford Ledlie Carson (1815–1886) practiced medicine in Coleraine, and became a theological writer and controversialist, most notably publishing *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren* (1862). Robert Haldane Carson (c 1821–1904) was minister in Perth before following his father as pastor of the church in Tobermore.[22] His attitude to the Brethren was pragmatic. In 1876, the Tobermore church hosted freelance Brethren evangelist David Rae, who

[20] John Brown, "Ireland," *The Earthen Vessel*, 1 August 1863, p. 199.
[21] The fullest discussion of this text is provided by James Fazio, "The elements and ordinances of proto-Brethren assemblies, 1818–1820," in Neil Dickson and T.J. Marinello (eds), *The Brethren and the Church* (Glasgow: Brethren Historians and Archivists Network, 2020), pp. 105–16.
[22] "Irish chronicle," *Baptist Magazine*, 1 October 1852, pp. 641–42.

preaching led to 96 baptisms, and to the conversion of the pastor's son. Perhaps lacking in gratitude, Carson went on to publish *The Brethren: Their worship and the Word of God at open variance* (1880).

Among Alexander Carson's children, James C.L. Carson was the most vociferous critic of the Brethren. This was, of course, ironic, given the similarities that existed between the Brethren and the Coleraine Baptist congregation of which he was a part. Driven perhaps by the narcissism of small differences, from 1862, he published a sequence of letters in the *Coleraine Chronicle* that critiqued published work by Darby and the exclusive brethren evangelist and writer, C.H. Mackintosh, who was also living in Coleraine during that period.[23] Mackintosh was an easy target. As a well-known populariser of Darby's teaching, he had been active in the 1859 revival, which had led to rapid growth among—and competition between—the Baptist and Brethren movements. Mackintosh had published some problematic comments on the humanity of Christ in the first edition of his *Notes on Leviticus* (1860). These notes attracted so much criticism from Darby and other Brethren leaders that Mackintosh published a retraction as well as a revised edition of the work (1862). But Carson continued to attack Mackintosh's original claims. He expanded his correspondence into a short book, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren* (1862), 10,000 copies of which were distributed within six months. Carson's attacks on Mackintosh—and, by extension, the Brethren—were relentless. He was not interested in debate: "Some of the Plymouthists have wasted their time in writing to me ... For their satisfaction, I may state that I threw their letters in the grate."[24] His work was full of bad faith arguments: "In place of trying to make everything plain and specific to the eye of the Christian public, the Darbyites have managed to cloak their opinions by using language in a Jesuitical sense ... wily and slippery customers."[25] And he focused on the worst possible

[23] James C.L. Carson, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren* (1862; thirteenth thousand, London: Houlston & Sons, 1870), p. iii.
[24] Carson, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren*, pp. iii–iv.
[25] Carson, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren*, p. v.

construction of Mackintosh's language: "I am convinced, when [Mackintosh] penned these words, he understood them in the very same sense as I understand them."[26] And he came to serious conclusions: "This is rank Socinianism."[27] Carson's attacks on the Brethren continued for more than a decade. The ferocity of his criticism reflected his determination to reclaim his father for Reformed orthodoxy, and to locate the Baptists as being among the most respectable mainstream denominations. He contrasted the "blasphemy" of the Brethren with the orthodoxy of his father, which he identified as representing the shared consensus of "the Established Church, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Baptists, the Independents, and the Covenanters."[28] His descriptions of "the 'chamber of horrors' connected with that most tyrannical and Jesuitical sect" were enormously successful.[29] By 1870, 13,000 copies of his work were in circulation.[30]

But Carson faced pushback—even from among Strict Baptists. In 1863, for example, a contributor to *The Earthen Vessel* suggested that Alexander Carson held similar views to those of the Brethren on the "unrestricted" exercise of spiritual gifts. James C.L. Carson's response was robust. Dismissing this claim, he insisted that his father had "practised the one-man-ministry during his entire ministerial career, and never suffered any one but himself to sign 'minister of the Gospel, Tubbermore' [sic]." Further, Carson continued, while his father may have agreed with the Brethren on definitive sanctification, he had also emphasised progressive sanctification, a doctrine that he (incorrectly) suggested the Brethren did not share. And while he admitted that his father shared with the Brethren a commitment to open communion, he would have admitted to the Lord's table a much wider variety of believers that would these modern *parvenus*. While Alexander Carson had argued

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[26] Carson, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren*, p. 8.
[27] Carson, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren*, p. 27.
[28] Carson, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren*, p. 74.
[29] *Coleraine Chronicle*, 7 January 1871, p. 4.
[30] Carson, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren*, p. iii.

for no creed but the Bible, his son explained, this could not be compared to the belief of the Brethren that their interpretations of Scripture were directly inspired by God.[31]

James C.L. Carson's attack on the Brethren was wildly inaccurate, but it was also extremely influential. He described the movement's preachers as being "monstrous, silly, trashy, and commonplace ... ignorant and illiterate ... puffed up with pride and self-conceit," and "claiming inspiration for all that is said at the meetings."[32] His attacks were personal. He described Mackintosh as "cowardly," and Darby as "stupid as a block ... On Mr Darby's principles no man could be saved."[33] But his attacks were also uninformed. For example, he described the Darby's denial of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ as a "dreadful and soul-destroying heresy"—not recognising that Calvin and the Westminster Confession had not taught the version of justification that he was defending.[34] But it got worse. Carson misunderstood such basic distinctions as communicable and incommunicable divine attributes—and he condemned as "heresy" a statement that Mackintosh had lifted from the Apostles' Creed.[35]

Darby responded to Carson's attack in private and in public. In public, he replied to Carson's work in *Brethren and their reviewers* (1862). Darby appealed to the creedal tradition with which Carson identified, but did not understand. He defended Brethren teaching by appealing to the Thirty-nine Articles and the Apostles' Creed. His response hinted at Carson's lack of social graces:

> No doubt Dr. C. is not of the Establishment, and has never learned 'the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten

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[31] "The late Dr Carson," *The Earthen Vessel*, 1 October 1863, p. 249.
[32] Carson, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren*, pp. 77–78.
[33] Carson, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren*, pp. 52, 74.
[34] Carson, *The heresies of the Plymouth Brethren*, p. 41.
[35] J.N. Darby, "Brethren and their reviewers" (1862), in *Collected writings of J. N. Darby*, ed. William Kelly, 34 vols (London: Morrish, 1866–81), 10: 80–81.

> Commandments in the vulgar tongue' ... I would recommend those who have Dr. C.'s attacks on the 'Brethren' upon their table ... to read the Apostles' Creed and Acts 2, and if they wish to be thought to know something about Christianity, to put [Carson's] pamphlet on the bookshelf.[36]

Darby also recognised that Carson's book was making an extraordinary impact. "I am told that the book is on the tables of evangelicals on every side," he noted; "I pity them."[37] But Darby's refutations could not appear fast enough to prevent the circulation of Carson's attack. His work circulated on both sides of the Atlantic—and travelled faster than Brethren refutations could follow. By January 1863, for example, Carson's tract was frustrating the growth of the movement in Quebec.[38] In 1872, his claim that the Brethren were teaching Socinianism was taken up by C.H. Spurgeon, who reviewed Darby's translation of the New Testament in *Sword and Trowel*: "Darby thinks proper to sweep the worship of Christ out of the New Testament ... nor could anything more decided on the subject be said by the most advanced Unitarian minister in London."[39] And local pressure continued. The *Coleraine Chronicle* continued to carry attacks on the Brethren, including by Vance MacAuley, a Brother who had returned to the Presbyterian church, while publishing critiques of Darby's New Testament that paraphrased Spurgeon's review.[40] In private, Darby's criticisms became pointed. Writing to Wigram, he described Carson as a "spiteful self sufficient vapourer."[41] "The poor Church people glutton in what attacks brethren and feed on ordure," he continued;

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[36] Darby, "Brethren and their reviewers" (1862), in *CW* 10: 80–81.
[37] Darby, "Brethren and their reviewers" (1862), in *CW* 10: 107.
[38] *Letters of J.N. Darby, Supplement: Correspondence with G.V. Wigram*, 2 vols (Chessington, UK: Bible and Gospel Trust, 2019), 2:156.
[39] C.H. Spurgeon, "Darbyism and its new Bible," *Sword and Trowel*, 1 December 1872, pp. 561–65.
[40] *Coleraine Chronicle*, 18 May 1878, p. 4. See also *Coleraine Chronicle*, 30 November 1872, p. 6.
[41] *Letters of J.N. Darby, Supplement: Correspondence with G.V. Wigram*, 2:142.

"that tract of Dr Carson denies the first elements of Christianity and they cannot even find it out."[42]

III

But Darby should not have despaired. James C.L. Carson's condemnation of Darby and Mackintosh might have circulated on both sides of the Atlantic, but not everyone in his family found it convincing. Margaret Ledlie Carson (1833–1920) was the daughter of George Ledlie Carson, and James C.L. Carson's niece. She grew up in an atmosphere of serious religion. Her childhood had been marked by a sequence of family deaths. Her aunts Eliza and Susanna Carson died only two months apart in 1837. Her father, George Ledlie Carson, wrote a devotional account of his sister's lives and deaths—which included a warning to his brother James.[43] But George Ledlie Carson died just months after his two sisters—and when his daughter Margaret was only five years old (1838).[44] Margaret's grandfather, Alexander, died in 1844.[45] Later in life, Margaret prepared an elegy for her father:

> In memory's cell a shadowy portrait lies
> I try to grasp it, try to catch those eyes
> In which I gazed in all my childish glee
> While they beamed back bright streams of love for me
> But O, 'tis vain; no feature can I trace;
> A shadowy form, but not the dear, dear face,
> And yet his voice, his touch, I don't forget;
> And O that prayer, it lingers with me yet.
> At twilight's hour I sat up on his knee,

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[42] *Letters of J.N. Darby, Supplement: Correspondence with G.V. Wigram*, 2:141.
[43] George Ledlie Carson and Matilda Carson Hanna, *Memorials of the family of the Rev. Alexander Carson* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, n.d.), pp. 33–34, 55–56.
[44] Carson and Hanna, *Memorials of the family of the Rev. Alexander Carson*, pp. 51–68.
[45] James Quinn, "Carson, Alexander," in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, s.v.

'Twas then his soul went out in prayer for me;
"O let," he said, "Thy heavenly grace descend
On this white head in blessings without end."

His earnest tones I hear, the words he said
While his hand rested on my infant head,
And then he drew me closer, closer still,
While silent prayer his yearning heart did fill.
That was my father. Others speak of him
With quivering lips, and eyes with tears bedim,
But as for me, this one bright memory lies
A precious gem unseen by mortal eyes.
And do I never weep, have I no tears
For him who loved me 'mid unconscious years,
Yes; tears of joy, of truest ecstasy,
Gush forth, my father, while I think of thee.
I think of thee in that loan twilight hour,
A mighty prince, one who with God had power,
And did prevail, for O thy God did send
On that white head, "the blessings without end."[46]

During the 1859 revival, when she was in her mid-20s, Margaret Carson was active in evangelism, and was also developing as a Christian writer. Despite her uncle's hostility to the Brethren, she found her way into their number—and into friendship with the subjects of her uncle's vitriol. By the early 1860s, she and Mackintosh were corresponding. In 1861, Mackintosh wrote to Carson from Malvern, explaining that her poem, "Love lies bleeding," had been used in the conversion of "a most worldly pharisaic old lady in Bath, one who had long and vigorously refused every tract which was offered her ... you sweet little poem broke her heart and brought

[46] Quoted in Jack Strahan, *More hymns and their writers* (Glasgow: Gospel Tract Publications, 2002), pp. 198–99.

her to the foot of the cross."[47] It is not clear when Margaret joined the Brethren. But if it was in the 1860s, she was joining a movement that her uncle was actively attacking, and enjoying friendship with a man her uncle had described as a blasphemer and heretic.

