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IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

VOLUME FOUR 1971/72

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Irish Baptist Historical Society

JOURNAL

Volume Four - - 1972/73

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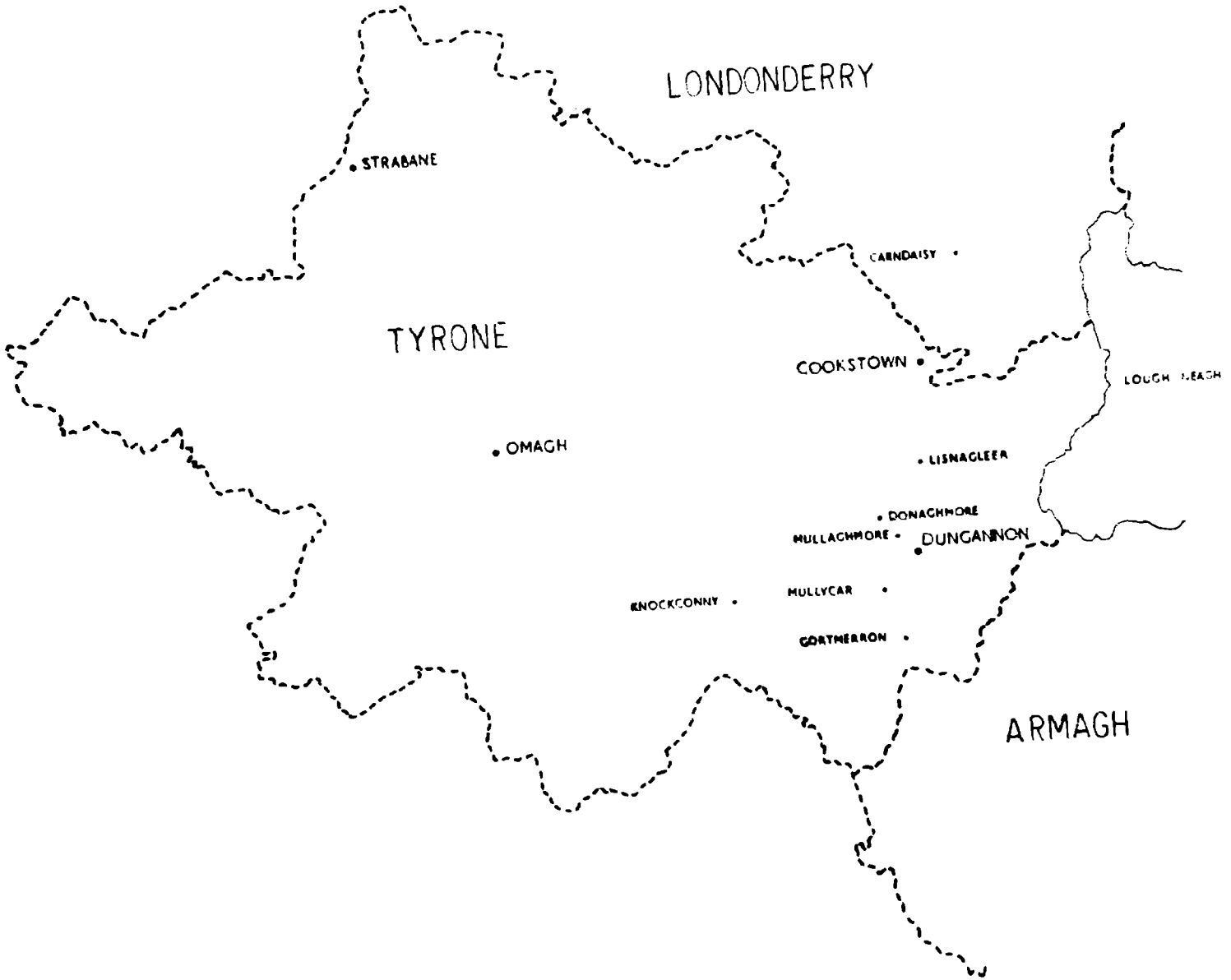
Editorial

There may be many in Ireland who feel that history is already too much with us, who are more conscious perhaps of the present making of Irish history than of any urge to study it. Nevertheless the work of the Irish Baptist Historical Society continues, as the issue of this latest number of the Journal shows.

At the end of its fourth year of existence it may be appropriate to try to assess the work and progress of the Society. In the sense that it has provided a forum for discussion of Irish Baptist history and a vehicle for publication of the results of study by individuals the Society seems to have achieved a useful objective - the circulation of the Journal is very satisfactory. As a means of provoking interest in their own history by Irish Baptists it has been less successful. Numbers attending the quarterly meetings are small, which is not particularly significant, more important is the fact that the circle of those prepared to engage in actual research remains disappointingly circumscribed.

That the Society is not entirely parochial in outlook is illustrated by Mr. Rodgers' paper herein. The papers of more local interest both here and in earlier numbers of the Journal aim at both academic quality and popular appeal. Views on the realisation or otherwise of that aim, suggestions of suitable subjects for future study, better still, offers of further material, will be very welcome. Meantime, thanks must be expressed to all those whose work has made possible the present publication.

H.D.G.


LONDONDERRY
STRABANE
CARNDAISY
TYRONE
COOKSTOWN
LOUGH NEAGH
OMAGH
LISNAGLEER
DONAGHMORE
MULLAGHMORE
DUNGANNON
KNOCKCONNY
MULLYCAR
GORTNERRON
ARMAGH

History of Lisnagleer Baptist Church

Lisnagleer Baptist Church with its tidy Churchyard, is situated three miles from Dungannon. A finger-post on the main Cookstown Road enables the visitor to find the Church easily. The centenary of the building was celebrated in December, 1970 by a weekend of special services. The congregation however was marking its 104th birthday, having been formed in 1866 - at that time the only Baptist Church in County Tyrone.[1]

The Baptists who came to Lisnagleer in 1866 may be described as the 'remnant' of a Church which previously existed in Donaghmore. A manse and place of worship owned by that Church are still standing. Sometime prior to 1866 these buildings were sold as the Church had died out. It had been a Campbellite Church,[2] and the pastor was a Mr. Hurt, who was also a noted herbalist in those days. The Church also met in a farmhouse in the townland of Mullaghmore about two miles from Dungannon on the Donaghmore Road.[3] Campbellism teaches that baptism is the means of regeneration.[4] Such teaching probably explains the demise of the Donaghmore Campbellites, and the interest of a 'remnant' in a Biblical Doctrine of Baptism. This group of eight or nine earnest Christians[5] met at Backford, Donaghmore, in a loft described by one writer as a small two-storey house[5] owned by Robert McLean, and now owned by his son Noel McLean. *'God blessed their efforts to make the Gospel known, and as the work grew they moved into a hall, now known as the Lecture Hall in the same village. This was the former Campbellite Church.*

The congregation next moved to Lisnagleer and met in a wooden hut across the road from the present building, in a field owned by

people the name of Maguire, and now owned by Mr. John Wilson.[6] *Lisnagleer Baptist Church was formally constituted in 1866 with eleven members. The work prospered and with the continued increase of the numbers came also the need of a suitable leader to take care of the cause.*[5] *An application was forwarded to the Central Committee of the British and Irish Baptist Home Mission in 1866, and the leaders of the work in Ireland were so favourably impressed with the progress that they nominated Pastor John Dickson to the oversight of the Church.'* Under his leadership the members embarked upon the erection of the present building on a site given by a certain Wm. Foster.

Plans were drawn by Mr. John Donnelly, a Roman Catholic stonemason who lived on the farm beside the Church. The builder was another local man - Adam Hunter of Drumconnor - a stonemason, and a very good one. The Church was built of stone from Carland Quarry - about a mile away, and complete with porch and vestry cost £300.[7] The opening was on Tuesday 13th December, 1870 with services 'at 12 o'clock noon and half past six o'clock evening'. Sermons were preached by Rev. R. M. Henry, A.M., of Belfast. Collections were taken up after each sermon, in order if possible 'to render this place of worship FREE OF DEBT'.[8] Collections that day amounted to £25, which almost cleared the debt.[7] A little footnote on the handbill added tactfully - 'Contributions from those unable to attend will be thankfully received by J. Dickson, Pastor, or Mr. Wm. Irwin, Donaghmore.'

The Trust Deeds[9] supply some useful information as to the constitution of the Church. The Trusts

> *'permit the said place of worship or meeting house or premises to be used as a place of Public Religious Worship by the society of Protestant Dissenters called Particular or Calvinistic Baptists.'*

So we have an indication of the calibre and doctrine of the foundation members. Another matter is defined -

> *'Though it is expressly intended that the Society*

assembling in the said Meeting House shall at all times be confined in the choice of a minister or Pastor to persons of the Denomination aforesaid, yet it shall be lawful for the members of the said Society for the time being if they shall so choose to admit to the table of the Lord's Supper any person or persons professing repentance toward God and Faith in their Lord Jesus Christ although such persons shall not be of the denomination aforesaid.'

The first pastor of the Church was a County Antrim man - Rev. John Dickson. Born in 1836 at Broughshane, it was during the 1859 Revival he decided to study for the ministry.[10] He entered Magee College, Londonderry, and was a student on its rolls in the first year of its existence - but it was in Glasgow University that he completed his collegiate education. He came to Donaghmore in 1866 and bought a small farm in the townland of Crieve. The house is now occupied by Mr. Harry McLean. It was to this house John Dickson brought his bride - a Miss Stevenson - a member of a long-established Coalisland family. There were no children of the marriage. John Dickson kept a few cattle on the farm, and had a servant boy called Robert John McFadden who lived in the neighbouring townland of Claggan.[11]

After the opening of the new Church a revision of the Church roll on 1st January, 1871 showed there were 22 members. In the Church Book the words 'added', 'resigned', 'separated' show that firm discipline was maintained. An entry about 1875 is headed 'Discipline as Bearing on Absentees from Church Worship'.

