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IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

Volume Nine
1976-77

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JOURNAL

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Editorial

The material in this year's Journal illustrates once again the breadth of interest of the Society and its members - two articles of local Baptist provenance, one of Irish-American interest and one on the history of John Knox, the last calling to mind the intolerant times (from both sides) through which some of our northern Ulster-Scots forebears passed. Unfortunately the final report by Mr. Paul Doherty on the effects on Irish Baptist churches of the present period of civil disturbance must await publication on a later date.

Reviews of published material are absent this year because nothing touching particularly on Irish Baptist interest seems to have appeared during the period covered by this issue. Attention should however be drawn to an article by Rosemary Taylor, 'English Baptist Periodicals, 1790-1865' in The Baptist Quarterly, vol. xxvii, No. 2 (April, 1977). This is a listing, of particular value to research historians, of all periodicals known to have been produced by Baptists in England between the dates cited. Several of the periodicals mentioned contain material of Irish interest. It is also a pleasure to record the production of a thesis (unpublished) by Mr. J.A. Noonan B.A.,M.Ed.,H.Dip.Ed. for his Master's degree at University College, Cork, entitled - 'Baptists in Ireland: A historical study with particular reference to their involvement in educational endeavours 1649-1798.' Mr. Noonan is a member of the Cork Church and of this Society and has our congratulations.

Meetings of the Society continue to be sparsely attended, and although this in no way detracts from the appreciation accorded to visiting and local speakers they would doubtless be encouraged by more evident interest. Members too would enjoy the discussion which inevitably forms part of these occasions.

H.D.G.

The Beginnings of the work at Phibsborough

In order to trace the beginnings of the work at Phibsboro' it is necessary to look at some aspects of Baptist witness in Dublin since 1650. The sculptured heads of Huss Tyndale, Latimer and Knox at the entrances to the Phibsboro' Baptist Church point to the Reformation as the soil out of which the modern Baptist movement arose.

Preparation of the soil:

The Reformers emphasis on the Authority of the Bible as the true guide in faith and morals, and the spread of the Scriptures in the vernacular, led to the crucial conflict with the sacral state regarded as a monolithic church. In England the national Church centred on king, bishop and prayer book, and this was reflected in its counterpart the Church of Ireland. The 1641 rebellion was regarded, subsequently, by the parliamentary authorities as a failure on the part of the Church of Ireland to evangelise the native Irish.

Cromwellian Dublin:

With the parlimentary forces came radical ideas, novel doctrines and Independency, and the need for a new assessment of the best way to propagate the Gospel in Ireland. When Dublin surrended to the Cromwellian army in 1647 Anglicanism and Presbyterianism were proscribed, and it became necessary to work out what form the new order should take. This was no easy task. Three leading chaplains who came over with Cromwell, Hugh Peter, John Owen and

Jenkin Lloyd played a big part in drawing up Gospel ordinances to guide religious practices. The system of parochial clergy supported by tithes was dismantled, and instead there were appointed some hundreds of official preachers paid by the state.

By 1651 there were two gathered congregations of Independents meeting in Dublin. One met in Christchurch cathedral under John Rogers and the other, across the road, in St. Nicholas's church under Samuel Winter. The military governor, Hewson, and leading army officers formed part of Rogers' congregation and the Cromwellian aldermen of Dublin were in Winters' congregation.

The Baptist Influence:

By 1653 the Baptists were in control of the cathedral congregation, and were soon to become a major political threat to the Protectorate. This remarkable situation had several causes. One was the arrival in 1650 of two Baptist ministers, Thomas Patient and Christopher Blackwood, who went first to Kilkenny and Waterford, where the military governors Axtell and Lawrence became Baptists. Adjutant-General William Allen and Capt. John Vernon members of the Baptist congregation in Waterford came to Dublin, and spread the Baptist teaching among the leading army officers in the Christchurch cathedral congregation.

Another factor in the rapid spread of the Baptists was the preaching of soldiers who were transferred from garrison to garrison. By 1655 twelve military governors in the country were Baptists, along with many members of the civil administration including the Mayor of Galway.

Baptist congregations were now to be found at Bandon, Carrickfergus, Clonmel, Cork, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kilkenny, Kinsale, Limerick, Naas, Waterford, Wicklow and Wexford.

It became increasingly clear that the army was using the Baptist cause in its opposition to the idea of the Protectorate.

Oliver Cromwell was aware of this danger. He sent his younger son, Henry to investigate matters. It was believed that the Lord Deputy, Fleetwood, a strong unholder of liberty of conscience had allowed matters to get somewhat out of hand. Henry Cromwell was commissioned as Major-General, appointed to the Council and immediately counteracted the influence of the Baptists.

When peace came to the country the army was largely disbanded. With the removal of the troops, a number of Baptists also returned to England, but some small congregations were left, and were tolerated by the authorities.

After the Restoration in 1660 the Dublin congregation led by Blackwood, undistracted by the political activity of the former Radicals continued its witness. It is interesting to note that in 1674 Colonel Sankey and William Lamb preached to this congregation.[1]

Dublin at this time was expanding north and east, and toward the end of the seventeenth century the Huguenots were to come with their silk weaving industry into the same district where the Dublin Baptist Church was to continue its witness for nearly a century and a half.

The Eighteenth Century:

We have noted briefly some of the political and environmental influences on the Dublin congregation in the seventeenth century, and it would be well to list here how the capital city was to expand. Dame Street would link Trinity College with the Castle. Parliament House (now the Bank of Ireland) was built in College Green in 1727. The Ballast Office, The Four Courts and the Custom House were built alongside the Liffey. A granite mole three and a half miles long was sunk into the deep waters of the bay from Ringsend. Docks and surrounding streets were built at the mouth of the Liffey, and fine bridges spanned its waters. The Rotunda Gardens and Stephens Green were laid out at this time. The big houses of the gentry were on the north side of the city. The R.D.S. and the Royal Irish Academy were founded during this period.

The Irish Parliment after the American war of Independence

was to enjoy independence itself for the last two decades of the century resulting in great prosperity to the country.

In 1737 the old Baptist meeting house having fallen into disrepair the Dublin congregation erected a new church building in Swift's Alley, located between Francis Street and Meath Street, not far away from the two cathedrals.

Some years after this, a young Baptist Benjamin la Trobe invited John Cennick, the famous Moravian preacher, to visit Dublin. Cennick's grandparents became Baptists after emigrating from Bohemia to England. Cennick who was to be the pioneer of the Evangelical Revival in Ireland preached first in the Baptist Hall in Skinner's Alley.

We are told that this hall was linked with a puzzling prediction. A godly pastor of bygone days had foretold the time when a stranger from across the water would stand where he stood and instead of the half-empty pews there would be such crowds that neither the building itself nor the adjacent burial ground would be able to contain them all. Within a very short time of Cennick's arrival in Dublin that prophecy was fulfilled. Crowds were in their seats long before the scheduled hour, windows had to be removed so that those outside could hear. Cennick had to climb through the window and clamber over the heads of the people to reach the pulpit.[2]

Wesley who had so many contacts with Cennick also preached several times in Skinner's Alley.[3]

It is worth repeating here what Hugh Brown tells about Augustus Toplady, author of *Rock of Ages*, who as a Trinity student attended the Swift's Alley church in the 1750's. He found that Pastor Rutherford's ministry was more suitable to him than that in any of the other Dublin churches, a ministry which undoubtedly had a formative influence of the young Toplayd.[4]

With the formation in England of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 and the Baptist Home Missionary Society in 1799, forces

were set in motion which were destined to have great influence on the Baptist life of Dublin and Ireland.

The Nineteenth Century:

At the beginning of the century the population of the American Republic was less than that of Ireland, but by the end of the century there were more Baptists in the United States than the total population of this country. Belfast was to add 400,000 to its 25,000 inhabitants.

After the Act of Union in 1800 Dublin was to suffer severely from the loss of its Parliment and the crippling blows to its commerce and trade.