Margaret Carson's move into the Brethren is all the more surprising as the local Brethren was not a promising bunch, and was divided over how to respond to the Christological errors that Mackintosh had included in the first edition of his *Notes on Leviticus*. Darby, who was lecturing in Portrush in May 1861, wrote to the meeting in Coleraine. "I heard from Coleraine twice and wrote twice," he explained to Wigram:

> They have made a mess there. I think somewhat of a chastisement for attacking others too much, so they have run into disputes on what none of them can define or settle, and what only leads to disputes. I judge Mackintosh has been very rash in some of his papers which I had never seen or heard of before, and then words used against it which could also be attacked, as all human language can on such subjects ... Certainly Mackintosh has given occasion ... to this spirit which has arisen, tho' that be not the origin.[48]

Wigram replied by noting the significant opposition to Mackintosh that existed within the Coleraine assembly: "William Gibbon of Coleraine is most Jehu like of any one I have seen ... William wrote me to stop and excommunicate [Mackintosh]. W[illiam] G[ibbon]'s letters ... are bulls to root out & destroy the pestilent error in man, woman & child."[49]

But Margaret Carson's family continued to oppose the

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[47] Quoted in Edwin Cross, *The life and times of Charles Henry Mackintosh* (London: Chapter Two, 2011), p. 114.

[48] *Letters of J.N. Darby, Supplement: Correspondence with G.V. Wigram,* 2: 188–90.

[49] *Letters of J.N. Darby, Supplement: Correspondence with G.V. Wigram*, 2: 190–91.

Brethren. In 1880, another uncle, Robert Haldane Carson, who had followed his father to become pastor at Tobermore, published *The Brethren: Their worship and the Word of God at open variance*, which was described as offering a "great deal of outspokenness."[50] By then, Margaret Carson seems to have committed herself to the open Brethren, and may have financed the construction of a gospel hall in Portrush.[51] She also developed as a writer, publishing verse in *Our Hope* (1905)[52] and collecting her work in *A few hymns and poems by M.L. Carson* (1913).[53] The collection's most famous item was "The victory":

My chains are snapt, the bonds of sin are broken,
And I am free;
O let the triumphs of his grace be spoken,
Who died for me.

Mackintosh added the hymn's last verse:

We wait to see the Morning Star appearing,
In glory bright;
This blessed hope illumes, with beams most cheering,
The hours of night.[54]

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[50] Robert H. Carson, *The Brethren: Their worship and the word of God at open variance* (London: Elliot Stock; Dublin: Carson Brothers; Belfast: S.E. Grant, 1880). This pamphlet was reviewed in *The Baptist Magazine* (1881), p. 189.

[51] David J. Beattie, *Stories and sketches of our hymns and their writers* (Kilmarnock: John Ritchie, n.d.), pp. 188–89.

[52] M.L. Carson, "The Lamb," *Our Hope* (1913), p. 226.

[53] M. L. Carson, *A few hymns and poems* (Armagh: Standard School Store, 1905). The original manuscript from which these poems were drawn remains in private hands. I am grateful to Ian Deighan for advice on this point.

[54] David J. Beattie, *Stories and sketches of our hymns and their writers* (Kilmarnock: John Ritchie, n.d.), pp. 188–89.

IV

Of course, in moving from the Baptists to the Brethren, and apparently in moving from the exclusive to the open Brethren, Margaret Carson was following a trend. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Baptists were growing in number, but not nearly as rapidly as were the Brethren. In 1871, Brethren numbered around 4,000, and Baptists almost 5,000. By 1911, however, Brethren had more than doubled in number, and had grown to become the fourth-largest of Ulster's protestant denominations.[55] Today, the relationship between Baptist and Brethren congregations may continue to be problematic. Congregations from each of these traditions can still look very similar. Many Baptist churches continue to allow congregational participation at the Lord's Supper, while some brethren assemblies are moving to adopt a more structured form of worship, often with recognised pastoral leaders. Singing the same kinds of hymns and spiritual songs, sharing a commitment to believer's baptism, and participating in the less formal cultures of modern evangelicalism, it is sometimes difficult to know to which of these traditions any individual congregation might belong. In the late nineteenth century, as in the present day, believers from each of these traditions were committed to policing their boundaries—for, as the history of the Carson family suggests, the relationship between Brethren and Baptists would remain ambiguous. After all, in 1877, when John Brown wrote a retrospective account of his ministry in the north of Ireland, his lament as to the informality of Irish Baptists struck a familiar note: "If the administration of the Lord's supper without ordination be a distinguishing mark of the Plymouth Brethren, then *all the Baptists in Ireland are Plymouth Brethren.*"[56]

[55] See forthcoming work by Andrew Holmes.

[56] John Brown, "The Plymouth Brethren," *The Reformed Presbyterian and Covenanter* 15–16 (1877), p. 276. I owe this reference to Ian Deighan.

CARR BAPTIST CHURCH: A HISTORY

JONATHAN MCCLUSKEY

There are so many people that we have reason to thank for the preparation of this history which has unfolded in rural Co. Down over a period of the last 120 years. Not just those who evangelised and pastored the area but other less known, faithful brothers and sisters who kept notes, photographs and minutes—without which the good work of others may have been forgotten. This story, which I have the privilege to share with you today, is so inadequate to communicate the hours, days, months and many years of service to Almighty God, that individuals gave to lift Jesus high in the townland of Carr. I must thank the past members of both Milltown Baptist Church, the "mother church", and past and present members of the church at Carr.

In preparation of this presentation, we are indebted to past and present church secretaries for the records that have helped compile what you will see and hear today. Of course, all thanks and glory and honour must go to our eternal God, who led and kept His servants.

LOCATION & CURRENT MAKEUP

You will find the Carr church building on the Comber Road, halfway between Carryduff and Lisburn, at the junction with Front Road which leads to Drumbo village. It is about 4.5 miles from Milltown Baptist Church and 10 miles by road from Belfast city centre.

The current church membership is 63, including 3 elders and 4 deacons. We meet on the Lord's Day at 11am and 6.30pm and for Midweek Bible Study and Prayer on Wednesday at 8pm. Typically between 80–90 people meet on a Sunday morning. We also run extensive children's and youth programmes, and a well-established Ladies Fellowship along with Senior Citizens and Men's work which have been meeting less frequently since the COVID pandemic. The pastorate is currently vacant following Pastor Andrew Campbell moving to the Ballykeel church in July 2021.

BEGINNINGS

Carr's story goes back to the late 19th century. Reading back, we learn of a Mr James Taylor who lived in a cottage on Milltown Hill (near the former site of the Barclay Restaurant). The road is still there, but the cottage is gone due to major road realignment. The late James Taylor worked in the nearby mill at Edenderry and was a well-respected pillar of the rural community. He attended Great Victoria Street Baptist Church (about an hours' journey from Milltown in those days). Mr Taylor was given permission to use Zion Hall, situated on the Milltown Road, built by our Methodist friends in 1829 but somehow abandoned by 1890. He started a Sunday School and other forms of gospel witness from Zion Hall, Milltown. In the winter of 1895, Great Victoria Street, with the help of the Irish Baptist Home Mission, conducted a mission at Zion Hall, which was so well attended that they had to move to the Dining Hall at Edenderry mill. At that mission 28 accepted Christ and were later baptised at Great Victoria Street in January 1896.

By the end of January 1896, 26 baptised believers committed to forming themselves into a church fellowship meeting at Milltown. James Taylor had been a great example of how to step

out in faith with the gospel and plant a church with very spiritually young believers. Milltown Baptist Church called Pastor Brisby in 1897 and he led the fellowship until March 1901. At about 34 years of age, a young Pastor James Shields was inducted in October 1902 and led the flock at Milltown for 35 years. Sadly, after Pastor Shields induction in October 1902, James Taylor—the founder of the work at Milltown—was called home to rest on 23 December 1902.

Pastor Shields immediately entered the work enthusiastically. Tent missions were a significant part of his ministry. He was regarded as an outstanding evangelist. One of the most successful tent missions being held at Carr, at the farm of the Maxwell family. Their home still stands across the road from the church building where we meet today. The Maxwell family at that stage walked to Milltown each Sunday morning to meet in Zion Hall. They were known to take a packed lunch, stay in the hall and walk home to Carr again after the evening service—which was all uphill on the way home! As a result of the Maxwell family's commitment and the successful tent mission when Pastor Shields shared the gospel, the members of Milltown raised £60 and erected a tin hall at Carr in 1904, at the junction of where the Ballycarngannon Road meets the Comber Road. Pastor Shields preached from Psalm 16 at the opening. This provided a suitable place from where to preach the gospel and meet for worship. Pastor Shields spoke at Carr Hall on the first Sunday of each month.

The church at Milltown were exemplary in its attitude to supporting the spread of the gospel. A church minute from 1906 records how the members agreed "to let Pastor Shields have liberty to go and preach the gospel wherever he might be led." Missions were held at Newtownbreda, Castlereagh, Banbridge, Poyntzpass and Kilkeel. Even in the midst of opposition and bigotry the church grew, to the point that in 1914 a new hall was erected at Milltown, costing about £400.

DEVELOPMENT

Pastor Shields, his successors, members of Milltown and local

committed families continued to lead a Baptist witness at Carr from 1904 until the early 1970's. This took the form of an outstation work from the Milltown church. There were regular missions held, Sunday School, Sunday worship and Youth Fellowship including socials and parties. One of the most popular Youth Parties being what was then known as the "Leper's Party". To explain, some of the ladies who met at Carr were exercised to support the Leprosy Mission and hosted parties to raise funds/support for the mission.

Pastor Shields's farewell service was held on 23rd October 1937 as he moved to Kilkeel. He died in 1957 aged 89. He was a remarkable man with a remarkable testimony. Pastor Graham led the work at Milltown and Carr between 1933 and 1960 and his pastoral care found much favour with the people of Milltown, Purdysburn, Edenderry and Carr. Pastor Graham steadfastly taught the attendees at Carr where he led the mid-week meeting each Thursday and preached on the 1st Sunday each month. He didn't drive, so to carry out his visitation work in the Carr district, he took two bus connections to Carryduff, from where Mr David Jamison would drive him to the Carr Hall, where he borrowed a bike for the day and visited homes before doing the reverse back to his home off the Newtownards Road.

The Milltown church minutes record how 1944 was a particularly difficult year for the Pastor, members and ministry of the church with the advancement of World War II. The church that year was unable to hold a Sunday School excursion, but instead Mr David Maxwell invited everyone to his farm at Carr for a picnic.

Pastor Currie Brennan took over the Pastoral ministry at Milltown and Carr in 1962 and it is recorded at Pastor Brennan's induction that my late grandfather Mr William McCluskey brought greetings on behalf of Carr Hall. Pastor Brennan completed his ministry in April 1970. Pastor Brennan's time at Milltown saw huge changes in the area. A vast urban spread housing development swallowed up the surrounding Belvoir Forest and neighbouring farms. The Belvoir council estate including high rise flats brought a whole new mission field to the Milltown church.