FIRST: That members of this Church absenting themselves without sufficient cause from the Meetings of the Church for worship on the first day of the week, shall be dealt with as offenders against Scriptural precedent:

as given in Acts 2:42 'They continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers', and as transgressors of the divine injunction Heb. 10:25 'Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.'

SECONDLY: When members are unavoidably absent on the first day of the week, that the Church should know as soon as possible that there is sufficient cause for their absence; so that the absent ones may not be regarded as transgressors, but may have the sympathy and prayers of the rest of the Church, according to 1 Corinthians 12. 'That the members should have the same care one for another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it' and Acts 12:5 'Peter therefore was kept in prison but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him.'

THIRDLY: In no case should more than three weeks at longest be allowed to lapse without the church's care for the absent being manifested by looking after them. Diligence in such matters is enjoined by Heb. 12:15 'Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.'

A capable pastor, a man of indefatigable zeal and boundless energy John Dickson was described by a contemporary as 'an evangelist whose labours extend ten or eleven miles in every direction, and who preaches at 18 different stations to congregations of from 20 to 200 persons.'[12] Ten years after the Church was opened the membership had risen to 40, the Sunday School had 100 scholars and 6 teachers, and

there were 12 preaching stations. Normal congregations filled the chapel each Sunday.[13]

He seems to have set his heart on establishing a Baptist witness in the County Town of Omagh,[14] and so from 28th December, 1879 to 1st January, 1880 he and the Rev. John Taylor of Tandragee had a mission there. Mr. Dickson reported - *'Weather unusually severe ... attendance satisfactory ... had pleasure of baptizing a young disciple in an adjoining river in the afternoon of New Year's Day.'*

The Baptist Association elected him as President for 1880 and his Presidential Address is recorded in full in the October Magazine of that year. His subject was: 'The Bible as the Christian's Tabernacle of Testimony and Land of Promise'. The address ends with the following verse and reflects his love for the Scriptures:

'This book, this holy book on every line
Marked with the seal of high divinity,
On every leaf bedewed with drops of love
Divine, and with the eternal heraldry
And signature of God Almighty stamped
From first to last, this ray of sacred light,
This lamp, from off the everlasting throne,
Mercy took down, and in the night of time
Stood, casting on the dark her gracious bow:
And evermore beseeching men, with tears
And earnest sighs, to read, believe, and live.' [15]

He served the denomination as Editor of the Irish Baptist Magazine from 1882 until June 1886.

Two large marquees[16] were in the custody of Rev. Dickson for use in evangelistic missions. He reports 250 attending a mission at Tamnishkinney,[17] near Rock, in August-September, 1880. A Mission at Milltown, Dungannon was attended by *'600 on some occasions,*[18] *during September-October, 1883. Dungannon was visited at the same time by a political squall of Nationalism so-called, or rather Parnellism. Owing to the presence of so many soldiers, police, Nationalists, and Orangemen, the town was more lively than religious for a day or two.'*

Simultaneously another Tent Mission was in progress at Mulnagore and *'as many as 500 were sometimes present on the Sunday evenings.'* Mr. Dickson had the help of Mr. Wainwright, Stockton-on-Tees, Mr. Taylor, Tandragee, Mr. Phillips and his son from Grange, and Mr. Simpson from Belfast. The interesting thing is that while these missions were in progress those who were converted were baptized in Lisnagleer and baptisms reported were as follows:- October 3rd - five; 17th - three; 20th - three; 21st - one; 22nd - one; November 1st - four; 4th - one. That season a mission was also held at Tulnagee, in the Carndaisy district, near Moneymore.

The mention of these baptisms remind me of several references found in an old account book - the cost of filling the baptistery appears as follows:

Jan. 2, 1871	By:	1 day filling baptistery J McCausland	1s.4d.
Jan.24, 1875	By:	Filling baptistery etc.	2s.0d.

These costs were later cut, because an entry reads:

Sep.29, 1875	By:	Down pipes and Trunk Head	12s.3d.
		Paid J. Manson turning slate water into baptistery	5s.0d.

Someone had the bright idea of running the rainwater off the vestry roof and into the baptistery, where a two-foot pipe stuck in the outlet kept the water at the required level!

The Church report for 1887 mentions the fruit of Sunday School work. *'From the Sunday School five young friends joined the membership of the Church during the past year - one of them not yet eleven years of age.'*[19] Spiritual concern for the young people was expressed in the arrangements made for 12th July, 1883 - and presumably thereafter.[20] *'A social meeting was held at Lisnagleer on July 12th designed principally to keep the young people of the congregation from being tempted to join in any of the party processions usual on that day'.* No less than seven speakers took part, one of them taking as his theme the number 'Twelve' in Scripture *'with respect to the twelve tribes, the twelve stones in the high priest's breastplate, the twelve apostles, the twelve foundations and twelve gates in the New Jerus-*

alem'! The report ends - *'the meeting was an enjoyable and profitable one throughout and was brought to a close at an early hour'!*

John Dickson's labours as pastor, evangelist, magazine editor, plus a large amount of deputation work in England and Scotland on behalf of the work in Ireland, must have required the stamina of Goliath! Little wonder that in 1888 he had a serious breakdown in health, and recuperation required several months in Portrush. The Church had a 'Welcome Home' for the good man and his wife in January, 1889.

With John Dickson's assistance the Dungannon Church was formed in 1884 and thereafter the most cordial relationship existed between it and Lisnagleer.

In 1891 he received a unanimous call to the Church at Coleraine which he accepted, and so a notable ministry of 25 years came to an end. Members and friends of Lisnagleer and Dungannon gather in Dungannon on 26th October at 6.30 p.m. for the 7th Annual Meeting of that Church, and there John Dickson received from his many friends in the district an 'address and presentation to their friend'. Wm. James Morrow, treasurer of Lisnagleer, presented Mr. Dickson with a 'purse of sovereigns'.[21] Lisnagleer then had 60 members.

After three years' ministry at Coleraine John Dickson died on Saturday evening 29th September, 1894 aged 58. He was interred in the family burying ground at Broughshane. 'A thorough missionary and a good scholar' - who 'loved his work well', a 'faithful and efficient pastor'. 'An admirable preacher'. These are the epitaphs used by his friends to describe John Dickson. During his 25 years in Lisnagleer there were about 140 baptisms, and 120 members added to the Church.

The next pastor Jas. W. Pearce came to Lisnagleer from Cork in 1891. The Church continued to flourish and seven years later membership had reached an all-time high of 73. Several things during his ministry are worthy of note.

He seems to have been an ardent Temperance worker and formed a Lisnagleer Band of Hope and Temperance Society which after two years

had 61 members, and a year later had over 100 pledged abstainers.[22]

In 1893 the Baptist Churches gave their opinion about 'Home Rule'[23] and on behalf of the Church Pastor Pearce wrote:

> *'It is the perfectly unanimous opinion of the members of the Baptist Church and congregation at Lisnagleer, Co. Tyrone, that the Government of Ireland Bill of Mr. Gladstone, if passed and carried out, would be productive of discord, ruinous to commerce, a source of bitter strife and bloodshed, and a curse to our country, subjecting Protestants everywhere to insult and, wherever possible, to intolerance and boycotting.*

Our brother adds:-

> *'I have been five or six years in Ireland, and only know two Protestants who are Home Rulers. Many Roman Catholics who have anything to lose are as strongly opposed to it as we are. I was once a Gladstonian.''*

In 1894 the chapel was painted and extra stables erected in the Churchyard. In the same year the Church decided to build a Manse and on Friday, 19th October a Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held 'which proved a decided success numerically and financially'. The collection was devoted to the Manse. Fund. The new manse in Donaghmore - a very fine stone building - was erected in 1896 at the cost of £500.[24] Early in the same year Pastor Pearce went on a trip to the Holy Land with Mr. Brown of Donaghmore, returned in March, 'passed into the holy land of matrimony on 6th April' (so reads the IRISH BAPTIST) and he and his bride were the first occupants of the new house. J. W. Pearce removed to Brannockstown at the end of April, 1898.

Pastor J. G. C. Irvine came in 1898, and it is due to his research and careful records that we have so much information about the beginnings of Lisnagleer. His map of the churchyard is still used for our burial records. Wm. Pringle, a Tyrone man, followed in 1901. He married a Miss Annie Patterson of Scotch Street, Dungannon, and later they moved to the U.S.A. He seems to have had

good friends in other denominations, and on his fourth anniversary in 1904, Rev. D. Manderson, Minterburn Presbyterian Church, and Rev. Henry Shire, Senior Methodist Minister, Dungannon preached at the services on 28th August.[25] A Wm. Cowden served the Church for a year, and then followed the six years' ministry of Pastor Burt Sharp, commencing 1907.

To my mind Burt Sharp had some of the calibre of the first pastor. He was an Englishman, and prior to coming into the ministry was a photographer and artist of no mean ability, winning a Bronze Medal in 1891, and a Gold Medal in 1889. Patronized by Her Majesty the Queen, he had studios at 79, West Street, Brighton. I do not know the circumstances which brought him to Ireland, but he came to Belfast and was instrumental in forming the Church at Bloomfield, labouring there with much acceptance for several years before coming to Lisnagleer. He had a family of six, three boys and three girls.

One day his son David took his father's horse and a borrowed cart to fetch some peat-mould from the bog for his mother's flower garden. The horse shied at the white flowers in the bog and horse and cart fell into a water hole. The local farmers were all at the market, and there was no help at hand. The horse could not be rescued and had to be shot.[26] This was a heavy loss to Mr. Sharp. Mr. Thomas McCorkell, the church secretary opened a 'relief fund' and in a notice in the IRISH BAPTIST appealed to ALL readers to 'at once' send 'simply a sixpence' to defray the cost of a new horse, adding that 'in the work here a horse is a necessity'.

Burt Sharp was a very active pastor, and as well as the Church services at 12 noon and 6 o'clock every Sunday, with a prayer meeting and Bible Study on Wednesdays at 7.30 p.m. had the following outstations:[27]

Drumballyhue	4th Sunday in Month	6.30 p.m.
Stughan	3rd Sunday in Month	7.30 p.m.
Mullaghnahinch	5th Sunday in Month	6.00 p.m.
Donaghmore	Every Tuesday	8.00 p.m.
Cady	Every Thursday	7.30 p.m.