The spiritual life of the Dublin church was at a low ebb but under the leadership of Rev. John West who became pastor in 1811, the congregation felt its responsibility to bring the gospel to the Irish people. Under the guidance of the pastor the Baptist Itinerant Society was formed in 1813 and within a few months many conversions took place. It was believed that with support from England much could be accomplished. This led to the start of the Baptist Irish Society in 1814 which operated through itinerant preachers, circulating schools and Scripture readers. David Kingdon and Hugh Brown give us some details about these activities.[5]

Circulating schools had already been tried out in Wales and the Scottish Highlands, but in Ireland the Baptists were largely pioneers in seeking to bring free education to some of the two million native Irish speakers. While the effort was small in comparison with the need,nevertheless in 1833 there were 10,000 being taught to read the Scriptures. In the 1820s discussions took place about the need to move from Swift's Alley to a more suitable district. The building in Swift's Alley was sold in 1834 and became a 'Free Church' for the poorer members of the Established Church, and the famous controversialist Rev. Tresham Gregg drew great crowds to this building. Tresham Gregg

at this time was minister of St. Nicholas's Church, the old home of Samuel Winter's Independent Congregation.[6]

After the Swift's Alley church was sold the congregation continued its services in the Apollo Saloon 15 Grafton Street. A committee was formed to consider a number of sites for the new church and in view of things to come, it is interesting to note that long negotiations took place about a particular site in the vicinity of Harcourt Street. Eventually however a site in Abbey Street was chosen. On July 6th, 1838 Rev. John Ford laid the first stone and on July 14th, 1839 the building was opened for public worship.

A notice in Saunders News Letter advertising the opening of the church mentioned that the building was in the Grecian style of architecture, and that for nearly two hundred years the congregation had witnessed to the gospel in the city and was confident of the support of Evangelical Christians; the addresses of those to whom subscriptions could be sent covered a wide area of the city.[7]

For some years there was no startling increase in the Abbey Street congregation and soon the great famine was to devastate the country. Thousands moved in from the stricken areas and occupied the town houses left vacant in the centre of the city by the gentry who had moved to the new suburbs on the south side. Thus large slums were created.

The 1859 Revival brought renewal to the spiritual life of the city. Thousands were meeting in prayer but the results were not on the same scale as the 100,000 conversions reported from the north of the country.

At this time the Protestant population of Dublin amounted to 22% of the city, 40% in the suburbs and 20% in the country. The Brethren movement which originated in Dublin had a crowded congregation in the great Merrion Hall. Abbey Street in addition to the Baptist Church contained the Metropolitan Hall, a large Presbyterian Church and a fine Methodist Church and Hall.

Baptists from the Abbey Street congregation met with some other Christians in Orlando Beater's House in Belgrave Square, Rathmines, to discuss plans for building a church in connection with the Baptist Irish Society to cater for the needs of the Rathmines suburb. This place of worship called the Grosvenor Road Baptist Chapel was opened in 1860 but failed to make headway and was closed five years later. Some time afterwards it was bought by the Brethren.[8]

Spurgeon and Moody paid some visits to the city. After the Moody campaign a committee of evangelical Christians was formed and bought the Metropolitan Hall. This structure was pulled down and a new building erected in 1877 known as the Christian Union Buildings. The Y.M.C.A. was invited to utilise the facilities of these premises which were a considerable help in tackling the needs of some of the 30,000 men who were living in business premises in the city at this time. Three well known Dublin Baptists who became Presidents of the City of Dublin Y.M.C.A. were - R. Pope Froste M.A.,J.P., W.H. Drummond J.P., and Vere Ward Brown J.P. (a brother of Hugh D. Brown).

Dr. R.J. Eccles came from Ballymena in 1877 to be pastor in Abbey Street and the membership showed a steady increase.

In 1884 Hugh D. Brown accepted a call to become pastor. Three years later Pastor Brown announced that he was erecting a church building in Harcourt Street which he would own, but which he would place at the disposal of the Abbey Street friends. He would resign as pastor at Abbey Street but, since he desired the continuance and prosperity of a church there, he would not ask the members to go as a church to Harcourt Street; those desiring to do so could resign as individuals and form a new church in the Harcourt Street building. There would thus, under the hand of God, be two Baptist meeting houses in Dublin in place of one. His main reason in favour of Harcourt Street was that 80 per cent of the existing congregation lived on the south side.

In November 1887 the new Harcourt Street church was opened. The initial membership of thirty eight increased tenfold within seven years.

The church in Abbey Street invited Mr. Clarke to become pastor in 1887; he remained until 1888. In November 1888 it was felt by the majority of those in the Abbey Street church that it would be best to merge with the Harcourt Street Church. This was accepted by the Harcourt Street Church.

Mission work was carried on for the next six months in Abbey Street under Mr. S. McCracken and in June 1889 he became pastor of the newly formed Fellowship there. This church continued in Abbey Street until 1891, and in August of that year moved to a Hall in Phibsboro' Avenue, to be known as The Phibsboro' Baptist Chapel on the north side of the city, with Fenton Bury as pastor.

On vacating Abbey Street Pastor Brown intimated that the congregation going to Phibsboro' could remove the baths, also all the furniture in the gallery and vestry with the exception, of the tea-pots, cups etc.,!

S.A. Gray was pastor from 1896-1898. He was succeeded by Pastor J.D. Gilmore who superintended the transfer from the Hall in Phibsboro' Avenue to the new church on the North Circular Road.

The building of this church was greatly helped by a generous loan of £2000 from R. Pope Froste and assistance from the Irish Baptist Loan and Building Fund, and the English Twentieth Century Fund. Some years later the congregation rejoiced that all debts had been cleared.

The opening services were held in the new chapel on January 21st, 1900. Those taking part included the pastor of the church, J.D. Gilmore, Principal A. Bury, Dr. H. Grattan Guinness and Pastor H.D. Brown, Revs. Wesley Guard and Newman Hall.

Postscript:

It is interesting to note that the Harcourt Street congregation stemming from Abbey Street went in 1942 to the Grosvenor Road Church, the same building where a work was started in 1860 by some

Abbey Street believers in conjunction with others.

Again in the 1940's a major part of the Phibsboro' congregation which likewise stemmed from Abbey Street left Phibsboro' and purchased the original Baptist Church in 12C Abbey Street and continues there as a Christian fellowship.

FOOTNOTE:

This study reveals two inaccuracies in H.D. Brown's The Past and Future of Baptists in Ireland:-

1. On page 6 he states that Thomas Patient built the first Baptist Church in Swift's Alley which still exists today (1914); this is not so, as the building in Swift's Alley was erected in 1737.
2. On page 10 Brown states that Mr. Cennick the Moravian preacher first preached in the Baptist meeting-house in Swift's Alley; this of course should be Skinners Alley as the Moravian records confirm.

All the information so far points to Skinners Alley as being the site of the earliest Baptist meeting-house in Dublin.

L. HARRIS.

NOTES:

1. T.C. Barnard. Cromwellian Ireland (Oxford, 1975) Chapter 5.
2. A.S. Wood. The Inextinguishable Blaze. (London, 1960) pp.158-15
3. Wesley's Journal. (London, 1968 ed.) p. 267.
4. H.D. Brown. The Past and Future of Baptists in Ireland (Dublin, 1914).
5. D.P. Kingdon, Baptist Evangelism in 19th Century Ireland (Belfast, 1965).
6. Saunders News Letter, The Warder etc, this period.
7. Saunders News Letter, July 8-13th, 1839. each day - this also mentions new church building erected in 1737.
8. Minute Book of Grosvenor Road, Baptist Church, Rathgar 1858-1865.

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Alexander Carson of Tobermore (1776-1844)

'An Ulster Giant'

The pleasant corner of Ulster lying along the southern foothills of the Sperrin mountains, known as the Moyola valley, produced three of Ireland's greatest thinkers - Dr. Henry Cooke, the famous orator who headed up the Arian controversy in Irish Presbyterianism; Dr. Adam Clarke, the renowned Bible commentator and Dr. Alexander Carson of Tobermore, the less known, but in some ways the most outstanding of the three.[1] It is a shameful fact that on this side of the Atlantic Carson has been relegated to the tombs of history and much remains to be done to rescue him from his undeserved oblivion. In the Americas he is known best through his classic work *Baptism - its mode and subjects* and his commentary on the Book of Esther. The widespread neglect of such an eminent theologian and prolific writer has a number of causes.

(a) As a seceder from Ulster Presbyterianism he was inevitably isolated from mainstream evangelical life in Ireland.