Pastor Derek Baxter was inducted to the Milltown pastorate in June 1972. During the 1970–72 vacancy, the Office Bearers at Milltown wanted to stay focused on their responsibility of reaching the new neighbouring housing estates with the gospel. This led to conversations about encouraging the friends meeting at Carr to separate themselves from Milltown and form a new church there.

Mr Edward McCluskey, Uncle Eddie as everyone knew him, was involved in the ministry at Haypark Baptist Church. Eddie had recently moved to live in Carryduff and felt led to oversee the work at Carr. And so, in the providence of God and personal acts of faith, a new church was constituted with 22 members on 13 April 1972. The formation service was conducted on the evening of 13 April 1972 by the President of the Baptist Union of Ireland (as it was known then), the late Mr Kenneth McCluskey (my great uncle who attended Portadown Baptist Church). I do remember my great uncle Kenneth was full of wit—but you can imagine how he raised a few eye brows when he announced that he was going to speak on the "two bears" found in Paul's epistles!

"Bear" one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2).

"Forbear" one another in love (Eph. 4:2).

A good lesson for any church as we commit to serve the Lord together.

Of the 22 foundation members, I believe there are still eight alive, four of whom are still actively supporting the work at Carr: my own father and mother and my uncle and aunt, Billy and Madeline. In it all God has remained faithful, but a lot has changed.

BUILDINGS

In February 2014, I was asked to speak at the opening of Carr's most recent building project, which included new halls, reception area, toilets and kitchen. I commented on how being born in 1970, and attending Carr all my life, I had experienced many different forms of meeting house: tin hall, portakabin, halls on loan, tents/marquees and of course the beautiful modern construction we meet in today. from 1904 to 1978, however, the church family met in a tin hall.

The minutes of the 1972 formation service recall how a short business meeting was held and it was unanimously agreed to install mains water. This brought huge benefits—the church could make "a wee cup of tea" and flush the toilet.

By 1976 land had been purchased with the help of the Northern Baptist Corporation Ltd, and a new church hall was opened to God's glory in 1978. The occasion was celebrated by the whole local community and a very young Pastor Clifford Morrison preached from God's word. Again, salvation blessing was experienced in the week of meetings that followed. Ladies, youth and children's ministries grew during the 1980's and 1990's and the office bearers and members committed to building a new main sanctuary to the left-hand side of the 1978 church building. Again, God blessed the church and this was opened in March 2000. This left the 1978 building available for the departmental work, which was a great benefit.

During 2011/12 opportunity arose to purchase more adjacent land. The church employed Whittaker and Watt architects to draw up plans for new multi-purpose halls including kitchen, toilets and a reception area. With the support once more of the Northern Baptist Corporation, in February 2014 a new £600,000 complex was opened to God's glory. This is our current accommodation and we are very thankful to God for supplying our need. Pastor Clifford was leading the church at the time of this latest project and we have plenty of great stories to tell about this project—some caused us to rejoice and some taught us to seek grace!

LEADERSHIP

Friends we all believe and know we serve a great God. He alone knows the end from the beginning. He ordains all things. He has all the power and all the authority. This is a great comfort in uncertain days! But God uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary tasks. And this article, right from the start, has been about ordinary people whom God, by His Spirit, has given vision, wisdom, strength, ability and love in their hearts to strive for the building of His

kingdom. Sharing the gospel, changing lives, planting a church, Mr James Taylor, Pastor Shields, Pastor Graham, Pastor Brennan, the Maxwell family, the Jamison family and many more.

The example of the New Testament church is for the appointment of overseers, elders, pastors to give spiritual leadership to God's children. In 1972, as the church at Carr constituted, Uncle Eddie committed to oversee the work at Carr as elder. Uncle Eddie was a professional golfer and was club professional at Royal County Down, Newcastle—Ireland's premier course. He felt led to leave this career and he went on to serve God in preaching/teaching ministry through Haypark Baptist Church, where he was a member, and worked part time in Athletic Stores, Belfast. When he retired, he gave of his time to lead the flock at Carr.

Uncle Eddie was a great people person. He faithfully visited every home in the Carr, Drumbo district, often taxi-ing up to 10 or 12 children at a time in his car to Sunday afternoon Sunday School. My own earliest memories of Sunday School in the old tin hall were up on 100 children crammed in during the 1970's and the Sunday School social had to be held over 2 days to allow all the families to attend.

During the term of 1986/1987 two Irish Baptist College students visited and spoke at Carr: John Taylor and Philip De Courcy. This was to be the beginning of a very special relationship with both these young men, but especially Philip. As God would lead, the church called Philip to take up the role as Pastor following his graduation from the College in 1988. Philip and June (and in time their three daughters) and the church enjoyed six years of blessing under Philip's pastoral care and ministry. Then in 1994 Philip felt led to expand his studies in theology and moved to California to enroll at the Masters Seminary; proceeding to pastor three churches in the United States.

Pastor William (or Billy) Houston led the ministry for a short pastorate between 1996 and 1998 before moving to England for a period and now ministering at Mountpottinger Baptist Church.

Richard Garnham, who grew up in the town of

Ballynahinch, had been well known by the people at Carr even from when he was a teenager. When in his twenties, Richard had sang and spoken from God's word in Carr and endeared himself to the people. A call was issued for Richard to leave the ministry he was involved in at Revival Movement Association, and that led to Richard accepting the position of Pastor at Carr in 1999. Again, under God, the fellowship experienced spiritual blessing and growth during Richard's nine-year pastorate. Richard moved on, having accepted a call to be pastor at Moira Baptist Church in 2008. Sadly, Richard was called home to glory in mid-life at the end of last year.

By 2008, the church eldership was Robin McCluskey (my father), the late Victor Scott and the late Bobby Graham. All three of these men have had a huge spiritual influence on my life. Each extremely different in character, but their passion for people, prayer and preaching was an example to anyone. Bobby "Billy" Graham—as Pastor De Courcy called Bobby—such was his enthusiasm for evangelism. Bobby's two daughters Roberta and Hazel still attend and support Carr faithfully today. In the vacancy following Pastor Richard Garnham moving to Moira these three elders set about meeting for prayer and seeking God's will for the pastoral vacancy at Carr. There was likeness of minds and a conversation was held with Pastor Clifford Morrison. This soon developed as, in the providence of God, the church at Carr issued a call and Pastor Clifford took up Pastoral Ministry at Carr on the 17 April 2009.

Sadly, during Clifford's ministry Carr lost two elders—both Victor Scott and Bobby Graham were called home to glory. Before Bobby's home calling, however, he, Robin and Pastor Clifford felt led by God and encouraged Junior Hilland, Myles Cordner and myself to join the eldership.

The church at Carr experienced extreme feelings of both loss and spiritual blessing during Pastor Clifford's ministry. Several hugely faithful members including two elders were taken to "higher service" and yet God blessed the church family with growth and the development of new halls. We are very thankful to God for a very timely and blessed nine-year ministry under Clifford until his

retirement from senior pastoral duties.

During Clifford's pastorate, the church at Carr were introduced to Andrew Campbell as an Irish Baptist College student placement (the third under Clifford after Jonny Dowds and David Kimber) and this placement forged another special relationship. This led to Andrew being called to be Associate Pastor following his graduation from the College. In time the church later called Andrew to position of Senior Pastor in 2018 as Clifford was retiring. Pastor Andrew's passion to share the gospel and gift in teaching God's word was evident. But nothing remains permanent in church life, except God's faithfulness. After a short pastoral ministry Pastor Campbell accepted a call from Ballykeel Baptist Church and he moved there in the summer of 2021.

The pastorate at Carr has been vacant since July last year—a daunting prospect in the midst of a pandemic and the push to restart departmental work and herald the gospel to our community. Nonetheless, God is good and has provided and blessed through faithful servants sharing God's word.

DEPARTMENTAL WORK

It is lovely to see how God gifts people to lead and work in various departments. It is also a great encouragement to see lives transformed by the gospel and watch young people grow in their faith serving week by week. Carr Ladies' Fellowship—formed in 1983—will be celebrating 40 years next year.

We are still blessed in this country with the freedom and liberty we enjoy to openly preach Christ crucified. And we have been privileged as a church to host men who are gifted in communicating the gospel. We must always pray that God's Spirit will challenge and give wisdom to all who have heard.

CHURCH MISSION FAMILY

It is lovely for a local church to support mission elsewhere, and we have been blessed at Carr to see many of our own members followings God's call—training and serving in foreign fields.

Ruth Hamilton (nee Deane) grew up with her family in Carr. She came through Sunday School and Youth Fellowship. After Ruth married John Hamilton (Castlereagh church) they felt God's call into foreign mission. Ruth and John trained with WEC during the mid-1980's before leaving for Senegal, West Africa to evangelise the Jola tribe in the Lin Diane region for 16 years. I was only a teenager as Ruth and John departed with their children David, Claire and Christine. Christine was only a few weeks old when they took off from Belfast International Airport.

Andrew and Nelli Wilson trained with New Tribes Mission to work with the Whagi Tribe, Papua New Guinea from 2004 to 2014. Again, the church at Carr rejoiced as reports came back of conversion blessing.

Victor and Audrey Maxwell served in Brazil with Acre Gospel Mission since 1961 and after returning home has pastored churches here in Northern Ireland. Victor and Audrey joined Carr after Pastor Victor retired from ministering in Banbridge Baptist Church, and last Autumn we were able to celebrate 60 years of God's leading in their lives from they entered Christian service—a lovely evening.

Keith and Karen Lindsay. Keith has been serving as Missions Director of Acre since he stepped down as Pastor of Rathfriland Baptist Church and they have been members at Carr since that time also.

Carr members have served under other missionary groups, including: Every Home Crusade (Junior Hilland with over 20 years service and Jeff Wilson); Gideons (Ian and Louise McClure); CEF (Geoff and Karen Wallace and Ben and Holly Mewha); Baptist Missions (Sharon Wilson volunteered on the Shankill Road).

CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS

About three years ago we started to talk about the significance of God's faithfulness in establishing and keeping the Baptist witness at Carr. We wanted to mark the occasion and celebrate God's goodness. After some communication "across the pond" to

California, our first full-time pastor, Philip De Courcy gladly accepted the invitation to join us and share a five-part Bible study on heaven entitled "Life after life".

No better way to celebrate and give thanks for the past than to look to eternity. The Book of Revelation was given to encourage the persecuted church and reveal our eternal hope. We also enjoyed an anniversary dinner together with the whole church family to launch the celebrations.

Friends, service for the King in the local church has its challenges and it can be easy to get dejected. But moments like these, when we reflect on God's work in and through the life of the local church, help us to focus on the goodness, the faithfulness and the blessings of God. Have faith in God, for He alone is faithful. We are on the winning side. Jesus is coming soon.

A THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY REFLECTIONS

EDWIN EWART

INTRODUCTION

The subject of worship is both ancient and modern and one on which every Christian will doubtless have an opinion. Speaking about one aspect of worship, John Wesley said, "Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself, or any other creature."[1] It is to be hoped that the consideration of this subject in this article will be conducted in that spirit—with an eye to God in every thought and word. Four preliminary considerations must be appreciated at the outset.

[1] Wesley's *Directions for Singing* VII, United Methodist Hymnal, Preface.

A Common Vocabulary

"Worship" is a term in regular usage and especially in the sphere of religion. It is also used from time to time in the secular context to refer to a dignitary of high standing, for example, a magistrate or mayor of a town or city, but most commonly it is a religious word which features in all the great world religions indicating honour and reverence being given to a deity.