Drumm 3rd Thursday in Month 7.30 p.m.

He was also a regular visitor to the fairs at Pomeroy, Stewartstown, Rock and Moy, where he preached the Gospel in the open-air.

The Sharp family suffered a sad bereavement in 1910. Cyril Sharp, a young man who had the prospect of a brilliant career in the Civil Service died in Dublin at the early age of 21. He is buried in the Churchyard just beside the entrance to the New Hall.

Pastor Sharp resigned from Lisnagleer in July 1913, leaving in unhappy circumstances. He was 62 years of age and a very sick man. He had hoped to remain in Lisnagleer until his death, and be laid to rest beside his son Cyril. Although hardly fit to travel he went to his sister's home in England, where, after three months' intense suffering, patiently borne, passed into the presence of the King.[28]

When Burt Sharp came to Lisnagleer there were 44 members, but his successor Albert Quigley entered upon lean times. He reported 'We have only the Sunday morning service here just now'.[29] There were 22 members. Pastor Quigley also had responsibility for Dungannon, Knockconny and Mullycar. Although 'called' by Lisnagleer and installed there as minister in 1914 - Dungannon seems to have claimed him, because in that Church's report for 1916 the writer states 'In May Pastor Quigley left here to take up the work at Lisnagleer'(!) His renewed interest and increased efforts were well rewarded because in 1916 the membership increased to 33, and six months later in 1917 he wrote of the work being re-organized. 'The Gospel meeting at night (which had been discontinued for a long time) has now an average attendance of sixty'.

Pastor George McKillen came to Dungannon, Lisnagleer and Mullycar in 1919. The big event of 1920 was the presentation of a BSA motorcycle - a gift from the churches to him. It cost well over £100, *'a project taken up most enthusiastically, and subscribed to most generously by the members and friends of Dungannon, Lisnagleer, Gortmerron, Knockconny, and Mullycar Churches'*. The presentation was made at Lisnagleer on 12th March. When he moved to Tobermore in 1922 the Church at Lisnagleer had 20 members.

From July 1923 to the end of 1928 Mr. H. Jeffrey ministered in Lisnagleer and Dungannon. We are reaping the benefits of his talent yet - he taught our present organist to play - and she in turn has rendered the Church very faithful service.

In March 1927 Captain Robert Dagnall conducted a mission in Lisnagleer which lasted six weeks. He returned in November and stayed for four weeks. Memories of these meetings linger yet in the minds of many of our senior members who were converted at that time of Divine Visitation. I am told that the building was crowded in every part, the preacher having only standing room in the pulpit where he was surrounded by children.

Pastor William Weir, B.A., B.Sc., came to Dungannon and Lisnagleer in June 1929 and in the report for that year wrote of Lisnagleer 'membership of 23 due to strict revision of the roll'. Under Mr. Weir's guidance the building received some attention, and in November 1930 was reopened after extensive renovations - a new ceiling had been fitted. On that occasion a tablet was unveiled in memory of Mr. and Mrs. James Arnold, two of the founder members of the Church. Tobermore called again and claimed Mr. Weir in 1932, as it had claimed Mr. McKillen some years previously.

A Mr. F. G. H. Sleath, a young man of about 20 years of age from Longford, and an evangelist served the church in 1932. He later joined the Church Army. Another evangelist, Mr. T. Moffett, B.Th., served Dungannon and Lisnagleer 1934-1937, when he went to Canada. In 1937 a Joseph Wilson was with the Church for a short time. He had formerly been a Covenanter, and hailed from Ahoghill district of Co. Antrim. In 1939 Mr. W. J. Rowell came to Lisnagleer from Athlone. He married during his ministry here. Like the first minister of Lisnagleer he responded to a call from Coleraine Church in 1945. In 1946 Pastor W. H. Rea came from Limavady. His ministry was to continue until April, 1967

Mr. Rea was keen to establish a Baptist witness in Cookstown, and a few years after coming to the district the Baptist Church was formed there in 1953, and in 1959 opened its own premises at Burn Road.

To my mind the Cookstown Church is a monument to the labours of Pastor Rea. In view of the new work in Cookstown the Manse at Donaghmore was sold, and another manse purchased at Oldtown Street, Cookstown. But he did not neglect Lisnagleer. Within the Church building various alterations were made. The pews were moved to the centre of the building - thus making an aisle up either side, and literally 'uniting' the congregation, which in his early days was very small. A canopy was erected at the rear of the pews inside the entrance to prevent draughts. Gas lighting and heating were installed. New walls and gates were erected in the Churchyard. At the Church's centenary in 1966 a new communion table and chair were presented to the Church in memory of Mr. Alex Morrow - a faithful secretary and deacon for many years. A new clock and carpeting were installed at that time. Before leaving in 1967 he arranged for the fitting of a new ceiling and the installation of electric lighting - both of which were in order when the present Pastor arrived in July, 1967 to take charge of the Cookstown and Lisnagleer Churches.

There are now 31 members in Lisnagleer, and a full Church programme is maintained. The services each Sunday are at 12.30 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. in order to co-operate with the Cookstown Church. Since November 1969 the evening service on the first Sunday of each month is at 8.15 p.m. About 45 attend each service on Sunday, and about 60 attend the late evening service. The Sunday School is now rather small, with 3 teachers and 16 scholars.

Changes of various kinds have been made during the past four years. Electric heating has been installed. The old furnace room now houses toilets and a kitchen. With the initiative of the BYF and the help of many friends a new piano and Hammond Organ were purchased. To mark the centenary of the building a new hall and vestry were erected, and are proving very useful. The Church was completely re-decorated inside, and a new pulpit and platform were added. The baptistery was renovated and tiled. Many gifts were received:- two chairs to match the Communion table, a flower table, a wall-text complete with spotlight, a desk-light for the pulpit, a desk for the

vestry, a hymn-board, new cups and saucers, and a substantial contribution towards chairs for the new hall. The old stables were given a badly needed 'face-lift', and a concrete floor laid in them. The Tyrone County Council at our request erected a direction sign to the Church at Agharan cross-roads. Over £1500 was spent on these improvements.

Over the years many people have given Lisnagleer long and faithful service, not least some of the present members. Our organist has served the Church over 30 years. The secretary, Mr. W. G. Steenson, and the Treasurer, Mr. Fred Morrow (like his father before him), have served the Church as deacons for over 30 years. Our other deacons Mr. George Walker and Mr. Cecil Turkington have both served over 13 years.

In conclusion I must say a word about the Lisnagleer School - for a history of the Church would not be complete without this.

A school at Lisnagleer may have begun between 1824 and 1826. Correspondence of Primate Beresford of Armagh mentions 10 schools in the Civil Parish of Donaghmore in 1824, but Lisnagleer is not listed.[30] It appears in the appendix to the 1826 Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education as one of 18 schools in the Civil Parish of Donaghmore. The entry is as follows:

LISNAGLEER Hugh Sharkey RC., a pay-school. Teacher's Income £14.12.9.
A good house, cost £40.
Protestant Return: 2EC, 28 Presbyterian, 30 RC. 39 male. 21 female.
RC Return: ditto.
Assisted by Kildare Place Society and London Hibernian Society Mr. Foster built the house and gives £3.2.9 per annum and the Rev. James Graham £1 per annum to the master.

At that time three societies for the provision of Christian learning were active in the Parish.

1. The Association for the Provision of Christian Knowledge.
2. The London Hibernian Society.
3. The Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland - afterwards known as the Kildare Street Society.

Teachers were better paid in schools aided by these societies. Seven of the 18 schools were unaided, having been established and controlled by the Priests and 'preserved from the attention of proselytising societies'.

The building then used for the school is now owned by a Mr. Patrick Montague. The building now referred to as the old school is the one in which Lisnagleer Church has an interest. I do not know when it was built. When John Dickson came to Lisnagleer in 1866 the Master and Mistress of the School were Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. McCausland. In 1884 Rev. John Dickson became Manager of the School. The school inspector has recorded on 11th December:[31]

'Rev. J. Dickson recognized as Patron and Manager on nomination of R. Hassard Esq. who resigns.'

R. Hassard was the landlord on whose estate the school stood. At that time the school had 79 pupils. This new appointment was at times more of a bane than a blessing for Mr. Dickson, and often also for the Church down the years. In the IRISH BAPTIST for June 1889 a notice appeared:[32]

"FIFTY POUNDS IS WANTED for the enlargement of the day-schools. Pastor Dickson has raised £30. Will some friends help him with the remainder of the 'needful' to complete the necessary alterations? These are the only day schools in connection with our denomination in Ireland, and they deserve a special and hearty response to Pastor Dickson's request for aid."

Robert McCausland, the principal deserves some mention. In

early life he was a Presbyterian,[33] but after his conversion was led to change his views on the subject of baptism, and against much opposition was the first to be 'buried with Christ' in the baptistery of the new chapel on January 3rd, 1871. He was secretary, deacon, local preacher, Sunday School teacher, and principal of the National School. A diligent student of the Bible, he was a firm believer in the sovereignty of God. His books were his best companions, among whom were Spurgeon, Carson, Haldane, and Barnes. When called upon to occupy the pulpit his expositions showed careful preparation. He died of a stroke while conducting a young men's Bible Class in his own schoolroom, leaving a widow and nine children, five of whom were members of the Church. That was in 1899. Under Church management principals of the school did not have to be Baptists.

After John Dickson, Wm. James Morrow, treasurer of the Church became manager until his death in 1930. Then Mr. Alex Morrow, another deacon of the Church. This patronage continued until 1955. when Tyrone Education Committee leased the premises. Five years later a new Primary School was erected across the road, and so the old school now stands empty. The master's residence is occupied by our Church Secretary and his wife - Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Steenson.

. . . . . .