(b) His subsequent espousal of congregational church polity and baptistic practices placed him on the fringes of the whole ecclesiastical world. R.A. Boggs, Pastor of the

FOOTNOTE:

1. Thomas Witherow, Three prophets of our own (1855).

Carson Memorial Church at Tobermore sees this when he writes - *"perhaps if our subject had given his allegiance to a more numerous and influential body than that of the Baptists in Ireland his name would have been more widely known."*[2]

(c) In a lecture[3] on the theology of Alexander Carson, D.P. Kingdon suggests that there are other reasons for negligence and forgetfulness in the house of his friends. He contends that Carson was a controversial theologian who employed his pen in dealing with the burning issues of his own days. Kingdon draws the conclusion that *"since many of the issues, such as the Unitarian controversy, have long since been relegated by the passage of time to the limbo of extinct theological volcanoes, Carson's works have a dated air."* The same author advances the opinion that he is neglected because he wrote no work of systematic theology and goes on to describe him as *"an occasional rather than a systematic theologian."*

DAYS OF PREPARATION:

Alexander Carson was born into and lived through troubled times. (The same can be said of any Irishman who has approached the alloted span in the past 800 years!) His parents were planter stock who had settled at Annahone near Stewartstown in Co. Tyrone. His father, William Carson was described as a Scottish Calvinistic Presbyterian. The Carson home was renowned for its godliness and Alexander, the eldest son, later saw himself as a spiritual successor to Timothy, inheriting the example and influence of a pious mother and grandmother. At their feet he learned the entire psalter and other extensive portions of Holy Scripture.

From his earliest years he displayed an alert and enquiring mind, taking every opportunity to pursue knowledge of all sorts. The financial resources of these plantation folk were

FOOTNOTE:

2. Alexander Carson of Tobermore, p.5.
3. Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal, Vol. 2, 1969/70 pp. 51-61.

limited and it was a considerable strain on the family purse to educate one of their children. The Carson family was large and educational facilities few and far between. Young Alexander had the benefit of attendance at a private school in the village of Tullyhogue, near Cookstown under the tuition of a Mr. Peebles. On one occasion his father tried to divert his attention from the field of learning but the youthful scholar quickly entreated the support of his grandmother. She spoke prophetically to his father - *"My son don't interrupt the boy's studies, for he may yet be a great man in Israel. I believe God has a great work for him to do."*

The next stage in his academic career brought him to the University of Glasgow where he quickly became the first scholar of his time. Here he studied Greek under the noted professor Young. His application to work was so intense that some of his fellow students were heard to exclaim - *"Carson is mad, he is always at the Greek roots."!* His critical faculties were speedily developed in a field that was to occupy so much of his time and attention in later years. Little information is available on the spiritual progress of the gifted graduate who had made his way from the farms of Ulster to the halls of Glasgow with the full blessing of the kirk of his fathers. When he presented himself for ordination to the Tyrone Presbytery there can be little doubt that the arid teaching of Arianism, which had seeped into the soul of the synod of Ulster caused him many a pang of conscience. In May 1797 Carson was licensed to preach the Gospel and on 11th December, 1798 he was ordained as minister of the congregation of Tobermore, a small village in the shadow of the Sperrin mountains.

TROUBLED TIMES IN CHURCH AND NATION.

The energetic young pastor settled into his first charge at the close of the year that saw the Irish Rebellion of 1798. This was the era of the United Irishmen when Wolfe Tone came into prominence in an attempt to unite Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter under the common name of Irishmen. The French Revolution

had raised the hopes of the Irish nationalists, and pressures for Parliamentary reform and enfranchisement of the Irish Catholics drew the Presbyterians of Ulster into the forefront of the political agitation. Native Catholics and planter Presbyterians were thrown into each others arms in defiance of the injustices and pressures of the English Establishment. In 1798 the United Irish society had 111,000 members in Ulster while *"in Belfast the members of the United Irishmen were for the most part Ulster Scots and men of the middle class: among its most active adherents at this time were many ministers of the synod of Ulster."*[4] Political instability and social unrest prevailed throughout the community and this unsettlement had grave consequences for the lovers of Biblical religion.

If the land was in turmoil the professing church was in spiritual disarray. The Established church was in a run down condition.

"There was not one active minister in every county who preached evangelical doctrine and scarcely one bishop could be named who laboured to promote the spiritual interests of his diocese ... several of the inferior clergy had Arian sentiments and at least one dignitary who wore an Irish Mitre for nearly thirty years, was an avowed and zealous Unitarian."[5] The state of Presbyterianism was far from healthy and discipline had almost totally disappeared. Prof. Hamilton's assessment of his denomination's outlook runs like this: *"The latter part of the 18th Century enjoys an evil reputation in the annals of religion. In England, Deism and deadness prevailed and the church in Ireland did not escape the prevalent infection. The Westminster Confession of Faith began to be thrust more and more into the background. The practice of requiring subscription to it from licentiates and ministers*

FOOTNOTE:

4. James Woodburn, The Ulster Scot, pp. 251-2.
5. Killen quoted by Reid - Vol. 3 page 302.

fell into obeyance. Most of the Synod's theological students received their education at Glasgow College and here the prevailing influences were all on the side of moderatism or something worse with professors poisoning, at its fountainhead, the stream of the ministry, it is not to be wondered at that the pulpits of the Synod of Ulster began to give a very uncertain sound on the great verities of the faith and in some cases to ignore them altogether ... 'New Light' principles gained a complete ascendancy. Life seemed now to leave the Synod almost entirely. There was none of that 'outward propagation' of the faith which is as essential to the life of the church as its 'inward preservation.'"[6]

At congregational level there was an absence of conviction and zeal graphically described in the words of Carson's admirer -

"There were no missions - no sabbath schools - and evangelistic labours beyond the precincts of the Meeting House were rare ... vague moral essays destitute of the warm glow of gospel truth were preached for sermons! and people wore the Christian name while they were indifferent to the creed and character and spirit which Christianity enjoins. There was ice in the pulpit - there was snow in the pew. There were some no doubt to fear God and think upon His name as there always have been in the church's darkest night; yet among ministers and laymen there was a very visible declension from the high religions attainments of other days."[7]

At 22 years of age, the young minister of Tobermore zealously applied himself, to the task of reforming and rejuvenating the church he so dearly loved. It was a greater undertaking than he realised and his ideas of a pure communion won little support amongst his fellow ministers. The prevailing lethargy of the times prevented him from gaining much success in beckoning the people

FOOTNOTE:

6. T. Hamilton, History of the Irish Presbyterian Church, pp. 129-130.

7. Thos. Witherow op.cit.

back to the standards they professed to cherish - either the subordinate confessions of the church or the absolute and finai court of Scripture. No support was forthcoming from either Presbytery or Synod and all the efforts of the minister to build a church on truly spiritual lines were in vain. Details of Carson's moves between his ordination and secession, a period of five years, are patchy. Records on his correspondence with the Synod of Ulster are sparse and it is impossible to reconstruct a complete picture of the parting of the ways. A close perusal of the minutes of the Synod of Ulster yields some informative glimpses of the growing storm blowing up between the pastor and the Synod:-

COOKSTOWN JUNE 25th, 1805 - *"Mr. Carson being cited by the moderator to attend the meeting of Presbytery in May, wrote an offical letter to the Presbytery saying that he declined all connection with and subjection to the General Synod of Ulster assigning some of his reasons and declaring that he would publish them more fully in due time: upon which the Presbytery ordered Mr. Moor to write to the Session of Tobermore, sub-joining a copy of Mr. Carson's letter, to enquire how far they adhered to Mr. Carson's new proceedings, which he did, but as yet had received no answer."* (Vol. 111 p.296)

The following day the Presbytery of Tyrone reported that they had declared the congregation of Tobermore vacant and requested the Synod to appoint a deputation to meet them at Tobermore *"for the purpose of devising and recommending such measures as may seem best adapted to preserve and promote the true interests of religion among that deserted people."* (Vol. 3 p. 298)

Protracted negotiations for the recovery of the meeting house were entered into and it was not until June 25th, 1811 that the Synod recorded this minute:

"Dr. Black reported that he had under advice of counsel prosecuted the business of Tubermore, but the congregation having obtained the actual possession of the meeting house further

proceedings became unnecessary ... should any attempt be made to recover possession of the meeting house by the opposite party to resist it by every legal means." (Vol. 111 page 374)

Although Dr. Carson severed his connections with the Synod in 1804, he apparently continued to minister to his people until they were evicted from the church building. This is borne out by the fact that a Presbyterian minister was not installed until 1810.