A Common Misunderstanding

In the contemporary Christian church a development in usage of the term has occurred. In the past people spoke about "attending worship" by which they meant going to a place of worship/attending a church service, but nowadays the word has acquired a much more specific meaning referring to "praise" or "singing" so that many people in church today understand worship to mean the songs and hymns. It is commonplace to hear about people moving from one church to another because there is "better worship" in the new place and this is a common misunderstanding which will be returned to later in the lecture.

Literature

A great deal of literature has begun to emerge on the subject both at the popular and academic levels. In addition, modules and whole courses can now be accessed on the theme of worship including the Masters' module at the Irish Baptist College on the Theology of Worship.

The task of this lecture is to examine the theology of worship from a historical perspective and draw out some reflections from that for the contemporary church. This will necessarily call for some treatment of relevant biblical texts, but the main thrust of the lecture will nonetheless be historical in focus. In addition, a basic controlling parameter will be stated at the beginning and that is that whilst worship is classically, the whole of life lived for God, for the purposes of this lecture, attention will be restricted to the matter of the public corporate worship of God's people.

A Definition

There are a great many definitions of worship in the literature but one that captures it particularly well serving as a useful starting point is that of Block in his *Biblical Theology of Worship*: "True worship involves reverential human acts of submission and homage before the divine Sovereign in response to his gracious revelation of himself and in accord with his will."[2]

WORSHIP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The terminology used in Scripture incorporates 3 sets of terms:

a. Worship as homage and adoration to God. The idea is of the acknowledgement of someone great, of someone to be honoured, of the giving of a salutation (as for example in Psalm 95 "let us humble ourselves before God").
b. Worship as service to God. These terms are taken up and applied in Scripture to the relationship between Israel and her King, or between Israel as children responding to God as Father (an example is Exodus 3:12 "you shall serve God on this mountain").
c. Worship as respect/reverence/fear. Notable in this connection is Ecclesiastes 12:13 "to fear God and keep his commandments is the whole duty of man".

In the OT there is a constant depiction of a contrast between true and false worship in terms of its object, its place, its focus and its activities. Thus, the nations worship gods of wood and stone in multiple places, using altars and images, doing what was right in their own eyes. In contrast, God's people were to worship Yahweh in a single location, enjoying the blessing of his presence and worshipping him in the way that he commanded.

Early references to singing by the congregation of Israel

[2] Block D., *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 39.

include Exodus 15 (the Song of Moses following the crossing of the Red Sea), and Deuteronomy 31, where Moses is instructed to "write this song and teach it to the people of Israel" (31:19, 30 for example). Later in the Pentateuch, following the giving of the Sinai Covenant, Moses gives detailed regulations for Israelite worship at the tabernacle (and eventually the temple) in, for example, Leviticus 23. However, while there are many references to the temple in the Psalter (e.g., Pss 42–43), Scripture does not specify how psalms are to be used in worship and outside of the Psalter itself, very little is said about the role of the Psalms in Israel's worship.

The books of Chronicles offer many details about temple worship: 1 Chronicles 16:8–36 indicates that the ark's arrival in Jerusalem was marked by thanksgiving songs using texts corresponding to Psalm 105. Then the books of Ezra and Nehemiah give glimpses into worship in the fifth century BC where, for example, at the dedication of the fortifications of Jerusalem, two choirs with accompanying instruments walked around the newly rebuilt wall (Neh. 12:27ff). All of this comprises a necessarily brief summary of the background to the worship of the people of God found explicitly in the Old Testament.[3]

THE WORSHIP OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS

Paul's references to the Psalms in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 are a good place to start. The implication of these texts, at least, is that the practice of psalm-singing was current among Christian believers. This is not surprising because it is clear from the accounts of apostolic mission in the first century Graeco-Roman world that Jewish communities could be found in most cities (e.g., Pisidia in Acts 13:14; Thessalonica in Acts 17:1–2). It is estimated that Jews comprised about one seventh of the population of most Mediterranean cities. Therefore, despite the fact of considerable

[3] For further study in the area of OT worship see: Hill A. E., *Enter His Courts with Praise. Old Testament Worship for the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

discontinuity between Jewish tradition and Christian ideology (e.g., regarding matters such as ritual purification and food laws) yet Jesus was a Jew and so were his earliest followers. It is consequently important not to overemphasise the contrast regarding worship and recognise that a range of Jewish concepts and practices underlie Christian worship right through to modern times.

Central to this was the notion of the centrality of Scripture. It was the Jewish custom to read and comment on the Scriptures (especially from the Pentateuch and the Prophets) and this was continued by the apostles (in for example, Acts 17:1–2).

In addition, the importance of prayer was emphasised by both Jews and Christians in worship. The language and content of prayer was similar, stressing the holiness of God and the blessing and honour due to him.

In broad terms the notion of recovering or reflecting on past events through commemoration which was fundamental to Jews was and is also highly significant for Christians. White states: "Christians may have turned the world upside down but in the form and content of their worship it was still recognisably a Jewish world."[4] Notably, it was Paul's practice to go into the synagogue to preach Christ (Acts 14:1; 17:2). It should, however, be noted that there is no unanimity among scholars on the question of the Jewish influence on Christian worship. Webber (1994, p. 58) notes, for example, the views of Paul Bradshaw (in *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 1992) who is less certain about the impact of Jewish influences on the worship of the first Christian communities.[5]

What was the pattern for the first Christians?

Public prayer was prominent. Acts 1:14 indicates that the first believers assembled for the observance of daily prayer. Scholars speculate (for example, White 1993) that at first these meetings may

[4] White J. F., *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 16.

[5] Webber R. E., *Worship Old and New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 58.

have mirrored the observance of other Jews who followed a daily schedule but soon the Christians formed their own assemblies and patterns. There is a suggestion, based on the Didache (an early Christian summary of doctrine) that the Lord's prayer should be recited three times a day implying that a regular cycle of prayers was in place.

The Lord's Supper was observed. Some scholars believe that later liturgical usage influenced the formulation of the accounts of the Lord's Supper in Scripture. One of these (Jeremias) is also of the opinion, however, that "*what Jesus said at the Last Supper is preserved for us in an essentially reliable form.*"[6] It is apparent that the celebration of the Supper in the infant churches was in the context of a meal and that the separation of the two was already becoming evident by the beginning of the second century. On the question of frequency there is perhaps suggestion of a weekly observance in the biblical text (Acts 20:7) and also in the writings of secular writers of the period such as Pliny. Patristic writers (like Justyn Martyr), speak of the eucharist as occurring "on the day called Sunday."[7] The eschatological orientation of the Supper ("until he come") was variously emphasised in the ensuing years and the vexed issue of the "real presence" of Christ vigorously debated at the time of the Reformation in particular.

A set time developed. A tendency to introduce daily schedules in worship became observable early on and this found its roots in the pattern of the OT and NT (for example, in Daniel 6:10 three times a day and Psalm 119:164 "seven times a day I praise you..."). The reality of Christian public worship being conducted on the first day of the week is clearly based on the resurrection occurring on the first day of the week. The outcome of this was that the Corinthians were encouraged to make their offering on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2) and the apostle John was in the Spirit on "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). Extra-biblical literature confirms this

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[6] Quoted in White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, 24.

[7] See, Webber, *Worship Old and New*, 54.

in, for example, the Didache (14) which stresses that believers should come together on this special day and give thanks.[8]

Music had a definite role. It is impossible to be definite regarding the role of music and singing among the first Christians except to note several places where the singing of hymns is mentioned (Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Pliny states that the Christians "sang a hymn to Christ as to a God"[9] and in the Book of Revelation singing is a feature of the worship of the heavenly church (a new song in 5:9 and 14:3) and the heavenly company are holding musical instruments (5:8 and 15:2). In addition, a selection of "hymn texts" appear in the New Testament (Phil. 2:6–11; Rom. 11:33–35; Col. 1:15–20; Eph. 5:14) and songs are found in the mouths of Elizabeth, Mary, and Simeon in Luke 1–2.

Furthermore, the worship of the first Christians was explicitly Trinitarian, increasingly inclusive of New Testament texts, with a strong focus on the centrality of Jesus Christ, incorporating a shift away from the physical Temple, and the move from Sabbath to Lord's Day. This is most accentuated in the NT in the Book of Hebrews where the supremacy of Jesus Christ is the central theme. David Peterson states that "what is striking about the NT is that Jesus is explicitly worshipped and that the theological impulses of the NT documents draw many OT strands into Jesus himself (thus he is the temple, the priest, the Passover Lamb and the bread of life)."[10]

WORSHIP IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Michael Driscoll (in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, 2006, p. 175) states that *"the medieval history of Europe can be told from a liturgical point of view…as the story of the conversion of the nations from paganism to the Christian faith."* The term "Middle Ages" refers broadly to the years

[8] Webber, 52–53.
[9] Quoted in White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, 37.
[10] Quoted in Carson D. A., *Worship by the Book*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 23.

500–1200 AD and the term "Christian" used in connection with these years, refers to the Roman Catholic Church, which, in this period, had risen to a position of dominance in the Western world. Characteristic of medieval worship was the development of liturgy (set prayers and readings and songs), primarily connected to the sacraments. Pope Gregory the Great who died in 604 AD had lent his name to several liturgical books, some used in the celebration of the Mass, and some in the reform of liturgical music ("*Gregorian chant*" emanates from Gregory's work). In the Middle Ages another feature of worship was a developing uniformity in practice in which the ministry of the priest became the key focus in worship and the role of the laity (or common people) was removed to the periphery. Even the music employed was increasingly "professional" with trained singers and choirs relieving the laity of any responsibility. Theologically, the idea of God as a stern and distant judge became prominent and this led to an emphasis on penance and monasticism as marking "*all that is highest*" in a search for acceptance with God. Monastic piety came to the fore with its stress on cycles of liturgy and the practice of self-denial and mortification of the body and will. All of this set the scene for the revolution in worship that took place in the Reformation.

WORSHIP IN THE REFORMATION

The period 1500–1700 saw dramatic changes in the Churches of the Western world. The Protestant Reformation born out of protest against Roman Catholic abuses and what the Reformers saw as the sterile atmosphere of medieval worship, brought in its wake massive implications for the theology and practice of public worship. Reformation approaches passed through into Anglican tradition in, for example, the Book of Common Prayer of 1549 and then the more radical version of 1552 (when the language used regarding the Eucharist was clearly aimed at dispelling any notion of the real presence in the sacrament of the bread and wine). English Puritans were instrumental in a further transformation when much traditional ceremony was excluded, and the primacy of preaching emphasised.

Main concerns for the Reformers

1) The Rejection of the Mass against the Roman Catholic notion of a repeated sacrifice and the doctrine of transubstantiation. For Luther this was an "abuse" which brought an endless host of others in its wake (intercessions, merits, memorial days—all for purchase, from which priests and monks derived a living).[11]
2) The De-Clericalisation of Prayer away from public liturgy to private recitation. Less emphasis on responsive prayers and a new focus (especially with the Puritans) on "the Christian home as a small church"[12] in which family prayer and Scripture reading was encouraged.
3) Dates and Days—Luther sought to keep major festivals in line with the major events of the Gospels but had a particular aversion to feasts of the Holy Cross (popular in Roman Catholicism). Anglicans were especially conservative on these matters, notably in the revised Prayer Book of 1552. White says Scots and Puritans denied such human inventions on the grounds that could command no Scriptural warrant but nevertheless, "more than made up in strict observance of the Lord's Day as the Christian Sabbath."[13]
4) Preaching—a renewed awakening in the significance of preaching was the chief hallmark of the Reformation period. In Wittenberg there were three sermons on Sunday and daily throughout the week. In Geneva Calvin was busy preaching every Sunday and often during the week and there was a great emphasis on congregational praise. The sermon was very much the high point of the service when God

[11] White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, 85.
[12] White, 120
[13] White, 129.

speaks, and man believes and responds. The Genevan people heard preaching several times weekly. They were, as McNeill says, "a new generation arising catechized trained in the Scriptures, a community well-indoctrinated and disciplined."[14] Anglicans too saw the importance of preaching. Cranmer published model sermons in 1547 and he was followed by eloquent preachers in Andrewes, Donne and Taylor.