Since the centenary of the Church Building in December, 1970 some kind friends wrote to me after hearing or reading the brief historical outline I presented on that occasion. To all these people I wish to express my thanks. I hope they will find satisfaction in this more complete, and I hope, more accurate, historical sketch.

J. R. GRANT

LIST OF SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Irish Baptist Magazine 1880. Statistical Table of the Churches of the Irish Baptist Association for the year ending June 30, 1880.
Note: Omagh on this table must have been formed since 1870.
Note: Modern statistics show formation of Knockconny as 1807. It does not appear on this table. Some think early Church died out - and was revived by the end of the century.

2. My informant is Mr. Thomas J. Totten, 195 Cliftonpark Avenue, Belfast, 14. He learned this fact as a boy in Donaghmore, from an old man who was a Lisnagleer member.

3. I am not sure whether the Campbellite Church originated or ended here.

4. A. H. Strong. Systematic Theology. Vol. 3 p947

5. I.B.Mag., Feb., 1910. Short Historical sketch.

6. My informant is Mr. W. G. Steenson, Schoolhouse, Lisnagleer. Present Church Secretary.

7. I.B.Mag., May, 1961. Article by Pastor W. H. Rea, minister of Lisnagleer 1946-67.

8. See handbill of opening services.

9. On file in Baptist Union Offices, 3 Fitzwilliam Street, Belfast.

10. I.B.Mag., 1894 pp 284-286.

11. My informant is Mrs. Mary Jane Wilkinson, now aged 90, and residing at Mulnagore, Sandholes, Cookstown. She can clearly remember John Dickson, describing him as 'tall and stout' - i.e. well-built. She was eleven years old when he left Lisnagleer.

12. I.B.Mag., 1878 p78.

13. I.B.Mag., 1880 pp 199-200. 'Notes of a holiday tour through Ireland' by Rev. John Douglas, Waterford.

14. I.B.Mag., 1880 p35, and also reference to Omagh on pages 199 and 200.

15. I.B.Mag., 1880 pp 157ff.

16. Apparently John Dickson was responsible for two tents - one of which is referred to as the 'Scotch Tent' - subscribed for by friends in Scotland.

17. I.B.Mag., 1880, p152.

18. I.B.Mag., 1883, p176.

19. I.B.Mag., 1887, p48.

20. I.B.Mag., 1883, p127.

21. I.B.Mag., 1891, pp 141, 203, 228.

22. I.B.Mag., 1894, pp 116, 1895, pp 21 and 152

23. I.B.Mag., 1893, pp 70-78.

24. I.B.Mag., 1896, pp 142-144. Subscriptions towards erecting Manse; p 270, Statement of Account - re New Manse.

25. I.B.Mag., October, 1904, p 225.

26. Indebted to Pastor Sharp's youngest daughter - Mrs. Olive Mills, Dunsley, Glos. for the details here.

27. I.B.Mag., January, 1911.

28. I.B.Mag., November, 1913.

29. I.B.Mag., August, 1915.

30. EAMON O DOIBHLIN, DOMHNACH MOR; An Outline of Parish History (Strule Press, Omagh, 1969) pp 222-227.

31. Public Record Office, Belfast. ED/6/2/4/1. Folio 22.

32. I.B.Mag., 1889, p 133. See response to this appeal I.B.Mag, 1890, p 243.

33. I.B.Mag., 1899, p 102. Article and Photograph of R. J. McCausland.

Irish Baptist Churches – 100 Years Ago and Today

When one arbitrarily selects a certain period of history in order to compare the present with the past there is the danger of being unduly selective and thereby distorting history. But on the other hand there is some advantage in that we can appreciate that Irish Baptist churches are not now what they were one hundred years ago. Yet there is a very real continuity, so that similarities are to be noted as well as differences. I think history is rather like a river, a river which begins in the mountains and then broadens out, flowing down to the plains and then through the plains. As it does so it changes its nature in many respects yet at the same time there is the continuity of the water flowing through a changing landscape. So it is with history - there is an underlying continuity and yet at the same time there is flux and change.

The first important area to which I wish to draw attention is that of the ministry. One hundred years ago there was a very different attitude among Irish Baptists to the ministry than that which prevails today, at least in many of our churches. In the first place it is true to say that our ministry one hundred years ago was a much more educated one. More than one pastor had a university degree and at least two were Doctors of Medicine. Also with respect to ministerial titles, the uniform practice was that a pastor should be addressed as 'Reverend' and should be entitled 'Reverend'. This is in striking contrast to today when in many of our churches to use such an appellation would be to invite disaster. Indeed as you will know quite well a number of our churches have a prohibition on the use of the title 'Reverend' written into their constitution. Coupled with this fact

is also the strong opposition manifested in the Irish Baptist magazine to Brethrenism. For example, in 1877, 1878 and 1880 there was a series of articles attacking the principles of the Brethren. Strong exception was taken to the Brethren's views on the ministry of Baptist churches, particularly their castigation of our ministry as a one-man ministry. It is perhaps a striking evidence of the way in which over the last hundred years Brethrenism has come to mould the life of many of our churches that today it would probably be unthinkable for the Irish Baptist to carry a series of articles attacking the principles of the Brethren. And yet one hundred years ago such attacks were common, probably because the Brethren were even more vociferous in their attacks upon the Baptists than they are now. Certainly they seem to have indulged in much more 'sheep-stealing' than they do now.

An interesting sidelight upon the attitude toward an English pastor, an attitude which one meets with in some of our churches at the present time, is found in the Irish Baptist magazine for 1883.[1] Here we have an account of a public 'soirée', as it was called, held to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the settlement of the Rev. Henry Phillips of Longhope, Gloucestershire, as the pastor of the Grange Corner church, County Antrim, the church which is now known as Grange. In proposing a hearty vote of thanks, Dr. Beattie took the opportunity, we are told, of referring to the hard work and genuine kindness of their pastor. He said that an English minister was looked upon with perhaps a prejudiced eye by our Irish people. But when they got to know one another thoroughly this had so disappeared that not one trace remained. In my experience, if you will pardon my saying so, the prejudice has not died yet. I remember when first settling among you, being introduced twice in the first few weeks of my sojourn here, as *'the only thing wrong with him is that he is an Englishman.'* Such a remark would never have occurred to me to make had I been introducing an Irishman in England.

Another interesting glimpse into the past is provided by a

a note in the 1877 number of the Irish Baptist.[2] As you will know our churches today frown upon Sales of Work and such like very much, and also they are not given to entertainment even of the 'improving variety'. But what of this notice for the Regent Street Church, Belfast? *'The annual soirée was held on Thursday, 7th December. As tea proceeded and afterwards immediately before the commencement of the public meeting articles useful were sold by the ladies from a stall which had been improvised. A Christmas tree also which was located in the rostrum gave promise to the younger ones of a treat in store. There was a capital attendance both at the tea and the public meeting, at the latter of which the pastor who presided had cheering things to say. The income of the church had exceeded £200 and spiritual results had not been lacking.'* And then an interesting sentence - and this is typical of many of the accounts indicating the cordial relationships which then existed between the various denominations - *'Addresses were delivered by the Revs John Harris, S. A. Swain and the Rev. King, Episcopalian.'* The same church finds mention again for its annual soirée in the 1878 number of the Irish Baptist.[3] *'The annual soirée of the Regent Street Church took place on the 6th ultimo. The Rev. Robert Holmes, pastor, presided and there were present during the evening the Revs Dr. Bryce, Presbyterian, A. Morrison, Independent, R. Patterson, Evangelical Union, W. Hamilton, Carrickfergus, S. A. Swain, Great Victoria Street, S. J. Banks, Banbridge, J. Taylor, Tandragee, J. Harris, Conlig and A. M. McKinley. About 400 persons sat down to tea which was served in excellent style and all present seemed thoroughly satisfied both with the quantity and quality of the good things provided. The building, which had been decorated by the ladies of the congregation, presented a pleasing appearance and considerable taste and skill were exhibited in the preparation and arrangement of the various mottos that adorned the walls. The contents of the "Ladies' Work Basket" were displayed on a stall and after tea the guests were invited to view the articles and make their purchases. While friends*

were emptying their purses, the choir, under the leadership of Mr. Mackintosh, the persevering precentor, sang with credit some favourite pieces. Meanwhile Mr. John Aiken with his electric battery afforded some innocent amusement and electrified many, both old and young. After the lapse of half an hour the company by request resumed their seats when the proceedings of the evening took a more spiritual turn. Earnest, practical addresses were delivered by Dr. Bryce and Messrs. Banks and Patterson which were listened to with evident interest. Fruit was then handed round and after hearty votes of thanks had been passed to speakers and others the doxology was sung and the benediction pronounced and thus terminated one of the most pleasant and successful soirées in connection with Regent Street.' From these quotations I think we glimpse the fact that there was a rather different ethos in our churches of a hundred years ago, and perhaps in some respects they were rather more broad-minded in the matter of entertainment than would be the case in most of them today.

A hundred years or more ago the matter of church discipline was taken much more seriously than it is today. I think that today one reason why church discipline is not taken as seriously as it should be is that we suffer from a false individualism. The way in which a man conducts his business is assumed to be his own affair and to be no affair of the church. But a hundred years or more ago this was not the case. The local church then watched over the lives of its members in a way which many of our members would find unacceptable today. For example, at Tobermore two brothers, one a member of the church but the other not (he was a Presbyterian), were in dispute about the lease of a farm. The lease of the Presbyterian brother's farm was due to fall in on a certain date and behind his back his Baptist brother went to the lessor and attempted to get the lease made over to him. Now although he was not acting illegally the church at Tobermore took a very grave view of his action. He was admonished by the church and having repented and sought pardon of his brother he was reinstated to fellowship. This incident, I think,

illustrates how seriously the elders and deacons of the church took the matter of discipline. The Tobermore church book also yields another interesting example of church discipline. A member of the church, a girl in service, left a certain household at 10.00 p.m., on the understanding that she was to go directly to the home of her master and mistress. However, instead of doing so she paid a visit to another home, and for doing this she was severely admonished by the church. Yet another instance is interesting. Some members of the church at Tobermore were publicly rebuked for watching an Orange procession. Yet today a number of our churches would have members who belong to the Orange Order. However, a hundred years ago there seems little doubt but that Baptists were not permitted to join the Orange Order at all. Indeed some of our older churches have a prohibition in their Constitution forbidding members to belong to secret societies. This prohibition would seem to be aimed particularly at the Orange Order.