THE SPIRIT OF A SECEDER:

An examination of extant records reveals that there was no rancour in Carson's method of secession.

"On the last Sabbath in which he preached in the capacity of a Presbyterian, he delivered a dispassionate discourse, and instead of denouncing the church of his pious ancestors, he besought the congregation to be deliberate and prayerful, and not to follow him, but to search the Word of God. After having stated his convictions, with tears he bade them a final adieu! His potent arguments were felt; for as soon as he descended from the pulpit, one of the most influential members seized the Bible and exclaimed, 'Let all who are for God and the Bible follow me.'! With the Bible in his hands he retreated to the green sward which surrounded the meeting-house, and thither about two thirds of the congregation followed him. The man who gave up all for Christ was not doomed to be deserted."[8]

This dramatic moment in the life and ministry of such a worthy man of God, could easily have begotten self pity and bitterness. While recognizing the seriousness of his move and the consequences into which it would lead him, Carson made sure that his attitude toward those who differed from him would be brotherly and conciliatory ...

"The day I gave up my connection with the General Synod, I gave up all that the world esteems ... a man is not apt, upon sight grounds, to reason himself out of his living, his friends and his reputation. It will not be out of whim he will exchange

FOOTNOTE:

8. G.C. Moore, p.11, Life of Alexander Carson.

ease for labour, respect for calumny, present competency for the naked promise of God. If classical Presbytery be in the New Testament, let its advocates come forward, and fairly refute my arguments. But let them not lose their temper, nor substitute railing for argument. Neither let them nibble round the surface of the subject, but let them enter into the essence of the debate ... Christians of every denomination I love, and I will never I hope, withhold my hand or my countenance from any who, after impartial investigation, conscientiously differ from me."[9]

GREAT ISSUES FACED.

We proceed now to examine the causes of Carson's action in sundering his association with Presbyterianism. What were the principles that guided him? What were the isses that motivated him? His *Reasons for leaving the Synod of Ulster* give us adequate information. His secession was bottomed in a deep concern for wholehearted obedience to the Scriptures and was not a hasty move of an impetuous man. Three great issues presented themselves before him:

(a) The prevalence of Arianism among his fellow ministers.

(b) The impossibility of creating or maintaining a pure communion within the Presbyterian system.

(c) His espousal of congregational church polity as the pattern of the New Testament.

The burning issue which seemed to dominate his thinking was the matter of establishing a pure communion. He is unsparing in his rejection of Presbyterian order -

"Many of them, indeed, have raised very high hedges around the Lord's Table, and have enjoined very rigid forms of communion; but in none of them I believe is credible evidence of new birth the test of membership. The gate is indeed shut against the openly profane, but the decent worldling may pass. At the same time the child of God is excluded if he cannot digest all the peculiarities of the sect, and load his soul

FOOTNOTE:

9. Carson's Works Vol. 4 preface.

with a mass or human obligations. .. I believe that debarring or fencing the tables and giving of tokens, like all other human expedients in religion, have been of the most serious injury. It is a bungling expedient to supply the want of Scripture discipline and an apostolically constituted church. If none but those who are credibly Christians were admitted to church membership, what occasion would there be for tokens of admission or debarring. They will take their seats around Christ's table as naturally as children will seat themselves unasked around the table of their earthly father. Who dare debar any such? And who dare invite any other? When I see a human invention employed to prop an ordinance of Christ I judge it has not a good foundation. Christ's laws are not at all calculated to govern the devil's subjects. If there are unregenerate members admitted and retained they will throw all into confusion."

Developing the theme of Biblical ecclesiology, Carson set out in vivid detail his explanation of his course of action. At this stage his thinking revolved wholly around the doctrine of the church, locally expressed. The issues can be set out under various heads:

1. Personal Declension.

"How can a man mount a very high hill with a weighty burden, having several hundreds pulling him back by the skirts? Who will say that the very society of men indifferent to religion is not a strong temptation to relax exertion in the cause of Christ? But especially, if they are not only indifferent but inimical to the spreading of the Gospel, the danger is increased. What concord can there be then between them and me? We both contribute to make each other uncomfortable."

2. Internal Supression.

"I cannot be a member of the General Synod without renouncing my Christian liberty, and submitting my conscience to be ruled and lorded over by man. I am not allowed to be directed by my

own conscience in the service of the Master.

I might get drunk frequently; associate with the most profligate; spend the Sabbath afternoons in gay parties; follow the world the whole week with my whole heart; preach against the peculiar doctrines of revelation; deny the very Lord and Saviour of men - and still my brethren would extend their charity to me. But if I would dare to preach the Gospel out of my own bounds, or admit an evangelical minister of another denomination to occupy my pulpit, dreadful would be the thunder that would be hurled against me! I cannot submit to this tyranny without calling men my master contrary to the express command of Jesus."

3. Ministerial Recognition.

"I do not find myself justified in recognizing as ministers, those whom I consider as destitute of the qualifications deemed essential by an Apostle."

1 Tim. 3:2-7, Titus 1:7-9.

4. Doctrinal Conviction.

"A Calvinist and a Socinian or Arian can with no propiety worship together. They do not address the same being, though they use the same name. How can we co-operate, seeing our principles are so entirely opposite? If each of us be conscientious, we must be at constant war."

5. Public Confusion.

"By remaining in connection with the Synod, I contribute to deceive the public as to the radical differences between my principles and those maintained by many in the Synod. My example, by continuing in that connection, might be the means of keeping some of the people of Christ under the ministry of those who corrupt the Gospel. The generality of private Christians in the General Synod have no conception that we differ so materially. If I think that any ministers of that body are wolves in sheep's clothing, not feeding, but devouring the flock, I am a partaker of their soul - murder, if I did not give the alarm, and warn the sheep to fly."

6. Humanitarian Consideration.

"My connection with the Synod is contrary to the law of love and duty I owe to the members of it as man. If I believe that 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God', and if I believe that few of them evidence such a change; nay if I know many of them to deny and ridicule this truth as enthusiasm, I would not be their friend, if in anything my conduct would lead them to believe that I considered their situation to be less dangerous than in reality I know it to be."

7. Undisciplined Ordination.

"I cannot conscientiously join in licensing and ordaining those whom I know do not possess the prerequisite qualifications, pointed out in the Word of God. If it be improper to appoint newly converted men to the charge of a flock, how dreadful must be the sin of appointing the blind to lead the blind and unregenerate men to feed the flock of Christ? Those who give their sanction to unworthy men to preach the Gospel are partakers of their sins 1 Tim. 5:22, 1 Tim. 3:10. As a member of the General Synod, I may be forced to join in licensing and ordaining men whose characters and doctrines I condemn. If I believe the doctrines I preach, I must be convinced that I am sending out a murderer instead of a physician."

9. Biblical Instruction.

"I have a positive and express command to separate from a corrupt church (2 Cor. 6:14-18, Eph. 5:11). Though classical presbytery were of God's appointing, yet if there but one disorderly person a member in the General Synod and I could not get him removed, it would be my duty to witherdraw, otherwise I am a partaker of his sins."

SECESSION AND ITS RESULTS.

Carson's move had far-reaching effects on his own life, his congregation and his fellow evangelicals in the Synod of Ulster.

In the record of a prayer dated 1st January, 1805 he pours out his soul to God - *"As I go out like Abraham not knowing*

whither I go may the blessing of Abraham come upon me. Scan out my future lot and fix the bounds of my habitation. May I trust myself, my wife and little ones to thy providence. O Lord I know of all men I am naturally the most unfit for the perilous work to which thou hastcalled me. Lord, hear thy servant on behalf of His dear relations. I intreat Thee also to bless my testimony for the conversion of the congregation in which I now labour. O that the Lord may have a church here."

And must I part with all I have
My dearest Lord for Thee?
It is but right since Thou hast done
Much more than this for me.
Saviour of souls could I from Thee
A single smile obtain
Though destitute of all things else
I'd glory in my gain.