5) Music—An explosion in this area also occurred. Luther saw singing as one of God's greatest gifts (he is credited with approximately 37 hymns). Zwingli, however, banned all music and song in public worship, presumably due to his position on the supremacy of Scripture. Calvin held a compromise position—music was welcome as long as the words were scriptural. The Anabaptists went beyond this and encouraged singing even if not based on any particular portion of Scripture. The Calvinist position became the norm in the Church of England and led to the default position being the singing of metrical psalms which only began to change when Isaac Watts began to write hymns at the close of the 17th century.

BAPTIST WORSHIP

Anabaptist Worship

An examination of early Anabaptist worship shows both dependence upon and distinction from the worship of the mainline reformed churches of the 16th century. The common core was the centrality of the Scriptures, but their radical distinctives in ecclesiology had a marked effect upon Anabaptist worship, for example, an "exclusivist" emphasis, in that only those who professed to know the Lord and whose lives bore out their profession were baptised, welcomed to the Lord's Table and included in the

[14] McNeill J. T., *The History and Character of Calvinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 102.

membership and worship activities of the church. This was in contradiction to the "inclusivist" approach of the mainline churches whose doctrine of infant baptism and church membership naturally led to the calling upon all to honour their baptismal pledges (made for them by others!) and to engage in the worship of God.

Notably, Dirk Philips, an Anabaptist, includes in his instructions about the Lord's Supper repeated emphasis upon the necessity of a regenerate congregation, the fact that this is a church ordinance and not an individual activity, that it must be preceded by personal examination and repentance and that it must issue in mutual encouragement and service one member of another.[15]

The question of hymn-singing was one upon which early Anabaptists differed. Conrad Grebel wrote to Thomas Muntzer chastising him for introducing "new German hymns." He writes:

> That cannot be for the good, since we find nothing taught in the New Testament about singing, no example of it...Paul very clearly forbids singing in Eph.5:19 and Col.3:16 since he says and teaches that they are to "speak" to one another and teach one another with psalms and spiritual songs, and if anyone would sing, he should sing and give thanks "in his heart."[16]

Peter Riedeman, on the other hand, encourages singing in the Spirit, to the praise of God and "to be of service to men." Spiritual songs "attract and move men to blessedness." However, the believer is to be careful that he does not engage in such singing merely for "carnal joy or for the sweet sound or for some such reason."[17]

There was therefore a great deal of fluidity in the conduct of, and involvement in worship among the Anabaptists.

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[15] Klaassen W., *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources* (Robertsbridge: Plough, 2019), 133–135

[16] Williams G. H. and Mergal A. M., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1957), 75.

[17] Riedeman, *Confession,* 123.

In the 17th century much Separatist worship was conducted in secret because of the very real threat of persecution. Particular Baptists tended to follow the pattern of other Calvinistic groups, Independents and Presbyterians rather than the more radical approach of the General Baptists. This pattern according to Ellis was: Prayer, Old Testament reading, New Testament reading, Psalm, Prayer before sermon, Sermon, Intercessory prayer, Lord's prayer, Psalm, Blessing.[18]

Baptist worship in the 18th century followed much the same pattern and into the 19th century prayer, praise and reading and preaching of Scripture remained commonplace. By the 20th century, Baptist worship had settled into what is sometimes called "the hymn sandwich" (hymn, reading, hymn, prayer, notices and offering, hymn, sermon, hymn, benediction). The period since the 1950's has seen the most rapid developments in Baptist worship with a considerable increase in diversity. Ecumenical contact and Charismatic influences have interacted to produce radical change. In some places a more liturgical style is apparent with a more sacramentalist approach characterising the writing of some English Baptists on the subject (notably Paul Fiddes and Anthony Cross).[19] At the same time Charismatic renewal has had an impact leading to a pattern of—worship time (a sequence of songs sometimes with prayers), sermon (usually preceded by Scripture reading) and ministry time (prayers for healing and help)—a structure which resembles American revivalism to some extent.

Baptists in Ireland

For most of their history, Irish Baptists have been characterised by

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[18] Ellis C. J., *Gathering: A Spirituality and Theology of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 49.

[19] See for example, Fiddes P., *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003); Cross A. & Thompson P. (eds)., *Baptist Sacramentalism* (London: Authentic Media, 1969).

a reasonably traditional approach to public worship. The "hymn sandwich" alluded to earlier has been a feature of the worship of many churches and the use of psalmody has been virtually unknown. The Baptist Hymnbook published in 1963 by the Baptist Union of Ireland and the old Irish Baptist Harcourt Street hymnbook published in 1965 was the staple diet of several of our churches alongside revivalist pieces from Redemption Songs in quite a few places. The use of the organ and sometimes organ and piano together was the most common accompaniment. In more recent years the development of contemporary praise songs, the demise of hymnbooks and the emergence of "worship leaders" and bands has been characteristic.

MODERN WORSHIP

From the time of the Enlightenment the supremacy of reason has been presupposed in virtually every sphere of thought. The questioning of everything which previous generations simply accepted whether in politics or science or religion is the standout feature of the modern period and this has continued into the contemporary setting. Worship has not escaped the ramifications of this trend. White identifies the Methodist, Frontier and Pentecostal traditions as indicative of this move away from objective orientation.[20] Methodism was in part a reaction to the Enlightenment agenda insisting on the importance of feeling and heart religion, inspired by hymn singing.

Public Prayer

In the modern period public prayer thrived in the Anglican context through regimented use of the prayer book and the introduction in the Victorian era of choirs to sing morning and evening prayers. In Roman Catholicism, public prayer remained the monopoly of the clergy until 1965 when Vatican II encouraged the recitation of prayers also by the laity. Methodists were instrumental in

[20] White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, 145f.

encouraging corporate prayer in groups and out of this grew, at first in America, the midweek prayer meeting.

Preaching

A preaching service became the norm for much of the English-speaking Reformed and Puritan tradition. In Methodism it evolved from the Anglican morning prayer with a sermon added. At a time when the average Anglican sermon consisted of "15 minute doses of morality"[21] Wesley and Whitefield transformed the significance of preaching as they brought their message to the masses, often beyond the confines of church buildings. In the Frontier tradition preaching was vital to the development of the movement with prayer, singing, preaching and then spiritual counselling at the heart of the worship meeting. These meetings commonly had an evangelistic orientation as many attended who ordinarily did not attend churches elsewhere. Prominent in the Frontier approach were the revivalists Charles Finney, D L Moody, Billy Sunday, and Billy Graham. The influence of this pattern on Protestant worship in North America is quite apparent to the present day. In the more contemporary context a "revival" of preaching has arguably taken place with the ministry of Proclamation Trust in the United Kingdom and Ireland and the Gospel Coalition and Together for the Gospel in the USA.

Time

Many festivals were given significance during the modern period in Roman Catholicism (Feasts of the Immaculate Conception 1708 and Feast of the Sacred Heart 1856) as was the inclusion of numerous saint's days to "an already crowded calendar."[22] In Methodism many of Charles Wesley's hymns had been written for particular seasons (e.g., "Hark the Herald" and "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"). Nevertheless, John Wesley had sought to rid the calendar of "holy

[21] White, 170.
[22] White, 162.

days" in the Anglican system.

Music

The singing of what had been perceived by the Puritans as "uninspired" hymns now blossomed under Charles Wesley who wrote some 6,500 hymns with largely solid doctrinal content. The influence of Bach in the 18th century cannot be discounted in terms of his influence of choral pieces and organ music. In the 19th century hymnody became more subjective with an emphasis on feeling rather than the mighty acts of God and here the Frontier tradition has at times been accused of manipulation in order to make people more receptive to gospel preaching. During the 1960's and 70's the charismatic movement began as a prayer movement which spread into mainline churches including Anglicanism and to some degree Roman Catholicism. Now, it features independent charismatic churches and denominations. In the current scene Christian songs have tended towards more subjectivity with the rise of the "worship leader" influencing how music is understood and used in the worship of the church. The "Praise and Worship Movement" has spread throughout North America, the UK, Ireland and other parts of the world. Some variation in terminology is observable in the descriptions of the phenomenon. However, in practice, confusion is apparent in the identification of singing as worship almost exclusively. Thus, in a great many churches today musicians will be thanked "for leading in worship" when what they have actually done is to lead in praise (which is a component of worship!). The elements of public worship are Bible reading, prayer, singing, offering and the exposition of the word in preaching, which the Reformers argued was the high point of the service.

This misunderstanding (over the distinction between praise and worship) has been in part produced by the development of what Carson calls the "cult of the worship leader."[23] It is arguable that the negative impact of the contemporary fixation on worship leaders

[23] Carson, *Worship by the Book*, 53.

could be addressed in part by the introduction of a variety of models of praise—from band to instrumental and perhaps even choral. An example of this is Redeemer Church in Manhattan which employs such a variety. More fundamentally, Carson argues, there needs to be a complete shift in thinking so that the notion of a "worship leader" who leads the "worship" part of the service before the sermon (which is no part of worship!) needs to be avoided since this skews people's understanding and expectations as to what worship is.

Praise Content

The content of what is sung in church has undeniably changed in the last 25 years and arguably not for the better. The contemporary church is losing touch at an incredibly rapid pace with a whole range of hymnody which has arguably impoverished corporate worship. This is not an argument for the jettisoning of contemporary praise songs but rather a plea for an approach employing the best of the old and the best of the new. Some modern songs are either trivial or verging on heretical. Take for example: "The Wonder of Your cross" by Robin Mark[24] which though in some measure, a very useful reflection on the passion of Christ, yet contains the lines:

> "Were heaven's praises silent in those hours of darkness? / Your Holy Spirit brooding round that empty throne?"

This is to say the least a fundamental misunderstanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The throne in heaven has never at any time been empty!

Or, Paul Baloche's song "Above All"[25] which contains the words:

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[24] http://www.songlyrics.com/robin-mark/the-wonder-of-your-cross-lyrics/ (accessed 14 Oct 2022)

[25] https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/michaelwsmith/aboveall.html (accessed 14 Oct 2022)

> "Like a rose trampled on the ground / You took the fall / And thought of me / Above all."

John Piper[26] says, "That's not true. It's not helpful. I'm not frankly even sure what it means."

Then also, some older hymns can have similar charges laid at their door, for example, "Away in a Manger"[27] which contains the line: "The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes." This is an expression of docetic theology since Jesus was fully human just like us but without sin.

Or, "At the cross, at the cross" by no less than Isaac Watts[28] which states in the chorus: "At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light, And the burden of my heart rolled away, It was there by faith I received my sight, And now I am happy all the day!" which portrays the Christian life in a way foreign to the expectation of the New Testament. (It is conceded that this chorus may have been a later addition to the original.)

Therefore, an approach which weaves together the best of Wesley and Watts, the Gettys, Stuart Townend and Sovereign Grace Music with some considered use of psalmody is surely a more satisfactory pattern. This means that pastors/elders must not abdicate their responsibility in this area of church life in terms of educating and closely liaising with musicians regarding themes and so on. In addition, those who lead praise need not only to be gifted in musical accompaniment and singing, but also theologically aware and biblically rooted so that praise content becomes a key consideration in public worship.