Another matter of considerable interest is the relative strength and geographical distribution of our churches. By far and away the largest church in 1880, according to a statistical table of the churches of the Irish Baptist Association, for the year ending June 30, 1880,[4] Tubbermore as it was then called which, pastored by R. H. Carson, the son of Dr. Alexander Carson, had 232 members. The next church in size was the Great Victoria Street Church, Belfast, which was pastored by William Ussher. However, the interesting thing is that the third largest church, with only five members fewer than the Great Victoria Street church, was Grange Corner which had 144 members and was pastored by Henry Phillips. Quite obviously there was a much larger farming population in the area upon which the Grange Church drew for its membership than there is today. We have to remember that there has been a great movement from the land to the towns and cities of our province during the last hundred years. Interestingly the church at Derryneil had 60 members in 1880 whereas Dublin had but 58. The church at Waterford seems never to have been large. In 1880 it had 14 members. There was a church at Ballymoney of 40 members in 1880;

it had been founded in 1825, but seems never to have had a building of its own and this is perhaps why it eventually died out.

In 1882 at the Annual Assembly held at Carrickfergus a decision was taken to affiliate the Irish Baptist Association to the Baptist Union of Great Britain. We read, 'A conversation followed on the propriety of being affiliated with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and of sending a deputation to their autumnal meetings to be held at Liverpool.'

It was moved by the Rev. A. McKinley and seconded by the Rev. Henry Phillips that the Association be so affiliated and a deputation sent. Vote by ballot was then taken as to the deputation and the result was that the brethren, Rev. R. Carson and S. J. Banks were appointed and in case of failure Dr. Eccles and John Dickson.[5] However, coming events soon cast their shadow upon this affiliation because in the 1888 Irish Baptist we learn that Pastor Hugh D. Brown (and the change of title from Rev. to Pastor is, I think, significant) has given notice that at the next meeting of the Association he will move the following Declaration of Belief; *'While desiring to extend to all believers the fullest and freest liberty of conscience we yet expect from all members of the Association an adhesion to the following doctrines of our faith as understood in a simple, straight-forward and evangelical sense. The Inspiration and all-sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, the Trinity in Unity of the Godhead, the fall of Man through sin; the perfect Divinity and perfect Humanity of our Saviour, the justification of the sinner through faith in the Lord Jesus, the Atonement through the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ, the personality of the Devil, the resurrection of the body, the immortality of the soul, the everlasting security of the believer, the everlasting punishment of those who die impenitent, the perpetuity of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper "till He come", the priesthood of all believers and the obligation resting upon all saved souls to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."*[6] As many of you will know, Hugh D. Brown was one of the few men to take Spurgeon's side in the Down Grade controversy which broke out in 1887 and

lasted into 1888. Hugh D. Brown undoubtedly seems to have drawn the conclusion from what had happened in the English Union when Spurgeon had pressed for doctrinal discipline that an adequate basis of doctrine for the Irish Baptist Association was a necessity, in view of the failure of the Council of the English Union to meet the points at issue by clearly defining its doctrinal basis. The statement of doctrine which he put forward forms the basis of our present Union, with a few changes. My own judgment is that we owe a great deal to the insight of Hugh D. Brown because at the time when the doctrinal basis of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, to give it its proper title, had become a mere declaration of principle (and that a very inadequate one), he saw to it that our own doctrinal basis was greatly strengthened with the result that, under God, we have been preserved in our evangelical faith, largely because our doctrinal basis is taken so seriously. Where the Irish Baptist magazine stood in the matter of the Down Grade controversy can be appreciated from the following notice contained in the same number of the magazine, *'"Hezekiah and the Down Grade" is the title of a discourse just published by Pastor H. D. Brown in the People's Pulpit. It was delivered in London to the Pastors' College Evangelical Association and is by far the ablest and best production we have seen from the pen of the Harcourt Street preacher. It gives no uncertain sound as to the merits of the "Blood Theology" and every page flashes with the light that shines from Calvary. The martial ring of the true Crusader is heard in almost every sentence and Down Grade doctrines and practices are assailed with the utmost vigour. We trust it will have a very large circulation.'*[7]

In the late 1880's and early 1890's, as you will know, there was a great deal of agitation over the question of Home Rule. Mr. Gladstone had proposed in his Home Rule bill that self government be given to Ireland. Some interesting sidelights on this proposal are to be found in an article in the 1893 volume of the Irish Baptist entitled 'Irish Baptists and Home Rule'. The article begins, *'The*

Home Rule bill of Mr. Gladstone has stirred the loyalists of northern Ireland to an unprecedented extent. All Protestant denominations in Ireland have declared their opposition to the measure and the Baptists are not otherwise minded. In the pages of the Baptist and elsewhere many of them have expressed their opinion, notably our senior pastor, R. H. Carson of Tobermore and Pastor H. D. Brown of Dublin. The testimony of the latter is the more remarkable as he has hitherto kept entirely aloof from politics and has formally declined to sign petitions on the ground that as a Christian minister he did not feel that he ought to take part in political matters. Not a few of our pastors and members have been of the same opinion but the present crisis is so alarming and is felt so seriously to threaten the religious interests of the country that such an attitude of reserve is being generally abandoned. We have deemed it desirable to ask all our pastors to send us an expression of their opinion on the subject and an indication of the feeling among their people. We wish to place the result before our brethren in Great Britain in the hope that they may be led to reconsider their attitude toward this great question. We are pained to find that the Gladstonian organs persist in speaking of all the Irish opponents to Home Rule as Orangemen and Tories. Even the marvellous assemblage in Belfast on Easter Tuesday, which included the Y.M.C.A., and members of all Protestant congregations, is so characterised. We beg our brethren not to harbour such an idea. The Baptists of Ireland as well as the Congregationalists and the bulk of the Presbyterians have ever been thoroughly Liberal and have formerly given most loyal support to Mr. Gladstone. That they are opposed to Mr. Gladstone now because, on the question of Home Rule, he is so much opposed to his former self, maybe a matter for blame in the eyes of English Gladstonians, but let the <u>fact</u> of their opposition be noted and let not its meaning be obscured by the cheap device of calling such men Orangemen and Tories.

Irish Baptists do not believe that justice to Ireland demands Home Rule. They are anxious that justice should be done and have

supported every measure which has been in the interests of justice but they have never heard of any real grievance which cannot be remedied apart from Home Rule.

Irish Baptists do not believe that Liberty calls for Home Rule. The principles of Civil and Religious Liberty have ever been dear to them, as to all Non-conformists, but they fail to see how this measure would promote or harmonise with true freedom. They see that the Nationalist party is dependent upon priestly support and that practically Home Rule would mean the supremacy of the Romish hierarchy, and while they do not fear the bulk of their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen if left to themselves, they do dread the influence of the priests and professional agitators.'[8]

The article then goes on to print the expressions of the views of the churches through their pastors. What is interesting to note is the differing attitudes taken to the question of pronouncing on political matters. Thus the church at Carrickfergus writes, through its secretary, *'The Officers of the church are unanimous in their opinion that nothing of a political nature should be introduced.'*[9] On the other hand, the Great Victoria Street church, also then without a pastor, through its secretary states, *'It is the opinion of the Baptist church meeting in Great Victoria Street, Belfast, that the adoption of some wise measure of local government would be an important help to the prosperity of Ireland, but that the passing of the Home Rule bill, as proposed by Mr. Gladstone, is as unnecessary as it is unwise, and would prove alike injurious to the best interests of Protestants and Roman Catholics. Therefore they give their unanimous vote against it,'*[10] Pastor C. S. Donald of the Regent Street church stated, *'It has been my rule hitherto to abstain from all reference to political matters in connection with Christian work believing such to be foreign to the main purpose of the ministry. Inasmuch, however, as the issues involved in the present Home Rule measure seriously threaten the religious life and liberties of this land, I feel that to be silent now would simply mean disloyalty to Jesus Christ. So far as*

the church over which I have the honour to preside is concerned I feel safe in saying that we unanimously deplore the prospect of such a measure passing into Law. It is our united hope and prayer that God in His mercy would graciously intervene to prevent this.'[11] However, Pastor Donald misjudged at least some of his members because there were some who were in favour of Home Rule.