G.C. Moore has put on record the subsequent events:

"Although the law awarded the meeting-house to him and those who followed him, yet he and his people were excluded by physical force ... He assuredhis church that unless the house could be obtained peaceably, he would never preach within its walls. His people acquiesced. Those from whom they seceded never resigned the house, so he was compelled for many years to preach in cold, incommodious barns, and often in the open fields. Here we have a congregational church formed, but without a house to screen them from the summer's sun, or to shelter them from the winter's storm."[10]

Ten years after his break with the kirk Carson and his people found a home of their own when they erected their meeting-house in 1814. But before the newly formed Independent church found a home of its own the second great crisis of doctrine broke upon the shepherd and his flock.

FOOTNOTE.

10. Op cit. pp. 18,19.

A NEW AND UNEXPECTED CRISIS.

In 1807 a crisis faced Dr. Carson on the question of the scripturalness of the paedo-baptist position. Just as the *"late storm was but lulled into repose a northern blast awoke almost a hurricine."* The Irish seceder came to change his position on baptism while preparing a refutation of the views of Robert and James Haldane, the two famous Perthshire noblemen who had taken a course of action similar to Carson's. Moore holds the view that one of Haldane's missionaries went to Tobermore and was exercising some influence on the question of baptism amongst the Independents. He describes the outcome -

"The shepherd was immediately aroused! With eager grasp he clutched the shepherd's crook, determined to slay the invader! 'I thought' said he 'that I could demolish the arguments of that Baptist as easily as you could crush a fly.' He besought his disturbed brethren to be patient, promising that in a few days he would write an article on baptism which would forever silence the Baptists ... The passages which contain any reference to the ordinance throughout the New Testament were read - the old Testament was consulted, - the Hebrew and Greek were scrutinized - authors were ransacked, and afterward he wrote during a whole month, when at length he faltered and finally halted, having discovered, as he thought, that his building rested on a foundation or sand. On one fatal Saturday evening he cast the manuscript into the fire, and on Sabbath morning, contrary to the wishes of many and the expectations of all, he announced himself a convert to the sentiment which he had boldly opposed. He was a Baptist! If the former change was accounted 'folly' the latter, many thought, might well be denominated 'madness.'" [11]

This momentous step led to a whole series of significant developments. The church added a new and unpopular dimension to its struggle for conformity to New Testament order. Carson felt more ostracised than ever -

FOOTNOTE:

11. ibid pp. 22,23.

"It was a very serious sacrifice to change my views on this question. All the other points in which I differ from the dominant sects of this country do not give so much offence to the world as does the difference on the subject of baptism. I anticipated the end, I counted the cost and I am daily paying the instalments."

Although his convictions on the matter of baptism changed rapidly and permanently he never made immersion a pre-requisite of church membership. Twenty four years passed before his celebrated work on the subject was published.

There was great financial sacrifice involved, particularly the loss of the Royal Bounty paid to Presbyterian ministers. Tobermore was in class II category and its pastor received £75 per annum. Homeless at first, the zealous young minister and his growing family soon found a small holding on the outskirts of the village of his ministerial labours. An old record describes it thus:

"'Solitude', the residence of the Rev. Alexander Carson is in the townland of Coolsoragh on the leading road from Tobermore to Magherafelt. It is a prettily situated farmhouse. It is here noted on account of its very fanciful name. The income of Rev. Alex Carson is derived from the voluntary contributions of his congregation. It fluctuates at and about £40 per annum. The Drapers Company present him in the rent of his farm amounting to £10 per annum, and the Rector with his tithe and bog."

His life partner was Margaret Ledlie, daughter of a wealthy and influential linen bleacher, George Ledlie of Ballygoneymore, near Coagh in Co. Tyrone. Mrs. Carson proved a helpmeet of great capability especially during the time of re-settlement at *'Solitude.'*

"In order that he might be fully devoted to the work of the Lord, she undertook to discharge his most onerous secular duties. She answered nearly all his correspondents. She became the stewardess of his house and the overseer of his farm. She hired

managed and paid his servants. She honoured the merchant's draft and paid the tailors bill."

A CHURCH IS RAISED.

If the shepherd went through a period of intense loneliness, the spiritual flock under his care also felt the chilling blasts of the reproach of Christ. Those who gathered around their godly leader gave themselves to the task of providing a simple house of worship. An old date-stone preserved in the vestry wall of the present Carson Memorial church bears the inscription *1814*. We are given a vivid picture of both the building and the church in this snippet.

"The meeting house of Rev. Alexander Carson was built in 1814 at the expense of the congregation. The cost however cannot be ascertained. It is a low slated rectangular building of coarse stone with the gable towards the street and is 65' x 35' in the clear. The interior is in good repair with seating for 270 adults including the galleries of which there is one at each end of the building. There are 302 communicants in Mr. Carson's congregation. These constitute his church and no non-members are allowed to join them until they have given evidence that they are influenced by the Spirit. The form of admission is similar to that of asking the parties of matrimony in the church of England. When the day comes and no objection is made Mr. Carson admits the new members into his church by advancing from the pulpit and shaking hands with them. This congregation does not wish to take any Sectarian name; They are commonly called 'Baptists' but this name they reject as they do not refuse admission to those Christians who differ from them on the subject of baptism. The meeting house is crowded every Sunday and contains about 570 persons."[12]

A Sunday School was established in 1832 with eighteen teachers and 135 scholars made up as follows:

FOOTNOTE:

12. Extracted from Ordnance Survey Memoirs 1832/1838.

Established Church	8
Presbyterian	10
Roman Catholic	4
Independent	113

The order of worship followed a distinct pattern and the proceedings of the Lord's Day were prolonged, consisting of 15 parts:

1. Salutation
2. Prayer
3. Singing of Psalm
4. Reading of Scripture
5. Prayer
6. Singing
7. Eating 'the Lord's Supper'
8. Singing
9. Collection for the poor -
   In summer an interval of 15 minutes
10. Singing
11. Prayer
12. Exhortation by the brethren
13. Preaching
14. Prayer
15. Singing, after which the church separates

A Belfast Presbyterian once accompanied Dr. Carson for Sunday worship to the Tobermore church. The weather was cold and the meeting house uncomfortable. The visitor, who had never heard lay participation in a worship service before, questioned the propriety of the practice. Dr. Carson replied, *"Indeed, Sir, the exhortations were not very edifying to the feet."!*

Because of Carson's unwavering ambition to strive for the ideal of a regenerate church membership, strict discipline was administered. Reaction to the presbyterian system of government caused him to conclude that if the worthy are to be received publicly the unworthy should be excluded in the same way. The method adhered to was noted:

Both the reception and expulsion of members was effected in the presence of the whole church and congregation. For the ostensible purposes of honouring the Lord Jesus and vindicating the purity of His religion, the repentant sinner was publicly admitted, the penitent apostate was publicly restored and the heretical and immoral were publicly expelled." [13]

Dr. Carson lived through the open communion controversy but declined to publish his views on the subject during his life. In a letter dated May 19th, 1819, he sets out his convictions:

"Many have thought that the most effectual way to make a disciple receive an ordinance of Jesus, is to refuse him fellowship till he has complied ... of late in some parts of Ireland it has been carried so far that some individuals can scarcely find a second to unite with them in constant fellowship .... We all deem that a man who has been received by Jesus ought not to be rejected by us; and that if He feed His people by His ordinances, it would be criminal in us, as far as in our power, to join in confederacy to starve the weakest of them ... if it be sinful to receive any that Christ has forbidden, it is also sinful to refuse any that He has invited." [14]

It was the overriding passion of his soul to be controlled by the guidelines of Scripture. Writing of his change of practice in relation to communion he confesses:

"Since I ceased to prostitute the Lord's Supper at home and abroad my labours have been more visibly blessed and I have had more evidence of a work of grace going on than I had in the whole five years of my ministry." [15]

Under the blessing of God the church prospered and preaching stations were opened up in a number of places. Two daughter churches were formed, one of which was located at Carndaisy

FOOTNOTE:

13. Moore op. cit. p.80.
14. ibid. pp. 88,89.
15. Works, Vol. iv p.97.

Glen near Moneymore. In some respects this is the most unique Baptist meeting house in these islands, standing at the end of a long cul-de-sac in a wooded clearing far from all signs of human habitation. For over thirty years he led and fed his people at Tobermore until his death in Belfast in 1814, following a severe fall at Liverpool docks. His son, Robert Haldane Carson succeeded him as pastor; other members of the family rose to positions of responsibility.