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[26] https://baptistnews.com/article/how-michael-w-smith-george-w-bush-and-one-popular-worship-song-expose-the-problem-of-calvinist-theology-and-politics/#.Y5sRFXbP2Uk (accessed 14 Oct 2022)

[27] https://www.41051.com/xmaslyrics/awaymanger.html (accessed 14 Oct 2022)

[28] https://www.greatchristianhymns.com/at-the-cross.html (accessed 14 Oct 2022)

CONCLUSION

Five controlling principles ought to guide worship in the contemporary church:

1) Scripture must rule. This most basic of principles will guide the thinking and practice of churches. Mark Ashton writes, "the church service should not just contain extracts from the Bible, it should be Bible-driven."[29] This means that Scripture must undergird all that is said and sung in a given service of worship.
2) Services must connect. Ashton appeals for "accessibility" in worship.[30] He traces this back to Cranmer who was determined to remove obscurity from church services and put simplicity and clarity in its place. This means that language must be contemporary, preaching will be relevant and that, at the very least, outsiders will take note that Christians are real people living in the 21st century but with a timeless message!
3) Dignity must be observed. This was a feature of, for example, the Genevan services of Calvin's day. Things were to be done decently and in order, which for the Reformer, was a push-back against the extremes of some radical Reformers. Nowadays church services are too often characterised by sloppiness and an almost irreverent sentimentality. In this there is no concern for excellence in music, song, speech or preaching. This is not, to clarify, a contradiction of Paul's argument about wise and persuasive words in 1 Corinthians 1, but rather an appeal for bringing to God the best we have and not that which costs us nothing!
4) Conviction must motivate. It is right to feel uncomfortable about excesses in public worship where there has been a whipping up of emotions. On the other hand, services

[29] Carson, *Worship by the Book*, 82.
[30] Carson, 85.

where the sheer dullness and mediocrity of what is taking place have a depressing effect on our spirit. Therefore, leaders and congregations need conviction. Convictions about God, his word, the Lord Jesus, the power of the Spirit and the weighty importance of eternal realities. These things will motivate the church in every element so that worship is offered in spirit and in truth.

5) Doxology must be the goal. In Geneva, Calvin's aim in worship was to bring people face to face with God and bring glory to him. For Jonathan Edwards, in Northampton, worship had not occurred simply when the external rites had been observed but only "when our hearts are affected and our love captivated by the free grace of God."[31] *Soli Deo Gloria* must be the banner over all that is done in worship services in the church of Jesus Christ.

[31] Quoted in Carson, 211.

LORD, I FOLLOW: 130 YEARS OF THE IRISH BAPTIST COLLEGE

S. D. ELLISON

In the courtyard of the building that is now home to the Irish Baptist College stands a stone which is engraved on one side with the words *Domine Sequor*, and on the other its English translation: Lord, I follow. This is the Irish Baptist College's motto. It is a fitting motto, because the Lord to which the College has pledged allegiance is the One who has been faithful to this institution.[1]

[1] I would like to thank both Edwin Ewart and David Luke for reading an initial draft of this article and offering helpful feedback. My appreciation must also be expressed to my wife, Tracy, who perused over a century of Irish Baptist magazines, yielding much enlightening information.

Formed in 1892, the Irish Baptist College celebrated 130 years of training men and women for gospel service in 2022. This article seeks to mark this anniversary by offering a narrative history of the Lord's faithfulness to the Irish Baptist College to date. It is a history of courageous visionaries, significant changes, ongoing fruitfulness and, ultimately, the faithfulness of a good God. Despite remaining a relatively small institution, the Irish Baptist College has throughout its history had a global reach with graduates serving on every inhabited continent on the globe. The story, however, begins with an individual in the influential city of Dublin.

THE COLLEGE'S FOUNDER: HUGH D. BROWN

Hugh D. Brown established the Irish Baptist College in Dublin in 1892. He was born into a wealthy family, his father founded the firm that is now known as Brown Thomas and is still located on Grafton Street, Dublin. The family's wealth is evinced by the fact that they had a yacht on which Brown, in his younger years, had visited most of the countries in Europe with his parents. Material riches, however, were only one aspect of Brown's upbringing, there was also spiritual riches. Both of Brown's parents professed faith, with Brown being particularly aware of his mother's persistent prayer for the salvation of her children. Her prayers were answered. Deens records: "Whilst he was still a boy, he was led to the Saviour by an elder brother, Vere, who had himself been recently converted."[2] Around the same time D. L. Moody visited Dublin and Brown appeared to benefit much from his ministry. Indeed, there is evidence that Brown was a fervent evangelist from his earliest days as a Christian.[3] It was not, however, until 1884, after a stint working as a barrister, that Hugh D. Brown became a Baptist pastor. His pastorate began in Lower Abbey Street Baptist Church, which through a move—necessitated by its growth under his ministry—became known as Harcourt Street Baptist

[2] L. E. Deens, *'Man of Stature': Hugh D. Brown, Baptist Leader in Ireland, 1884–1914*, Reprint (Moira: Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland, 2020), 7.

[3] See the account in Deens, 8.

Church. Indeed, it was clear that Brown's ministry was blessed, with church membership reaching 380 within eight years and 409 baptisms taking place in the same period.[4] Thompson labelled this period of "outstanding ministry . . . the high water of Baptist witness in the capital city."[5]

Hugh D. Brown was concerned not only for his own congregation, but also for his fellow Baptists on the island. He was elected President of the Irish Baptist Association in 1887, served again as President of the Baptist Union of Ireland (BUI) in 1900 and was Chairman of the Irish Baptist Home Mission until his death in 1918.[6] The high regard in which he was evidently held by Irish and English Baptists alike was exemplified when he delivered an address at the centenary celebration of the Irish Baptist Home Mission, held in Bloomsbury Chapel, London in Spring 1914.[7] During his leadership the family of Baptist churches likewise enjoyed blessing and growth. Subsequent to his involvement in the final years of the nineteenth century Irish Baptist churches multiplied from 20 to 35 with the number of pastors increasing from 16 to 27.[8] It was during this time that the Irish Baptist College was founded, which was a further expression of Brown's commitment to his Baptist brothers and sisters. All of this, of course, is simply to say that "Hugh D. Brown was God's instrument in it all."[9]

Another important feature of Brown's life, especially with respect to founding the College, was his close friendship with Charles Haddon Spurgeon.[10] There are a number of extant letters between the two men which demonstrate the intimate nature of their

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[4] As recorded by Deens, 12–13.

[5] Joshua Thompson, *Century of Grace: The Baptist Union of Ireland: A Short History 1895–1995* (Belfast: Baptist Union of Ireland, 1995), 5.

[6] Brown also contributed substantial financial amounts. In 1899, for example, he contributed a single donation of £1,000. See, Thompson, 11.

[7] Thompson, 15.

[8] As recorded by Deens, *Man of Stature*, 14.

[9] Deens, 16.

[10] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 6, designates Brown a 'personal friend' of Spurgeon.

friendship. From them it appears that Spurgeon clearly held Brown in high regard, designating him "a great God-send to Ireland" and confessing that "if anybody can raise the weak Baptist interest in that island he is the man."[11] Spurgeon's view of Brown might well have been influenced by his public support of him in the Downgrade Controversy, with Brown being one of seven dissenters who voted with Spurgeon in 1888.[12] The relationship was evidently reciprocal, with Spurgeon clearly exerting influence over Brown's thinking—especially regarding theological training. In the wake of the Downgrade Controversy Brown was also quick to advocate a doctrinal basis to undergird the BUI.[13] Perhaps hoping to avoid any Irish edition of the Downgrade Controversy.

Brown recognised the need for Irish Baptists to be able to avail of theological training on the island.[14] The trend prior to the establishment of the College was for young Irish Baptists to move away for theological training. Sadly, for Irish Baptists at least, the reality was that very few returned to minister on the island.[15] Brown's desire to alter this trend motivated him to establish a training institute and a Select Boys' School.[16] On his initiative, and with the support of Harcourt Street Baptist Church (now Grosvenor Road Baptist Church), a house at Harcourt Street was purchased and opened in 1892. It opened with five students and stood firm-footed on the foundation of God's word—in fact, the College itself "was to

[11] As recorded in Deens, *Man of Stature*, 17.

[12] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 6.

[13] Thompson, 18.

[14] For more of his thoughts on theological education see, Hugh D. Brown, 'Our Denominational Colleges', *The Irish Baptist Magazine*, 1905.

[15] Thus, from 1910 'students were required to give three years to Irish Baptist work on completing their course, to ensure that the output of the College should first benefit the home churches.' See Joshua Thompson, 'Irish Baptist College: The Dublin Years 1892–1963', *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal* 23 (1990/91): 27.

[16] Thompson, 26, astutely notes that Brown had both the 'vision and means.'

be a witness to the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures."[17] This was the birth of the Irish Baptist College.[18]

Given his exploits and the history that the College has enjoyed for 130 years it is perhaps unsurprising to find Deens, in October 1967, labelling Brown as "unquestionably the most outstanding figure in Irish Baptist life within living memory."[19]

DUBLIN DAYS: INCREASE AND DECREASE

The College spent more than 70 years in Dublin from 1892–1964. It is important to clarify, but is unsurprising given his personal and financial investment, that Brown largely controlled the College in its early days. He was the legal owner of the premises and the President of the College.[20] In the Union's early years attempts were made to garner support for the College from BUI churches. This was difficult given the lack of control the Union had over the College's affairs. From 1898, however, it was agreed that the Union would appoint seven representatives to the College Committee, with the other seven coming from the Harcourt Street church. This arrangement led to the commencement of official financial support from the Union.[21] It is noteworthy, however, that this arrangement gave a single church the same voting privileges as all the other churches

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[17] Michael A. G. Haykin, "'God Grant Us to Be Ambitious": The Witness of Hugh D. Brown', *Insight*, 2022, 35.

[18] It should be noted that the Irish Baptist College, ever since its move to Belfast in 1964, performs a dual function. As noted in a booklet produced to celebrate its centenary, *Lord, I Follow: The Irish Baptist College Reflects on a Century of Service* (Belfast: Irish Baptist College, 1992), 1: 'It is, at one and the same time, a pastor's college, training men for the vital work of ministry in the local church; and a missionary college, helping prepare both men and women for service at home and overseas.'

[19] Deens, *Man of Stature*, 6. Also see, Edwin Ewart, 'The Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland: The First 120 Years', *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal* 23 (2015): 30, 38, who with more restraint initially labels Brown a notable leader. Later, however, he writes: 'To this day H D Brown remains perhaps the most outstanding figure in the annals of Irish Baptist History.'

[20] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 70.

[21] Thompson, 14, 70–71.

combined. Even though this relationship was not the most harmonious, it was not until 1963 that the College came under the full control of the Union.[22]

Hugh D. Brown and the College's first Principal, Ambrose U. C. Bury,[23] were held in high regard by Irish Baptists.[24] Therefore, notwithstanding the slightly ambiguous relationship between the Irish Baptist College and the Irish Baptist Association, later renamed the BUI, from 1900 onwards the College report was included in the BUI's annual report even though it was not, strictly speaking, a formal part of the Union.[25] That being said, the College clearly placed a strong emphasis on the churches' recommendation of students as "Applicants had to have been a member of a Baptist church for at least a year, be commended by their home church, [and] backed by a recommendation from the appropriate Association committee."[26] The Dublin days dawned with increasing support from BUI churches.