County Derry, through the pastors of its two churches, *'utters no uncertain sound'*, to quote the words of the editor, Archibald McKaig.[12] Pastor J. Dickson of Coleraine begs to say that *'I am strongly opposed to the measure. Commercially it is injuring business already and if it becomes law it would drive much capital out of the country. Socially it would exalt to a position of undue power the ignorant, indolent and greedy hordes of the South and West. And religiously it would give ascendency and governing power to superstitious and arrogant Romanism. Of course every Romish priest is bound by his priestly vow to crush and extirpate heresy by any and every means in his power. Hence, I and my people protest against Home Rule as we protest against popery. Ecclesiastical and landlord ascendencies have been put down in Ireland, we want to remain free from ascendencies in future.'*[13] Pastor R. H. Carson of Tobermore says, *'In order that our brethren in England may have no doubt about our views in regard to the Government of Ireland Bill we beg to state on behalf of the Baptist church and congregation here that with one single exception the whole people look with the most intense alarm and abhorrence upon the Government of Ireland bill now before Parliament, believing as they firmly do that the passing of such a measure would in numberless ways produce untold misery, bring disaster and ruin upon our country and be the death blow to all civil and religious liberty. They believe also that it would inflict a deadly wound upon the integrity and welfare of the Empire. Privately and in their meetings their most earnest prayer is that God in His mercy will open the eyes of their brethren and co-religionists in*

England, Scotland and Wales to the iniquity of this bill and avert such a dire calamity. We desire to add that until Mr. Gladstone associated with the enemies of our country and of the Empire we were all, without an exception, amongst his most devoted adherents and many of us supported him at great risk and loss.'[14]

One of the most interesting comments comes from Hugh D. Brown. It is as follows: *'As an Irishman, born and bred in the Emerald Isle, around which all my ambitions and affections twine, not as an alien, Orangemen, Tory or anti-Irish Irishman , but as a patriot, nationalist and radical, I feel constrained to utter a solemn protest against my Non-conformist brethren aiding and abetting a measure which, if carried, will embroil more than ever the British parliament in continual strife concerning Irish matters, tend to the establishment of Ultramontane ascendency emphasise the religious antagonism so strained at present in Ireland, and necessitate increased taxation, if not indeed commercial bankruptcy, and above all, lack that element of finality which alone can restore confidence to the minds of capitalists and employers. Dr. Clifford, for whose large-heartedness and intellectual power I have the greatest respect and admiration, may claim to speak for English Baptists in favour of this abortion of a bill, but surely, without undue egotism, more weight attaches to the candid verdict of a resident Irishman.*

In three vitally important matters the bill fails utterly. 1. It will not free England from Irishmen and Irish measures in the House of Commons. With the vicissitudes of political parties in Great Britain and the constant minority appeals from Ireland to London, together with the well nigh impossible adjustment of rival financial claims as regards revenue, Post Office, etc., the partnership between the two nations, so weakened, must lead inevitably to endless strife and complications, while it would be just strong enough to maintain an irreconcilable and ever-growing New Ireland party who will never rest content until its total dissolution. 2. It will not satisfy Irishmen; a mongrel scheme, giving to this

country an enlarged County Council, hemmed in by restraints and vetoes which, if real, rob the bill of any merit, and if unreal, are not the production of an honourable statesman, cannot and will not satisfy our national aspirations. Our claim is, - cement the Union, make it real and thorough by abolishing the Lord Lieutenancy, by appointing judges and other officials, not as heretofore on the ground of party services but of intelligence and sterling merit. Make Ireland what she never truly has been, an integral part of the Empire; and following the evolution of a true democracy, consolidate instead of disintegrate, or else give us back in its integrity our nationality.

3. The financial clauses of the bill are ungenerous and dishonest to Ireland.'[15]

What is, I think, interesting about these quotations is the way they indicate that Irish Baptists who hitherto seem to have kept aloof from politics and particularly from making political pronouncements were pressed by the exigencies of the situation, and particularly by the sense of crisis which prevailed at this time, to make definite political pronouncements. Perhaps at the present time we can exercise greater sympathy than we might a few years ago because we are tending to feel the same sort of pressure, from the crisis situation in which we are, to make political pronouncements. And then again what is also interesting is the way in which the financial and economic implications of Home Rule seem to have been very prominent in the minds of Irish Baptists. These same considerations in relation to a united Ireland are also prominent today. And then, also, of course, there was the fear that Home Rule would in fact mean Rome Rule, and this undoubtedly was probably one of the chief factors in the situation. It seems that the only dissentient voice against the prevailing unanimity of Irish Baptists on the matter of Home Rule came from the Limerick Church because Pastor A. Grant Gibb of Limerick writes: *'Not being of one mind as to the present political issue, we as a church refrain from expressing an opinion.'* On the other hand the pastor

of the Cork Church writes: *'The members of our church and congregation are signing a petition against Home Rule to be sent from the church.'*[17]

To revert to the matter of ministerial titles, it seems to me, having gone through a number of Irish Baptist magazines, that the change in the way of addressing ministers came about in the 1890's, because the magazines for that decade uniformly referred to ministers as 'pastors'. I would suggest that probably the greatest influence making for the change was that of Hugh D. Brown who followed C. H. Spurgeon, his great friend, in declining to use the title 'Reverend' or to have it applied to him, and his example would appear to have been copied by other ministers. Later on it appears that the objection to the title 'Pastor' in our churches came to be based more and more on the type of thinking that is found among the Plymouth Brethren.

I have, I think, said enough to show that there were significant differences between Irish Baptists a hundred years ago and ourselves. Undoubtedly, times have changed a great deal and so has the ethos of our churches. Yet, notwithstanding these differences there is the basic underlying continuity, a continuity which consists in a hearty commitment to the truths and the doctrines of our evangelical faith. When one compares the recorded sermons of a hundred years ago, apart from differences in language and some difference in presentation, the truths being proclaimed are the truths that are being declared today. For this we can be thankful to Almighty God, Who through no merit on our part, has kept Irish Baptists faithful to the truth in days of very real doctrinal declension. Perhaps it is the fact that we have to make our way against a semi-established Presbyterianism and also against a very powerful Roman church that has kept us faithful to the task of preaching the Gospel. Irish Baptists would lose all reason for their separate existence if they did not declare the whole counsel of God. May that day never come.

Looking back, we can see that God has raised up some great

men to lead us, men like Alexander Carson and R. H. Carson, his son, Hugh D. Brown and T. R. Warner and a whole host of others. Looking back, also, we can see that materially speaking our churches are far more prosperous today than they were a hundred years ago, but that very material prosperity, of course, can bring with it spiritual dangers, particularly the danger of spiritual self-sufficiency.

D. P. KINGDON

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2. I.B.M., 1877, p 7.

3. I.B.M., 1878.

4. I.B.M., 1880, p 126.

5. I.B.M., 1882, p 109.

6. I.B.M., 1888, p 102,

7. ibid, 1888, p 102.

8. I.B.M., 1893, pp 70-71,

9. ibid, p 73.

10. ibid, p 72.

11. ibid, p 73.

12. ibid, p 74.

13. ibid, p 74.

14. ibid, p 74.

15. ibid, p 76. In the light of the reaction within N.Ireland to the recent (March, 1972) suspension of the Northern Ireland Parliament and the assumption of direct responsibility for Northern Ireland affairs by the Government of the United Kingdom this paragraph makes interesting reading.

16. ibid, p 77.

17. ibid, p 77.

Anabaptists – Theological and Political

Authentic Anabaptist history is only now beginning to emerge. After generations of abuse and misrepresentation, the Anabaptist cause is now enjoying the fruits of unbiased historical research and the story being unfolded bears scant relation to the reports formerly presented to us in the name of history. H. L. Ellison has written: *'Until recently, their history has been known to us mainly through the vilifications of their opponents, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, who regarded them as enemies of God and emissaries of Satan; a garbled version of the tragedy of Münster was held to serve as a picture of all. Indeed, the first comprehensive survey of the movement in English, G. H. Williams' "The Radical Reformation", was not published till 1962. In all the story of zeal, suffering, persecution and martyr-death during the Reformation, the palm must be awarded to these outcasts.'*[1]

This is no exaggeration, for certain it is that Anabaptists who died for their faith must be numbered, not in hundreds, but in tens of thousands. Though *'the worst persecutions came from the Roman Catholics ..... the protestants were far from guiltless. Even John Calvin, though he did not persecute them, could see little good in them.'*[2]

'In 1531, Melanchthon drew up a memorandum on Anabaptism in which the death penalty was prescribed for recalcitrant Anabaptists'[3] and at Zürich, under Zwingli many Anabaptists were executed, often by drowning.[4] *'At first, Luther strongly opposed persecuting methods, but as the Anabaptist movement spread he be-*

came alarmed and, in 1530, urged the use of the sword against them by right of law.'[5] Paterson was therefore abundantly correct when he wrote, *'It has been made clear that the Protestant tradition judged this movement by its worst examples, ignored the ethical idealism which entered into their dreams and passed an anathema on all which was merited only by a few. It is indeed one of the tragedies of history that men like Hubmaier and Denck and a great company of victims who followed them to the slaughter, should have been involved in the same condemnation with Münzer and John of Leyden.'*[6]

That this has been the case must be attributed in some measure to the fact that historians generally have been much too willing to accept uncritically the unfounded accusations of the movement's enemies and, at the same time, too insistent upon treating the movement as a united ecclesiastical body. It was far from being that! Its teachings were diverse just as the movement itself was fragmented. Says Renwick, *'In view of the variations in teaching and practice which existed among the different Anabaptist groups it is difficult to give a description of them which would cover all.'*[7] To speak generally of the Radical Reformation is to spawn all manner of error and misunderstanding. A recent writer has accurately stated the position thus: *'The radical reformation ..... was a complex movement composed of heterogeneous elements. It included not only Anabaptists of various types but also groups which exalted alleged revelations of the Spirit above the written word of Scripture, spiritualizers of varying tendencies and what G. H. Williams calls Evangelical Rationalists. Grouped under the Radical Reformation one may find both political revolutionaries like Thomas Münzer and pacifistic communitarians like Jacob Hutter. One may discover legalists and Antinomians, wild fanatics and sober pietists. The Radical Reformation was, to use the vivid image of Rufus Jones, a veritable Banyan tree.'*[8]

Various attempts to group the Anabaptists have been made with varying degrees of success. It is possible to deal with them in a

very general way according to geographical location and to speak of the Anabaptists of Switzerland, South Germany or the Netherlands, each group being represented more or less by an outstanding leader. Others have divided them into three major groups, The Evangelical, The Revolutionary, and The Contemplative, though with the acknowledgement that *'these classifications must not be too rigidly applied because there are some individuals who could be placed in more than one group.'*[9]

Undoubtedly, the group that has received a disproportionate amount of attention and has been instrumental in bringing the entire movement into disrepute, is the Revolutionaries of the City of Münster, *'They preached a wild millennarianism and insisted that God's Day of Wrath was about to break and that the Saints would dominate the governments of the world. They appealed strongly to the power of the sword to impose their views and during their brief control of the City there were many excesses.'*[10] *'Unlike the Evangelical Anabaptists'*, writes another historian, *'the Revolutionary Anabaptists regarded the Old Testament as normative for theology and especially for the constitution of the Church. When they came to set up their Commonwealth in Münster (1533-1536) they drew more and more upon the Old Testament. Eventually it came to be interpreted out of any relation whatsoever with the New Testament. Not surprisingly certain features of the old dispensation, such as polygamy, began to reappear. Münster became during the years of Anabaptist rule a strictly organised theocracy on the Old Testament model. Sins punishable by death included blasphemy, seditious language, scolding one's parents, backbiting, spreading scandal and complaining,'*[11]