THE CALVINISTIC ENTHUSIAST:

An evaluation of his theological position can best be obtained from his rich legacy of writings. Even those who stood apart from him in many doctrinal matters recognized his stature as a Biblical scholar. The Orthodox Presbyterian paid this tribute:

"On matters of church order it is well known we differ from him; but as a scholar, we honour him; as a Christian brother we embrace him ... With respect to metaphysical acuteness and powers of reasoning, he has been called 'the Jonathan Edwards of the 19th Century.' His character as a philosophic theologian, and a profound, original, independent thinker, stands in the very highest rank; and he is only justly designated when called one of the most philosophic reasoners of the present age."[16]

Dr. Carson's doctrinal stance was that of an evangelical Calvinist. The strong meat of the Westminster Confession and the shorter Catechism left a lasting impression on his thinking. But he was most careful to distinguish between the subordinate formulations of the church and the absolute standards of scripture.

"They must indeed be blind who do not look upon the Reformation as the greatest national blessing any people ever experienced; but those who idolize the Reformers are guilty of

FOOTNOTE:

16. Press Opinions, Works Vol. 11.

setting up another God in Israel ... However much we have been benefited by their labours, however eminent were their attainments, it is to the law and to the testimony, not to the Reformers, we are directed as the standard of truth. Episcopacy, Presbytery and Independency have each had some of the most pious men in the list of their defenders, the Christian then can have no safe guide but the Bible."[17]

He expressed himself pungently on the great verities of the Gospel - *"The guilt of all men is such as utterly to prevent their justification by law."* (Vol. I, p.38)
"The scriptures assure us that faith is the gift of God; they assure us nevertheless, that the want of it is man's sin. How it is beyond man's powers, and yet his duty, is not for me, by metaphysical arguments to establish. I leave this to him from whom I have learned it." (Vol. I p. 108)
"To charge God with partiality in having mercy on some of his enemies and leaving others to perish, denies His sovereignty and supposes merit in those who are overlooked."
"A conditional atonement is no atonement in the proper sense of the word ... if there is anything plainly taught in scripture, it is that the sacrifice of Christ was made for those only who shall eventually be saved by it. If the wisdom of men cannot reconcile this with their views of what is right, let them be prepared to dispute the matter with the Almighty in the day of judgment." (Vol. I, pp. 58,125)
In Carson's thought, consistent Calvinism was evangelistic Calvinism. He taught and practised the free offer of the Gospel and the church's duty of persuading souls. In a sermon preached to the Baptist Missionary Society at Surrey Chapel, London on October 12th, 1842 he warned -

FOOTNOTE:

17. Works Vol. iv page 79.

"Sometimes people talk foolishly, as if to employ the means which God has appointed to effect an end is to take the thing out of God's hands. But surely, to employ means that God has not appointed, neglecting the means which he has appointed, is to take the thing out of the hands of God."

When Carson spoke of a regenerate church, he was prepared to employ every means approved by God to call men to faith. His biographer John Douglas bears testimony to his passion for souls.

"A Church in its meetings for its own edification ought to have constantly in view the conversion of sinners. It ought never to forget in any meeting of the saints, that the gospel in one way or other should be exhibited for the salvation of those who have not yet believed... if in some part of the Sermon I cannot find an opening to tell sinners the way to heaven I am a bungling workman. Why is the church called 'the pillar of truth' if it is not a finger board pointing constantly to heaven?"[18]

As a preacher of the Word he was an outstanding example of James Denny's model minister - *"a theologian who is an evangelist and an evangelist who is a theologian"*. Some of his discources lasted for two or three hours and one of his biographers wrote of the amazing fact that *"Good and full sermons were sometimes delivered within thirty minutes!* "George Moore observed him closely in the pulpit and remembers vividly his impassioned utterances -

"All defaulters, hypocrites and wrongdoers had to sit on hard seats and to endure drilling winds when he preached. While denouncing the wrath of God upon unbelief and all unrighteousness, he was indescribably awful. Every declaration was a manifesto and every entreaty seemed a mandamus from the throne of the Almighty. He endeavoured to scathe the impenitent with heaven's lightning; but he left them not long to quake in the vicinity of Sinai. Calvary

FOOTNOTE:

18. Biographical sketch of the late Dr. Alexander Carson (1884).

and its cross and its omnipotent Saviour constituted the refuge city to which he directed the perishing. Truly the cross was his polar-star - Calvary was his much loved home." [19]

HIS LITERARY LEGACY:

Finally, we turn our attention to the voluminous writings of Alexander Carson. The list of titles is long and varied, but an unusual revelation of his grandson Joseph D. Carson dated June 1st, 1850, brings out a little known point of information regarding his literary output. He is writing to G.C. Moore:

"I have heard it remarked by some that it was strange his works there not more voluminous as they understood that a great part of his time was devoted to writing. But they are ignorant of the fact that for many years he assisted his friend the late Robert Haldane of Edinburgh, in writing his 'Evidences of Christianity,' his 'Commentary on Romans' and other works. I have myself, when but a boy, posted many a quire of manuscript sent from Tubbermore to Mr. Haldane.

Delicacy, has prevented my grandfather's family, since he died from making these facts known; and I have heard it urged as a reason for not doing so, that he would not divulge it. This, I doubt not, is true; for he often said with regard to this matter, 'It makes no difference how or in whose name my writings are published, if Christ be honoured.'"

A sketchy outline of his Works shows the width of his knowledge and interest -

VOL. 1 A collection of Doctrinal papers dealing with such matters as the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Nature of God, the Sabbath, Evangelical Faith, the scheme of salvation.

VOL. 2 A critique of Roman Catholicism and Unitarianism.

VOL. 3 The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture.

FOOTNOTE:

19. op. cit. pp. 64,65.

VOL. 4 The Ecclesiastical polity of the New Testament, incorporating his reasons for separating from the Synod of Ulster and his reply to Mr. Brown on Presbytery.

"BAPTISM IN ITS MODE AND SUBJECTS"

This is generally recognized as one of the greatest works in the field of Baptist apologetics. It falls into four sections - an examination of Archbishop Whately's ideas on burden of proof; the Apostolic mode of Baptism; the Scriptural subjects of baptism, and a series of replies to advocates of the paedo-baptist position including Rev. Edward Bickersteth and President Beecher.

"If what Mr. Carson terms axioms are indeed such, the matter is forever set at rest, the whole Christian world must forthwith embrace the principles of anti paedobaptism" (Congregational Magazine). Carson deals at length with covenant theology and in particular the view that it is linked with circumcision. He exclaims: *"What an extavagant position that every slave in Abraham's household had Abraham's faith. If all Abraham's household were so well taught he was much more successful with his slaves than Jacob with his sons".*[20]

"If the law of circumcision is to regulate baptism, the posterity of a believer have a right to baptism to the remotest generations even if all their intermediate progenitors were atheists. The child of a Jew must be circumcised without any respect to the faith of the parent. If then, none but believers have a right to obtain baptism for their children, the law of circumcision does not apply to it." [21]

For 46 years the *"lion-hearted divine of Tubbermore"* spent himself for the Kingdom of Grace in a quiet Ulster village of 132 houses. The ancient Gaelic meaning of Tobermore is the "big well". Here too, the Father of Mercies placed a spring of pure water where many have drawn joyfully from the wells of salvation. The tribute of Thos.