The glimmers of hope from these various aspects of support for the College from the Union were not to last. Brown passed away in 1918, Ireland was partitioned in 1922 and Baptists in what was now named Northern Ireland were growing while Baptists

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[22] Thompson, 27.

[23] The College's Principals have been: Ambrose U. C. Bury (1892–1912), James Willoughby (1912–1916), T. Harold Spurgeon (1916–1963), David P. Kingdon (1964–1974), Ivor J. W. Oakley (1974–1988), Norman Shields (Acting Principal, 1988–1990), Hamilton Moore (1990–2010) and Edwin Ewart (2010–present). See, *Lord, I Follow*, 2–3, 13.

[24] The esteem in which Hugh D. Brown was held can be exemplified by the fact that the wider public understood him to speak on behalf of Irish Baptists, even when his personal view was at odds with the majority of Irish Baptists. See, for example, David Luke, 'Irish Baptists and the Second Home Rule Crisis', *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 20, no. 1 (2020): 100. Luke notes that 'Such was Brown's standing amongst Irish Baptists and the wider evangelical community in Ireland and Britain that the newspaper [Irish Times] took Brown's letter as representing the position of the whole denomination.'

[25] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 72.

[26] *Lord, I Follow*, 9.

in what later became known as the Republic of Ireland declined.[27] Together these factors began to make it more difficult to make the case for keeping the College in Dublin. Thompson adds:

> Furthermore, the attachment of Brown to C. H. Spurgeon, and the sensation of the Downgrade Controversy coupled with the rise of 'the German Theology' worked powerfully in Irish Baptist circles against an educated ministry and created an anti-College lobby in the BUI.[28]

Other tensions also surfaced during the period when the College was based in Dublin. From 1900 until 1943 the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) recognised graduates of the Irish Baptist College and they were thus eligible to be appointed as pastors in British Baptist churches.[29] This arrangement concluded in 1943 because the BUGB demanded that the College affiliate with them to maintain ministerial recognition of their graduates. In 1943 the College expressed its difficultly in affiliating with the BUGB, acknowledging the problem it would cause among Irish Baptists and yet expressed concern at the possible curtailment of recruitment from England and the prospects of its graduates. There emerged a new arrangement in which students at the Irish Baptist College were treated as a special case which amounted to them effectively being treated as if they were students from a recognised college. It is perhaps notable that in 1948, during the period this agreement was active, the College had a total of 18 students in residence, which

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[27] Thompson, 'The Dublin Years', 28: 'These were years of violent change in Ireland when relations between north and south altered radically, and political tensions in society at large put strains on the Baptist community at large, and not least on the College.'

[28] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 72. This, of course, was not a new concern. A note in the 1890 August edition of The Irish Baptist Magazine, Vol. XIV, 160, observed that while one pastor asserted "'God does not need our learning to convert the sinner' it is still more true that He does not need our ignorance."

[29] Thompson, 74.

necessitated additional accommodation.[30] The new arrangement, however, ceased in 1963.[31]

The difficulties of the Dublin days eventually took their toll on the work of the Irish Baptist College. Thompson refers to a meeting in 1950 at which the Union Council and the College Committee "discussed the constitution of the College committee, the location of the College, and the place of the College in the life of the denomination."[32] It was becoming clear that the churches of the Union were losing confidence in the College, eligible students were opting to study elsewhere and, as a natural consequence, student numbers were dwindling. Financial pressure soon came to bear along with the impending retirement of T. H. Spurgeon, the College Principal. On 14 March 1963 the College Committee met to award the College Diploma to the two final students to graduate from Dublin.[33]

The 1895–96 BUI Handbook states: "The College was founded in 1892, for the purpose of training Irishmen for pastoral and evangelistic work in their native land."[34] During its Dublin days the Irish Baptist College admitted 136 students. Of those admissions 108 graduated. Almost half of them (48) served in Irish Baptist Churches, with 16 serving exclusively in Irish Baptist Churches. In part, the purpose behind establishing the College was met. Given all of this was instigated by a single pastor and supported by a fledgling group of churches, this is no small achievement.[35] The Dublin days, as difficult as they were at times, bore fruit.[36]

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[30] Ewart, 'The First 120 Years', 32.

[31] This scenario is outlined in Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 74–75.

[32] Thompson, 76.

[33] Thompson, 77.

[34] Quoted in Maurice Dowling, 'A History of the Irish Baptist College', *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal* 13 (1980/81): 30.

[35] These figures can be found in Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 77.

[36] The Irish Baptist Magazine, Vol. XXV, July 1901, 154, records: "Our IBC is not large, and its means are small, but we know of no college that for its size and means does such thoroughly good work."

T. Harold Spurgeon[37]

The link between the Irish Baptist College and Charles Haddon Spurgeon did not cease with Brown's death in 1918. In 1916 Spurgeon's grandson T. Harold Spurgeon was appointed as a tutor, and in 1921[38] became Principal of the College. T. H. Spurgeon remained Principal until 1963 and the College's move north. To Spurgeon's credit he served as Principal during a difficult time for the College, surviving on what has been described as a hand-to-mouth existence due to the financial constraints that the College experienced during its Dublin days.[39] One student from those days reminisced that "The facilities verged on the Dickensian and the students led a Spartan existence."[40] Indeed, Spurgeon, visiting lecturers and the caretaker were given three months' notice in early 1919.[41] It is perhaps understandable that he was described as "a man of granite who wept like a child."[42] Spurgeon, however, was not without his critics.[43] Thompson notes some dissent within Irish Baptist churches at Spurgeon's attitude "to such matters as smoking

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[37] Information in the below paragraph is drawn from *Lord, I Follow*, 2, 9.

[38] *Lord, I Follow* contains two different dates for Spurgeon's appointment as Principal. On page 2 it states that he was appointed 9 years after being appointed a tutor in 1916, which would be 1925. On page 9, however, it states that he was appointed Principal in 1921. This discrepancy in date is, however, clarified by Dowling, 'A History of the Irish Baptist College', 34, who notes Spurgeon's appointment as Principal in 1921 and the fact that this became a full-time post in 1925.

[39] David Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast: Fifty Years of the Irish Baptist College in the North', *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal* 22 (2014): 17, argues that 'From the outset the College was beset by small numbers, lack of support from the churches and weak finances.' The difficulties of the Dublin days are outlined in detail by; Thompson, 'The Dublin Years', 27–36.

[40] *Lord, I Follow*, 8.

[41] Thompson, 'The Dublin Years', 28.

[42] *Lord, I Follow*, 2.

[43] One even took his complaints to print: Alfred Olley, *Why I Left the Irish Baptist College*, 1935. The main issue within Olley's booklet is Spurgeon's view of Scripture.

and cinema-going...internal discipline and examinations."[44] A term of nearly four decades as Principal is certain to bring its detractors, and yet Spurgeon is remembered as a soft-natured man of intellectual ability and strong Baptist principles. In his later years he suffered much mental and physical deterioration which arguably mirrored the decline of the College in its latter Dublin days. Luke aptly summarises: "The College's Dublin years were always difficult; although many of the graduates went on to make a notable contribution to Baptist life in Ireland and beyond."[45] Furthermore, Spurgeon was convinced that the College would succeed. In 1929, in his inimitable fashion, he asserted that although the College costs money and comes in for a good deal of criticism, it will succeed.[46] T Harold Spurgeon played a central role in making it so. As Deens reflects:

> Unquestionably his chief work was done as Principal of our College. Our denomination owes him much for the self-sacrifice with which he devoted himself to this service for forty years. Bearing the honoured name he bore, and possessed of the outstanding qualities and gifts which were his, he could easily have found a wider sphere and commanded a far larger salary more commensurate with his powers, but he was not tempted. Contentedly he continued here with us.[47]

NUDGED NORTH: THE SANDOWN SEASON

In 1964 the College was relocated to Belfast. Dowling's assessment is that this was "Undoubtedly the most important event in the history of the College since its foundation."[48] This move was the

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[44] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 76; Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 18.

[45] Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 18.

[46] The Irish Baptist Magazine, Vol. LIII, Nos. 7–8, July-August 1929, 82.

[47] L. E. Deens, 'The Late Principal T. H. Spurgeon, M.A., B.D.: A Tribute', *The Irish Baptist*, 1968, 4.

[48] Dowling, 'A History of the Irish Baptist College', 37.

result of a number of factors—detailed above—not least the growing number of Baptist churches and potential students in the north of the island. Strikingly, despite the decline of the College in Dublin, the BUI voted nearly unanimously to maintain a college for training pastoral and missionary candidates.[49] There was a year's hiatus as the building in Dublin was sold and premises in Belfast were found and refurbished for the purpose of housing a theological college. In September 1964 the Irish Baptist College resumed its task of training men and women for gospel service on the Sandown Road.[50] All of this was done with "a sense of thankfulness amongst the churches for all that the College had contributed to the life of the Union for nearly seventy years"[51] while located in Dublin.

David P. Kingdon

During the hiatus the Irish Baptist College was not without a principal. After T. H. Spurgeon's retirement, the College Committee commenced a search for and found a successor: David P. Kingdon. He was a graduate of Cambridge and Spurgeon's College, London, Assistant Minister in Purley Baptist Church and imbibed the evangelical position of the BUI.[52] He was appointed Principal effective 1 September 1963.[53] Despite the absence of students, the academic year 1963/64 was not a fallow year for Kingdon. He engaged in a full programme of deputation around Irish Baptist churches seeking support for the re-opening of the College. Thompson suggests: "They were impressed by his warm-hearted

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[49] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 78.

[50] R. Clarke, 'The Aims of the College', *The Irish Baptist*, 1964, outlines the aims of the College as producing men: 1) with a true understanding of the Bible; 2) well-grounded in the fundamental truths of the Apostolic Faith; 3) who are Baptists by conviction; 4) with a passion for the salvation of souls; 5) who will give themselves to prayer; 6) who will adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

[51] Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 19.

[52] *Lord, I Follow*, 3.

[53] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 79.

love for the Lord and his whole-hearted loyalty to the Scriptures. Bonds were forged in this way between the College and the Churches which have endured to the present day."[54] Indeed, these bonds remain even now 27 year after Thompson wrote those words. Another Irish Baptist publication describes Kingdon as a "genial personality" who "soon endeared himself to his students."[55] The accuracy of these claims is verified by the recruitment documented: 13 individuals applied to commence studies in September 1964 and 10 for September 1965.[56] These figures exceeded expectations. In fact, during Kingdon's tenure 111 students enrolled, almost as many as the entirety of the College's time in Dublin.[57] The success intimated in these figures may be tempered somewhat by noting that many students in the early years followed Kingdon from England.

The success experienced in relocating the Irish Baptist College to Belfast may also be witnessed in its appointment of additional staff. In 1964 Ivor J. W. Oakley was appointed as a full-time tutor and in 1966 Norman Shields was appointed part-time tutor in addition to a number of other Union responsibilities (he became a full-time tutor in 1975). In 1972 Roy C. McMullan was added to the growing staff team and in 1975 Maurice Dowling was appointed as a full-time member of staff only a year after graduating from the College.[58] He remained a tutor in the College until retirement in 2012, although even then he continued as a visiting tutor until his death in 2016. The growing staff team brought expertise and experience in a range of pertinent subjects for ministry training.

As alluded to already, one significant change that

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[54] Thompson, 79–80. Cf. Joshua Thompson, 'Irish Baptist College: "The Belfast Years" 1964–1991', *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal* 24 (1991/92): 54.

[55] *Lord, I Follow*, 3.

[56] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 80.

[57] The figure of 111 is taken from Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 20.