It would appear that polygamy was introduced during a siege of the city initiated by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Münster. The city, it seems, had four times as many women as it had men and Bockelson, who had assumed control upon the death of Matthys, proposed that polygamy be practised.[12]

'The Münster happenings, bad enough in themselves, but exag-

gerated and distorted as news of them spread from state to state, decided the reputation of Anabaptists for many years to come.'[13] Wrote Henry Bullinger: *'God opened the eyes of the governments by the revolt at Münster and thereafter no-one would trust even those Anabaptists who claimed to be innocent.'*[14] Happily, Renwick has written: *'In the past most historians have represented these wild fanatics as being the founders of the Anabaptist movement. Research has shown that this view is undoubtedly erroneous.'*[15]

In a treatise on the 'Incarnation of Christ' published in 1549, the great English Bishop, John Hooper, opposed what he took to be the standard Anabaptist position on the subject. He asserted that they *'denied Jesus of Nazareth our Saviour to have received His humanity and manhood of the blessed and holy Virgin Mary'* and supposed that *'either He brought His humanity with Him from heaven or else took it of some other than of her.'*

This, in fact, refers not to the Anabaptists in general but to Melchior Hoffman in particular. His peculiar Christology was accepted by quite a few. He taught that Christ was born 'out of' but not 'of' Mary. *'As the heavenly dew falls into the shell of a mussel and changes there into a pearl without taking anything over from the shell, so the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, fell into Mary's womb and there of itself became the Spiritual pearl, namely, Jesus Christ.'* Again, Hoffman illustrated his doctrine that Christ did not receive His humanity from Mary by saying that Jesus *'passed through her as water through a pipe or conduit.'*

This, of course, was a revival of Docetism, an ancient heresy which advanced the view that Christ's body was either a phantom lacking material substance or else of celestial, not earthly, origin.

Then too there were the Anti-Trinitarian Anabaptists, particularly the Transylvanian Unitarians under their leader Francis David. When Faustus Socinus advanced his heresies in Poland, he was instrumental in leading Racovian Anabaptism in the direction of Socinianism.[16]

Furthest removed from the wild fanaticism of the Münster revol-

utionaries were men like John Denck who may be placed in the contemplative category. Their position was somewhat akin to the Quaker ideas of today since they spoke of following the 'Inner Christ' or the 'Inner Word', though they did, in fact, administer the ordinance of baptism.

It would seem, too, that the 'spirituality' of some groups was carried to an excessive degree and issued in an asceticism unwarranted by the Word of God. These ascetics lived in desert places, denied themselves the usual foods, drinks and clothing, hoping thereby to follow the example of John the Baptist and others of the Apostolic Age.[17]

Clemens Ziegler is another outstanding leader whose vagaries, though more or less confined to his immediate following, have been treated as though descriptive of the entire radical movement. He propagated the belief that the body is evil and the spirit alone is good and to him must be apportioned the responsibility for the Anabaptist reputation of believing in Universal Salvation.

We need to remind ourselves, however, that the existence of fanatical revolutionaries on the one hand and mild, meditative pacifists on the other, the emergence of docetic tendencies in Christology or Unitarianism in the Doctrine of God, in no way precluded the possibility of the movement containing within its ranks many who were both Evangelical and Orthodox. Time and again their voices were raised and their pens employed to oppose the heresies springing up in their midst.

'Menno Simons, a man of integrity, mild, accommodating, patient of injuries, and so ardent in his piety as to exemplify in his own life the precepts he gave to others'[18] was utterly repelled by the views of the Münster fanatics and went into print against them. *'No-one'*, he wrote, *'can truly charge me with agreeing with the Münster teaching. On the contrary, for seventeen years until the present day, I have opposed and striven against it, privately and publicly, by voice and pen. Those who, like the Münster people, refuse the Cross of Christ, despise the Lord's word and practise*

earthly lusts under the pretence of right-doing, we will never acknowledge as our brethren and sisters.'[19]

Clemens Ziegler's views were repeatedly rejected by Pilgram Marpeck, and Cornelium Veh objected to the extreme ascetics *'since John's asceticism was meant as an object lesson to the Pharisees and has no relation to us.'*[20] Hoffman's Valentinian Christology was opposed by Scharnschlager and others and the term 'Inner Light' never appears, for example, in the writings of Marpeck.[21]

Again, many were stoutly Trinitarian in doctrine and defended the Biblical concept against those who denied it. In their 'Verantwortung' Leopold Scharnschlager and Pilgram Marpect *'assert that in order to maintain the true almighty God in Christ in (or with) His two united natures, we contended for several years against certain spirits which denied that some time ago.'*[22] This may refer to Scharnschlager's opposition to Hoffman's Christology in 1532.

'For Marpect, the Holy Spirit is not some pantheistic spirit that floats around the Universe, or an inner light, but is specifically given to us and related to us. He has been sent to lead Christians into all truth. His work is not some ecstatic phenomenon unpredictably and unrelatedly laying hold of the individual in a spectacular way, but related to the Scriptures.'[23]

Thus we see that the fiery fanaticism of Münster and the doctrinal deviations of individuals or groups, cannot with propriety be deemed descriptive of the entire Anabaptist movement. We may now also appreciate the tremendous danger inherent in passing upon them a collective anathema. *'Modern, and particularly American, Protestants, seeking to grasp the Radical Reformation as a whole, must try to see it as one of the two fronts against which classical Protestantism was seeking to establish its position, the other being Catholicism which was renewing its strength and extending its global bounds. With what they considered the papal Antichrist to their right, Luther and Melanchthon, Zwingli, then Bullinger, Calvin and Cranmer, readily thought of their common foe to the left as a three-headed Cerberus and called the monster abusingly, without their wont-*

ed theological precision, almost interchangeably, libertinism, Anabaptism, fanaticism.'[24]

We are now in a position to consider the positive stance of Evangelical Anabaptism. There can be little doubt that the matter which fundamentally divided the 'stepchildren' from the 'Magisterial Reformers' as Williams calls them, was their view of Holy Scripture, and arising from that their doctrine of the church.

The Evangelical Anabaptist view of Scripture differed radically from the views entertained by the Münsterites who appealed more and more to the Old Testament in support of their beliefs and practices. It was also opposed to the position of the Reformers who insisted upon treating the Old and New Testaments on an equal basis, for the Anabaptists were sometimes accused of rejecting the Old Testament as Scripture. Bullinger, indeed, went so far as to compare them with Marcion.[25] Klassen states that this accusation was made because the Anabaptists rejected categorically the analogous position of circumcision and baptism that Zwingli, Bucer, Bullinger, Calvin and Peter Martyr used to prove the necessity of infant baptism.[26] Though this is undoubtedly correct as far as it goes it is surely more accurate to assert that it was, in fact, the Anabaptist doctrine of the church in concert with their distinction between Old and New Testaments which drove a wedge between them and the Reformers. It was their doctrine of the church that determined their views of the ordinance of Baptism.

The relationship between the Old and New Covenants has always been a source of debate in the church. Marcion has the doubtful distinction of having fomented this argument and in reaction to him *'Iranaeus developed what may be termed the first fully-fledged Biblical Theology.'*[27] *'Augustine, in his battles with the Manicheans struggled to define the relationship between the Old and New Covenants'*[28] and many a theologian since has found great difficulty at precisely this point.

Klassen has written: *'The evidence that any Anabaptists re-*

jected the Old Testament as Scripture has not yet been adduced, even though some leaders cautioned their readers to read primarily the New Testament.'[29]

Of course the Anabaptists rejected the ethics of the Old Testament as no longer valid for the Christian and insisted that the means of eliminating enemies and heretics used in the Old Testament could not be used by the child of God. They were wont to compare the different manner in which Christ dealt with His enemies with the treatment meted out to his adversaries by Elijah. In this context they could speak of the covenant of servitude over against the covenant of sonship. It will readily be appreciated that this issue, so vitally important, emerged at every major disputation between the Anabaptists and Reformers. Baptism, taking the oath, bearing arms, war, usury and worship were among the many doctrines on which the two sides were divided because they viewed the Old Testament differently.

Though *'the first translation of the Old Testament prophets from the Hebrew into German was a joint effort by the Anabaptist Hans Denck and the "fringe" Anabaptist, Ludwig Hätzer,*[30] *there can be no doubt that the Anabaptists did draw a fairly sharp distinction between the Old and New Testaments. For them, the New Testament alone was normative and this coloured their entire lives.*

The majority of Anabaptists ..... did not know the original languages of the Scriptures and seldom studied the Bible in any concerted way. They read the Scriptures, taking them by and large at face value, and allowed them to speak to their condition.'[31] They constantly employed the use of proof-texts and were renowned for their appeal to Scripture. Their reticence with regard to the original languages is clearly seen in the statement of a Moravian Anabaptist who observed that those who crucified our Lord knew Latin, Greek and Hebrew.'[32]

As has already been indicated, the next major divergence of opinion between the Reformers and Radicals concerned the nature of the Church. The Reformers, who had no hesitation whatever in

appealing to the Old Testament in this matter, roundly asserted that society is a sacral society and that the church is a visible society existing in correlation with the state.[33] The magistrate was therefore regarded as an officer of the church with the duty of suppressing heresy, even by violent means. Zwingli, in the preface to his commentary on Jeremiah, says, *'The Christian is none other than the good and faithful citizen and the Christian city none other than a Christian Church.'*[34] Therefore, since any child born within the territory of this sacral society was deemed to be a member of the church, it could not be refused the rite of baptism. Infant baptism was therefore practised.