FOOTNOTE:

20. Baptism, p. 226.

21. Ibid., p.230.

Witherow sums up the man whose name is still known and treasured in the neat farmsteads of the South Derry countryside:

"Carson was a great, strong-minded, lion-hearted man. Difficulties could not daunt him. He took care to do what he thought right and left it to God to take care of the consequences. He cultivated his powerful intellect to the utmost. He discharged his duties as a minister with great ability and spent a life-time of study and toil. He expounded the scriptures on the Sabbath to admiring crowds and wrote a whole multitude of treatises, discussing therein nearly all the questions that agitated the religious world in his day. His mind was ever on the rack of thought. His prolific pen was always producing. His study was literally a workshop. From early morn till dewy eve he toiled away, and the books he wrote among us found their way from the Derry mountains out to the world." [22]

LESSONS FROM HIS LIFE:

1. The value of a theological, rather than a pragmatic approach to church life and order.
2. The lasting benefits accruing from the implementation of the gathered church principle. Against great odds Carson fostered the idea of independency and resurrected the concept of a local church as a Christocracy. His efforts live on in the form of the Carson Memorial Church at Tobermore, where a faithful ministry continues to this day.
3. As a reluctant controversalist, Carson delicately balanced the polemical and the cirenical approach. He was careful to steer clear of personal attacks when opposing his religious adversaries. The generous charitableness of his spirit is illustrated in his attitude to those who failed to share his separatist outlook. Professor G.N.M. Collins' estimate of Dr. Hugh Martin fits the character of Carson so well.
   "In him, penetrating theological insight was matched with warm evangelical fervour. His sword-play was magnificent: but when he entered the arena it was not from love of controversy but because necessity was laid upon him. The polemic in him was always under the restraint of the evangelist." [23].

FOOTNOTE:

22. quoted by R.A. Boggs - Alexander Carson of Tobermore, pp. 25,26.
23. Preface to Hugh Martin, The Abiding Presence.

4. His life and ministry proves convincingly that a Calvinistic creed and an evangelistic zeal can beat in the same heart.

5. That proficiency in things spiritual necessitates hard work and devoted study. His wife could not recall three days he spent out of his study in forty years ministry.

6. That intellectual keeness is not detrimental to warm spirituality. His outstanding learning was blended with a rich and fresh scriptural piety. Although awarded the LLD by two American institutions of learning he never moved away from the childlike trust of a needy sinner. His unbending adherence to the written word alone as the final court of appeal in matters of faith and life. To a religious opponent he wrote: *"If you are able to establish presbytery from the Scriptures I am ready to be your convert."*

R. DUNLOP.

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Early American Baptists and Religious Liberty

This paper is intended to be a modest Irish Baptist tribute to American Baptists in the bicentennial year of the founding of the United States of America. The American Baptist historian, Robert G. Torbet in A History of Baptists (Valley Forge, The Judson Press, 1969 p.210) notes that *'the Pennepack Church was founded in 1688 by Pastor Elias Keach, son of the well-known London Baptist Minister, and twelve members, five of whom were Baptists from Radnorshire in Wales; another was a member of a Baptist congregation in Kilkenny, Ireland; and the rest were from England.'*
Of equal interest is the fact that four years earlier in 1684 Thomas Dungan, a native of Ireland, who had emigrated to Rhode Island, came with a group from the Baptist church of Newport, Rhode Island, to Cold Spring, Pennsylvania. At Cold Spring, Dungan and his followers founded a church which survived until about 1702 (Torbet: ibid pp.209,210). There is evidence that other Irish Baptists emigrated to the New World in the period prior to the War for Independence, and like Dungan and the unnamed brother from Kilkenny identified themselves with Baptists in the Colonies.

* * * * *

The aim of this paper is to highlight the Baptist contribution to the cause of freedom prior to and during the revolutionary years which led to the separation of the Thirt-

een Colonies from Great Britain. That contribution was part of the fruit of the Baptist struggle for religious liberty in the British Isles - a struggle which began with John Smyth (c1570-1612) to whom belongs the honour of making *'the first claim for full religious liberty ever penned in the English language.'* (A.C. Underwood: A History of the English Baptists, London, 1947, p.42.

> *'That the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force and compel to this or that form of religion or doctrine: but to leave the Christian religion free to every man's conscience, and to handle only civil transactions, injuries and wrongs of men against man, in murder, adultery, theft etc. for Christ is the only King and lawgiver of the Church and conscience.'*
>
> (Propositions and Conclusions, concerning True Christian Religion, containing a confession of faith of certain English people living at Amsterdam. Article 84)

Thomas Helwys, a gentleman lawyer and close friend of John Smyth, took up Smyth's plea for liberty in matters of religion and conscience and, in 1612 having returned from Amsterdam, published a book entitled A Short Declaration of the Mistery of Iniquity. This was the first demand to be made in England for universal religious liberty and freedom of conscience. The thrust of the book is expressed in the following words:

> *'Our Lord and King is but an earthly king, and he hath no authority as a king but in earthly causes, and if the king's people be obedient and true subjects, obeying all human laws made by the king, our lord and king can require no more: for men's religion to God is betwixt God and themselves;*

> *the king shall not answer for it, neither may the king be judge between God and man. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews or whatever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.' (p.69)*

This language sounds tame to twentieth century ears, but in 1612 it was political dynamite! Helwys must have known of the king's ideas about his royal prerogatives, nevertheless he sent a copy of the book to James I with a handwritten, autographed inscription. This action to quote Underwood, was 'remarkable for its fearless courage'.
James I and the Church authorities could not ignore the challenge. Helwys was arrested and imprisoned in Newgate Jail. Little was heard of him afterwards; some evidence suggests that he died prior to 1616.

S.T. Bindoff: Tudor England (The Pelican History of England, 5, London, 1950, p.100) puts Smyth and Helwys into their historical context for us, when he writes,

> *'The movement which Luther had launched in Germany in 1517 and which had quickly spread across half Europe, had enough in common with what Henry VIII started in England in 1529 to entitle them to a common name. But they had different leaders and starting points, they followed different routes, and they moved forward at different speeds.'*

Henry VIII, while repudiating the Pope's authority, remained orthodox; because he realised that 'safety lay in unity, and unity was only to be found in the traditional creed.' Heresy was not only spiritually damnable but socially dangerous. So Henry VIII acted in both directions - the years which saw him break with Rome also saw him persecuting those who had broken with the Roman faith. But, in England,

as on the Continent of Europe, the ideas stemming from the great spiritual movement in Europe could not be killed by persecution.

It is important to recall what those ideas were. In recent years research has shown that the Anabaptists (or Re-baptisers) constituted a third significant group which emerged from the Reformation alongside the Lutheran and Reformed churches. They have been called 'the radical reformers' or 'the Reformation left wing'. They were persecuted without mercy on the Continent by state and church, both Catholic and Reformed. Many of them fled to England as refugees, only to be persecuted there also.

Anabaptists were persecuted for the principles they held, practised and propagated - principles in which they differed from or went beyond their Reformation teachers:

1. That the Bible is the Word of God, and therefore is absolutely authoritative.
2. That the true Church of Christ is a fellowship of believers free from state control.
3. That the true baptism is that of believers.
4. That Christianity is a way of life rather than a system of belief.
5. That there should be toleration not compulsion in matters of religion.

In England, Reformation principles had operated to produce a movement from conforming Puritanism to non-conforming Puritanism; these more radical views induced a further movement from Separatism to the Baptist position, which John Smyth's own spiritual pilgrimage epitomised. English Baptist Separatists entered into the heritage of persecution in common with other dissenters; they also drew upon themselves the hostility of fellow-dissenters because of their insistence on the separation of church and state. Underwood (op.cit. p.49) comments that, even 'the Congregational Separatists,

at this stage in their development, put out no plea for universal toleration, because their minds were still imbued with the Calvinistic idea that it was the duty of the civil powers to encourage true religion and to suppress the false.'

'The plea for universal religious liberty had a theological basis, which Underwood (in.loc.) puts this way. 'These early General Baptists believed that no man was predestined by a divine decree to damnation but that all men might repent and believe the Gospel - none were irretrievably lost. They, therefore drew the inference that to destroy a man for his mistaken beliefs might defeat the purpose of God for that man's salvation. While he lived he might yet be saved from the error of his ways, if the truth were presented to him in spiritual forms and no coercion applied to his conscience. It was therefore, no accident that the General Baptists were the first to plead for complete freedom of conscience for all.'

In their doctrine of the church these English Baptist Separatists may be said to have carried to completion the reformation upon which Puritanism had embarked. From the idea of a state church, which embraced both godly and ungodly, they had come as Puritan Separatists to oppose this concept and to uphold the concept of the gathered church of regenerate believers. They saw that the basis of constitution for the true church was not a covenant, but believer's baptism and that infant baptism was an error. In this they reached the theological consummation of the concept of the gathered church.