[58] A move Thompson, 'The Belfast Years', 57, notes as 'an innovative move which has proved to be another divinely-led choice.'

accompanied the College's move to Belfast was the training of women for missionary work. Luke explains:

> Another notable feature of the College from its re-constitution in Belfast was that it began to train women as well as men. The College was originally conceived as an institute for training men for pastoral ministry. However, during the Belfast years this changed. When the College opened in Belfast, in 1964, Elizabeth Hughes, who later served with Baptist Missions, became the first woman to study at IBC.[59]

This feature is simply another aspect of the continuing development of the Irish Baptist College. The admission of women to the College was only the first step in the ever-widening avenues of Christian service for which the College trains its students.

A decade after moving to Belfast the College's Principal, David P. Kingdon, resigned to move to South Africa. This brought to a close a fruitful first ten years for the Irish Baptist College in Northern Ireland. While Thompson notes that Kingdon contributed a balanced curriculum for the College, delivered stimulating lectures and preached in a warm and thoughtful fashion that was appreciated by his hearers, his most beneficial legacy was undoubtedly the fact that he "had secured for the College an enduring place in the affection of the churches."[60] Kingdon was succeeded as Principal by Ivor Oakley who continued to develop the College during his tenure. Indeed, by 1995 Thompson could assert that "the churches now look to the College for a supply of pastors."[61]

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[59] Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 20. This, however, had been suggested as early as 1919 by the then Principal T. H. Spurgeon. See, Thompson, 'The Dublin Years', 29.
[60] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 82.
[61] Thompson, 83.

University Accreditation[62]

A preliminary meeting between the staff of the Irish Baptist College and representatives of Queen's University, Belfast took place in December 1975 to explore the possibility of university accreditation for the College. It seems that the primary driving force in this decision was the very practical matter of student access to grants.[63] The meeting was obviously positive as in February 1976 the staff recommended that the College Committee apply to Queen's to teach a university accredited course. There was some unease both among students and in the churches of the Union but the College decided to press ahead with the plan by bringing it to the 1976 Assembly for a vote—with Ewart noting that there was "a vigorous debate on the floor of the assembly"[64] concerning this motion. It passed by a narrow margin: 132 in favour, 128 against. Despite some of the concerns about this move, support for the College did not waver. Ewart observes:

> The merits and alleged demerits of an educated ministry and fears about a loss of autonomy were thoroughly aired and the decision was taken to press ahead. The approval was subsequently granted, took effect in 1977 and continues to the present day in a postgraduate relationship which has proved beneficial both to the College and to the local university.[65]

Accredited courses have been part of the provision of the Irish Baptist College ever since. The relationship with Queen's formally came to an end in 2020 with the closure of the Institute of Theology. By that stage, however, the College was only offering postgraduate awards with Queen's. From 2003–2010 the undergraduate programme was accredited by the University of

[62] This section relies on Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 21–22.
[63] Dowling, 'A History of the Irish Baptist College', 40; Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 22.
[64] Ewart, 'The First 120 Years', 33.
[65] Ewart, 33.

Wales, Lampeter and from 2010 onwards the University of Chester. These relationships that the College has enjoyed with various universities have contributed much more than merely student access to grants. They have enhanced and refined the standard of teaching at the College, and given graduates a credibility beyond the church.

Raising its Own and Reaching Out

The 1983 intake of students proved to be an apt example of how the College has had a propensity for raising its own. As noted above, many of those who served as staff were previously students at the College. In 1983 three future staff members were enrolled: Edwin Ewart, Peter Firth and David Luke, with Edwin going on to become Principal. They were joined by William Colville who went on to become Association Director and Mike Ewan who became Baptist Youth Secretary.[66] In 1984 the current Old Testament Lecturer, Sarah Dalrymple, enrolled. At this time the College student body amounted to 28 individuals, the largest it had been for some time.[67]

The College raising its own was witnessed once more when, as a result of the retirement of Ivor Oakley and Norman Shields, previous graduates Hamilton Moore and John Birnie were appointed Principal and Secretary[68] respectively in 1990. These retirements marked the end of an era as both Ivor Oakley[69] and Norman Shields[70] had been associated with the College since it was nudged north. With a new Principal—the first Irish-born Principal[71]—and a new Secretary there was a buoyant mood around the College, one

[66] Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 22.
[67] Ewart, 'The First 120 Years', 33–34.
[68] The College's Secretaries, later renamed Director of Training, have been: Norman Shields (1966–1990), John Birnie (1990–2007), Nigel Younge (2007–2019) and Davy Ellison (2019–current).
[69] Of Oakley Thompson, 'The Belfast Years', 59, writes: 'His contribution as pastor, College tutor and principal was substantial and important.'
[70] Of Shields Thompson, 57, writes: 'Over those twenty-five years Mr Shields made a significant contribution to the development of the College in every area.'
[71] Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 23.

that comes with the anticipation of a new era.

In his autobiography, Moore notes how this new era in the College's history was invigorated with a fatherly love for the students. He records that his children "detected my deep interest and support for all the students and my commitment to their success, a goal which of course was shared by the other faculty members."[72] This fatherly concern extended beyond students from the island, with Moore being the driving force behind a string of Romanian students studying at the College.[73] The College therefore began to reach out to help Baptists in eastern Europe, guiding many students through both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Moore reflects on the end of his time at the Irish Baptist College by asserting: "I could leave with a sense of satisfaction that I had helped in some small way to prepare others to further the kingdom of God."[74] Moore's self-reflection is supported by Dowling:

> I want to pay tribute to Hamilton for the gentle and gracious way in which he worked and ministered as college principal. He really set an example in godliness and wisdom...The value of his contribution to the life and work of IBC is something which simply cannot be measured; we will always be in his debt and we will always be grateful to the Lord for the work which he did through Hamilton.[75]

MOVING TO MOIRA

While the 1990s may have appeared to be a new era in the College with new staffing arrangements, a more significant change arrived in

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[72] Hamilton Moore, *By the Grace of God: I Am What I Am* (Independently Published, 2017), 83.

[73] Moore, 87–88. This was not, however, the first overseas students to study at the Irish Baptist College. Thompson, 'The Dublin Years', 27, notes two German students and a Russian student being admitted in 1908 and 1910 respectively.

[74] Moore, *By the Grace of God*, 95.

[75] Maurice Dowling, 'A Hard Act to Follow: Dr Hamilton Moore Retires', *Abcinsight*, 2010-2011, 23.

the early 2000s:

> In February 1998 the Union Secretary, William Colville, made a presentation to the College Board, which was to herald changes that would have the most far-reaching consequences for the College since the move to Belfast. The Secretary spoke to the Board about a recent agreement by the Corporation Directors to "investigate the possibility of bringing the Union administration offices and College premises together in one suite of buildings". This would involve either a move to a new site outside Belfast or the redevelopment of the College premises at Sandown Road.[76]

Initially such a proposal was met with resistance, with concerns about whether such a move would be in the best interests of the College. On the other hand, the Sandown Road building needed refurbishment and the College was running a deficit. It was therefore agreed in April 1999 to support in principle the amalgamation of the BUI offices with the Irish Baptist College.[77] It took time, but in 2003 the College moved into shared, purpose-built premises on the Hillsborough Road in Moira.[78] The Principal at the time, Hamilton Moore, recalls: "Some took time to be persuaded of the move. But over the years it has proved to be an excellent location."[79] The current Principal of the College concludes that the move "proved to be in the best interests of the work [of the Association] as a whole."[80]

Soon after the move to Moira serious consideration was given to the shape of the ministry training delivered at the College. There appeared to be agreement that the College needed to adapt

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[76] Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 25.

[77] Luke, 25.

[78] Despite being purpose-built premises, in 2010 there was need for an extension to house the ever-growing College library. Derek Baxter et al., *120 Together* (Moira: Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland, 2015), 15.

[79] Moore, *By the Grace of God*, 94.

[80] Ewart, 'The First 120 Years', 35.

the course to ensure training was vocational and relevant.[81] This was spearheaded by the current Principal, Edwin Ewart, during a three-year stint as Assistant Principal between 2007–2010. In 2008 the new Preparation for Ministry Course commenced. Under God's sovereign guidance, this new course proved effective in terms of output. Between 2010 and 2014 62 full-time students graduated from the College with 34 entering ministry, 18 within the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland (ABCI).[82] Ewart asserts that the Preparation for Ministry Course "has operated very successfully to the present time contributing markedly to a reduction in the number of vacant churches in the Association."[83]

THE PRESENT: MAGNIFYING CHRIST, ADVANCING THE GOSPEL AND STRENGTHENING THE CHURCH

Writing in 1995, Thompson noted that there remained some "who still look with deep suspicion on attempts to raise the standards of ministerial training, but on the whole Irish Baptists have welcomed the role of the College in preparing candidates for pastoral and missionary service."[84] University recognition of courses in the 1970s would not have helped soften that opinion. Yet, it remains a commitment of Baptists to ensure that formal training is not a pre-requisite for the pastorate. This position Thompson designates Irish Baptist "genius."[85] Nevertheless, the churches of the ABCI continue to seek out Irish Baptist College graduates to fill their pastorates. In April 2017 the College launched a plan to realise the appointment of 70 College graduates to ministry positions in ten years. This year, 2022, marks the half-way point in the College's Ten Year Vision and at present 50 College graduates have been placed in ministry positions in the last five years. The vast majority of these ministry

[81] Luke, 'Born in Dublin, Bred in Belfast', 27.
[82] Figures taken from Baxter et al., *120 Together*, 12, which also notes that 60 individuals in the prayer diary at the time had received training at the Irish Baptist College.
[83] Ewart, 'The First 120 Years', 36.
[84] Thompson, *Century of Grace*, 73.
[85] Thompson, 74.

placements are within Irish Baptist circles, thus continuing to fulfil Hugh D. Brown's initial desire with the formation of the Irish Baptist College.

Values that undergirded the establishment of the Irish Baptist College in 1892 continue to inform its present. Haykin identifies that:

> The divine blessing that has attended it since the days of Hugh Brown and still remains is surely owing in part to the solid commitment to the inerrancy of the Scriptures that Brown emphasized in his ministry and that has continued to mark the school.[86]

The current Principal, Edwin Ewart, is known to regularly describe the College as conservative (with respect to its view of Scripture), evangelical (with respect to its proclaiming of the gospel) and unashamedly Baptistic. But the College can only continue to exist, humanly speaking, if the churches of the Association continue to identify and send suitable individuals to train there: "The challenge for the future will be to continue to identify and train those with gifting in preaching and leadership; people who will be at the forefront of advancing the cause of Christ across this island and beyond."[87] The College will only ever magnify Christ, advance the gospel and strengthen the church if new students enter its doors, undergo its training and are returned to our churches and mission with a toolkit for sustaining lifelong ministry for the sake of Christ and his people. In an increasingly saturated market, if Irish Baptists are to keep control of training our pastors, missionaries and evangelists we must keep the doors of the College open.

Dowling concluded his 1980/81 article with words that can be suitably echoed in this conclusion:

> We are indeed grateful to God for the continued ministry of

[86] Haykin, 'God Grant Us to Be Ambitious', 35–36.
[87] Baxter et al., *120 Together*, 14.

> the College over the years and for its progress in recent years especially. We can look forward to the future with confidence, convinced that we are making a contribution to the Lord's work in Ireland and abroad.[88]

After 130 years of the Irish Baptist College experiencing the Lord's goodness and faithfulness, we continue with the pledge: Lord, I follow.

[88] Dowling, 'A History of the Irish Baptist College', 41.

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