True, the Reformers acknowledged the shortcomings of the church, holding that it had become corrupted during the Middle Ages but believing that it could be reformed. This was decisively rejected by the Anabaptists. They believed in the concept of the gathered church, completely distinct in every way from the state. The church, they held, is composed only of those who are regenerate. Since an eight-day-old child cannot exercise faith in Christ, infant baptism was likewise rejected. In their view, the church had not merely been corrupted during the Middle Ages but had been lost when church and state had come together at the 'conversion' of Constantine. They therefore sought, not the reformation of the existing church, but the restitution of the true apostolic church.

Having thus regained a Biblical concept of the church and having recovered true baptism, that is, the baptism of believers, the Anabaptists proceeded to establish a vigorous discipline within the church. *'A church without the practice of a genuine apostolic excommunication'*, wrote Menno Simons, *'would be like a town without ramparts or barriers, a field without enclosure, a house without doors or walls.'*[35] This ban (excommunication) was held to have come in place of the Old Testament sword. *'The sword is an ordinance of God outside the perfection of Christ; the princes and rulers of the world are ordained for the punishment of evil-doers and for putting them to death. But within the perfection of Christ, excommunication*

is the ultimate in the way of punishment, physical death being not included.'[36]

The phenomenal spread of Anabaptism within a very short period is ample evidence in itself of the practical application of the Great Commission at the hands of the Radicals. They believed it was their task to evangelise the world and therefore the Great Commission applied, in their view, particularly to them.

Each believer was expected to employ in the church the gifts imparted to him by his Lord, so that any question of ministerial orders receded into the background. Laymen, sanctioned by the church, could preach the Word and administer the ordinances.

This naturally leads to a consideration of the ordinance of Baptism. The Anabaptists were so nicknamed by their opponents because those opponents, holding to the validity of infant baptism, taught that the radicals re-baptised their converts.

The important thing for the Anabaptists was the subject of the rite since they believed that an infant, unconscious of what was taking place, could scarcely be held to have exercised faith in Christ. One even described infant baptism as a sacrifice to Moloch and it was often referred to as the remains of Romanism.

It would seem, too, that they arrived at immersion as the mode only in the process of time. At first the mode seems to have been of little consequence and immersion in a few instances definitely repudiated. When Conrad Grebel baptised the former priest, George Blanrock, he did so by affusion, upon profession of faith. It was at Habelschwerdt that baptism by immersion was first practised for large numbers.

Indeed, Schwenckfield, impressed with the large areas of disagreement evident even among the Anabaptists themselves and pointing out that there was no certainty about the true visible church into which baptism admitted the believer, proposed that the external rite of baptism should be suspended pending further divine authorisation.[37] He appears to have been content with what was termed 'Inner baptism of the Spirit' which 'comforts, strengthens and assures

the believing soul or inner man.' Marpeck, on the other hand, held that the inner baptism (the cleansing of the conscience and the new birth) is incomplete without the subsequent external baptism of water.[38]

Baptism was viewed as the covenant of the good conscience, i.e., Jeremiah's covenant written on the heart by God's Spirit. The good conscience is created by the Holy Spirit cleansing the heart of sin. It is the believer's pledge to God and dedication to the Christian life.

Water was the symbol of anguish and tribulation so that those baptised were identifying themselves with the sufferings of Christ, which are actually the pangs of the new birth.

Baptism is also a submission to the discipline of the Christian congregation together with a promise of Christian love for the brethren. This idea of submission to the community is particularly strong in the theology of Marpeck. His writings were offered to the judgment of his readers since he desired *'to submit humbly to obedience of the saints and the Holy Spirit in the hope that each one related to the covenant with a pure conscience before God will judge them with lenience and in the unity of the faith of Christ.'*[39]

The importance of the Christian community comes out too in the communism practised by the Anabaptists. The sharing of goods and production, though implemented by the radicals in Canton Zurich, and *'built into their abortive New Jerusalem'* by Rothmann and John Beukels of Leyden, is really the distinguishing mark of the Moravian Anabaptists under Jacob Hutter.

Based upon the communitarian passage in Acts chapter 2 where the disciples had all things in common, Hutter established the practice of community of goods which has persisted in his people down to the present day.

Apart from Menno Simons and his followers who held to the Reformed Confessions[40] and the Italians who perverted the doctrine anyway, the Anabaptists seem to have rejected the doctrine of absolute predestination. *'Most of the radical reformation broke away from the*

Protestant pattern in a Universalistic direction in abandoning or revising the doctrine of predestination and in holding that the work of Christ, in taking from mankind the burden of Adam's guilt, made possible the recovery for all men everywhere of that freedom of the will which Adam lost in paradise.'[41]

Hoffman confidently asserted that *'Christ, the second Adam, had restored to all men everywhere the freedom of the will lost by the first Adam'*[42] and cited as proof John 8:36, *'so if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.'*

The majority of the radicals were believers in the doctrine of soul sleep, i.e., they believed that after death the soul sleeps pending the resurrection. Here the Apocrypha was pressed into service, particularly IV Esdras 7.32. Some conceded that the soul was an enduring substance but that it fell asleep at death and lost memory and feeling. Others held that the soul was merely a vital power which could not subsist without the body though it might rise again with it at the resurrection.[43] They were sternly opposed by Calvin whose first theological writing as a Protestant was directed against that doctrine.

The Anabaptists also believed that the Holy Spirit was not given to believers in Old Testament times and that New Testament believers did not receive Him until Pentecost except as a foretaste.[44] In relation to this they denied that Christ's suffering worked retroactively into the Old Testament period. To hold such a position they maintained is to deny that sentence in the Apostles' Creed concerning the descent of Christ into Hell.

Had the patriarchs received all the gifts of salvation there would have been no need for Christ to proclaim redemption to them. Schwenckfeld objected to this but his opposition was countered by the claim that he was misquoting them. They did not say that <u>now</u> these patriarchs are not Christians or have the Holy Spirit. They only insisted that they did not have salvation before Christ.[45] They held that the forgiveness possessed by Old Testament saints covered only the forthcoming temporal punishment and that, because the ex-

ternal, valid sacrifice has been offered only by Christ, it is impossible to say that the saints of the Old Testament were already redeemed.[46]

With regard to original sin, they held that Christ took away Adamic or Original sin from the whole world. The collective sin caused by Adam's fall is covered by Christ; only individual sin, the result of individual personal transgression, remains as imputed guilt. The counterpart to inherited sin is inherited grace which also proceeds from the loins of Adam. The one invalidates the other. Consequently the unknowing child is spared condemnation until he sins consciously. The child who dies is covered by Christ's grace.[47]

The spoiling of human nature as a result of the Fall is inherited by all men, but this does not take place in reality until reason is awakened in youth and their created simplicity dies.[48]

It now remains to consider the manner in which the doctrine of the Anabaptists affected their everyday lives. For example, they were by and large pacifists, refusing to bear arms under any circumstances. Indeed, rather than carry a sword many of the radicals simply carried a cane or staff and were derisively termed 'stabler' - staff-carriers. Says Verduin, *'So widely was the carrying of such a harmless cane thought of as a mark of "heresy" that we find this feature mentioned in the sixteenth century as prima facie evidence of addiction to the heresy that characterised the Second Front.'*[49] It was their conviction that a sword of steel is not a proper weapon in the hands of a follower of Christ. The believers of apostolic times, they insisted, refused to bear arms and in emulation of them they would likewise refuse.

Common to both the Germanic Anabaptist and the Italian antitrinitarian impulses was the radical pacifism in imitation of Christ and the ways of the early Christians. Like the German evangelical Anabaptists, almost all the Italian Evangelicals, whether Protestantised Waldensians, conservative Protestants or Radicals, were opposed to war, to capital punishment and to coercion in the realm of con-

science.[50] Of course their refusal to bear arms impaired the military potential of the Protestants in their struggle with the Catholic cantons.

We have already seen that the Anabaptists possessed a social conscience in that they gave prominence to community of goods. This economic arrangement was carried still further by the Radicals' rejection of usury. In some instances, notably in the case of Schnabel who led the Anabaptists in the Marburg Disputation, they had been driven to their rejection of usury by professing Christians who exploited the economically underprivileged. Indeed, the Disputation at Marburg was quite unique in that it was concerned mainly with the questions of usury, the ban and the Commonweal rather than with Baptism.[51]

Concerning oath-taking, many Anabaptists felt this to be wrong though Hans Hut, for example, felt it could be used in *'community, state and civic matters.'* Kessler described the Anabaptists of St. Gall ..... as *'those who swore not, not even to the authorities, the civic oath.'*[52] Though this was recognised as a religious duty in the Old Testament it was solemnly superseded in the injunctions of Jesus (Matt.5:33-37) and of James (5:12). Says Williams, *'We need not enlarge upon the disastrous civic consequences of the Anabaptist refusal to take the annual oath to uphold the constitutions of the city republics of the south west quadrant of the Empire. It is of interest that in the imperial city of Strassburg ..... all the local Anabaptists were prevailed upon to take the civic oath.'*[53]

Participation in public office was suspect for many Anabaptists. *'As Christ refused to act the part of a judge (Luke 12:13) so must His follower. As Christ refused to be made a king (John 6:15) so must His follower refuse to take part in all forms of earthly government.'* The Schleitheim confession, quoting 1 Peter 2:21, declared that in suffering and not in ruling Christ left an example for true Christians following in His steps, and concluded that *'the regime of magistracy is according to the flesh but that of Christians according to the Spirit.'*[54]

In some ways the Anabaptists were ahead of their time. Professor Renwick says they *'stood for religious liberty at a time when neither Protestants nor Catholics fully appreciated the importance of freedom of conscience,'*[55] He further describes them as those who *'have always been pacific, earnest and industrious Christians.'*[56] Ellison, in his foreword to Verduin's book, speaks of the scriptural riches lost by the Reformation churches by their repudiation of the Anabaptists and goes so far as to suggest that, had the Reformers acted otherwise, we would not today be facing a world problem of Communism.[57]

R. RODGERS

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