In the prevailing ecclesiastical pattern of the time in England there was no place within the established Church of England for independency and non-conformity. Charles I (1625-1649), a sincerely religious man, was guided in his ecclesiastical policy by Archbishop Laud, described by Underwood as 'a pious man with the narrow mind of a martinet.' Laud's aim was to secure uniformity in the Church of England and to suppress both Puritanism and Dissent. To achieve his aim he was prepared 'to torture men's bodies for

the good of their souls'. G.M. Trevelyan: England under the Stuarts (London 1924)
says that many thousands of religious refugees emigrated to the New World because of Laud's persecution and describes him as 'the founder of Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the new world.'

. . . . .

One man, destined to found the first Baptist church on American soil, was both a witness and an object of Laud's persecution. This was Roger Williams. (With the kind permission of the authors and publisher I have drawn heavily for this section on Baptists Who Shaped A Nation, Broadman Press, Nashville, 1975, by O.K. and Marjorie Armstrong, whose friendship I value highly). See also O.K. and Marjorie Armstrong: The Indomitable Baptists published by Doubleday and Company, 1967.

Roger was born probably in late 1603 of Welsh parents. His father was a merchant tailor. 'The Williams' home (in London) was near the square in front of Newgate Prison, the favourite site of the authorities for the execution of condemned heretics. As a lad, Roger witnessed many such executions. The people in the crowds who came to take in the ghastly spectacles generally considered them a time for laughing, mocking and jeering at the condemned wretches. Roger, however, developed a sense of pity which grew to shame and abborrence at such inhumanity towards persons whose only crime in many instances was nonconformity in matters of conscience.' (p.31).

Roger's mother was well-connected and a close friend, Sir. Edward Coke, later to become Chief Justice, became Roger's patron. He secured a scholarship for his protegé at Charter House school and sponsored him at Pembroke College, Cambridge

where Roger graduated in 1627. Sir Edward Coke employed him to record the proceedings in the Court of the Star Chamber (so-called because it sat under the star-spangled ceiling of one of the rooms in the Palace of Westminster). Williams heard and transcribed all the arguments used against heretics. 'The injustice of punishing persons who refused to believe the religious dogma prescribed by the state developed in the young man an intense hatred of bigotry and intolerance. He rebelled against the practice of denying freedom of conscience.' (p.32).

Sir William Coke, himself, opposed Laud's oppressive policies, and was in consequence dismissed and imprisoned in the Tower of London. When Charles I succeeded James I in 1625, and Laud had a freer hand, persecution of Puritans and Separatists intensified.

'With burning indignation Williams witnessed the cruel treatment assessed against Dr. Alexander Leighton ... and influential Puritan (who) had written ... Zions's Plea against the Prelacy which was critical of the intolerance of established church leaders. For this offense he was arrested on Archbishop Laud's orders ...' (p.33). The punishment prescribed for Leighton was indeed cruel:

> *'Committed to the Prison of the Fleet for life, and pay a fine of ten thousand pounds; that the High Commission should degrade him from his ministry; and that he should be brought to the pillory at Westminster while the Court is sitting and be publicly whipped; after whipping be set upon a pillory a convenient time and have one of his ears cut off, one side of his nose split and be branded in the face with a double SS for a sower of sedition; then that he should be carried back to prison, and after a few days be pilloried a second time in Cheapside, and have the other side of his nose split and his other ear cut off, and then be shut up in close prison for the rest of his life.'*

The punishment of Leighton seems to have been a turning-point for Williams. He wrote a protest called Dissent, and addressed it to Laud. It voiced in forceful language Williams' opposition to all religious intolerance. The inevitable reaction followed with Laud ordering the arrest of Williams. Before the warrant could be executed Williams, with his wife Mary, sailed from Bristol for Boston, Massachusetts, arriving there in 1631.

The new arrival was welcomed by the Boston Puritans as a trained, educated minister, proficient in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and Dutch. To his dismay, however, he discovered that these Puritans held to the principle that the government should support an established church and protect it from error. The Massachusetts colony was, in fact, a mixture of democracy and theocracy,and theocracy in which civil and religious laws were 'so intermingled as to be inseparable.' Williams' hardening conviction against any control of religious affairs by the civil power and the concept of a state church compelled him to refuse the invitation by the Puritans to become one of their ministers. 'I durst not', he explained, 'officiate to an unseparated people'.

Instead, Williams became pastor of a Separatist church at Salem, Mass. He preached that 'according to Divine Law officers of the Crown cannot rightfully interfere with the right of a person to worship as he pleases.' He argued that magistrates had no right to punish Sabbath-breaking, swearing or other violations of the first four commandments of the Decalogue, since those matters lay in the realm of the spiritual. When the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony passed a law compelling every colonist to join one church or another in the colony, Williams protested that there could be no true freedom without freedom of conscience to join a church or not to join a church as one might please.

In 1633 he preached and published a sermon in which he affirmed 'that there was never civil state in the world that ever did or ever shall make good work of it, with a civil sword in spiritual matters.' He chided the religious leaders for using the civil authorities to carry out their persecutions. 'The State', he argued, 'should give an absolute permission of conscience to all men in what is spiritual.' The General Court retaliated in 1634 by passing a law called the Freeman's Oath, which specifically provided for 'the right of Magistrates to punish for breaches of the First Table (of the Ten Commandments) and to rule in religion.' It required all men to take an oath of loyalty to the General Court. Failure or refusal to do so was punishable by banishment.

Williams attacked the new law as illegal and unjust. He was put on trial on a charge of 'entertaining dangerous opinions'. He was sentenced to banishment from Massachusetts Colony, but was given twenty-four hours in which to recant. When the Court re-assembled Williams told his judges, 'I shall be ready ... not only to be bound and banished, but to die also in New England for my convictions and for the truth as I see it'. The court allowed him six weeks to leave the colony, but before the time limit expired Williams was advised of a plan to seize him and put him on a ship back to England. Once more he had to make a hurried departure, and leaving his wife and baby son behind, he left for Narragansett Bay where he spent the winter among the Indians.

While at Narragansett he was instrumental in settling a dangerous quarrel between two rival chiefs, and in gratitude Chief Massaoit gave him a tract of land. This gift sparked off in Williams the idea of founding his own colony, which would be open to all who wanted to live in the enjoyment of religious freedom.

The idea came to fruition in 1636 when he founded Rhode Island Colony with its famous guarantee of religious liberty written into its charter:

> *'We whose names are hereunder written, being desirous to inhabit the town of Providence, do promise to submit ourselves in active or passive obedience to all such orders or agreements as shall be made for the public good of the body, in an orderly way, by the major consent of the present inhabitants, masters of families incorporated together in a township, and such others when they shall admit into the same, only in civil things.*

In less than one hundred and fifty years the principle embodied in those four words 'only in civil things' was accepted as part of the fundamental law of the new union of states, and was written into the constitutions of its various commonwealths.

'On several occasions', write the Armstrongs, 'the matter of the interpretation of religious liberty came to the test. "Should not our council pass a Sunday-observance law, as enacted by the Puritans, since it is man's duty to rest on the Sabbath?" was asked and discussed among the settlers. Williams' answer was a definite "No!." This was a matter of conscience, he said, so long as the citizen obeyed the civil laws on Sundays as on all other days ... "What about such heretics as Seventh-Day Baptists who defy the accepted Christian concept of worshipping on Sunday, and insist upon observing Saturday as a day of rest and worship?" was asked. Here again Williams asserted that this was a matter of conscience, and even though the practice ran counter to the majority in the community, the religious minority, however small, should not be troubled for their beliefs. He welcomed these seventh-day worshippers, who were persecuted and discriminated against in almost every other American colony, and they came in such numbers

that in 1671 they organised a conference. Later, one of their faith served as governor of the state.

'Records of the colony show that one of the settlers, Joshua Verin, "restrained his wife from going to meeting as often as she desired." Whether Mrs. Verin's plaint was based upon sound reasons or whether it might indicate unmentioned domestic difficulties is not known. However Joshua Verin was "withdrawn from liberty of voting in the Council until he shall declare to the contrary", which meant until he agreed to let his good wife go to meeting without interference even from her husband. Thus Williams and his band of believers in freedom of conscience and worship struggled to establish their community.' (pp.45,46).

We must ask, was Roger Williams really a Baptist? Torbet (op.cit.p.202) comments, 'In 1639 some Baptists, newly arrived in Rhode Island and seeking refuge from religious oppression, influenced Williams to accept briefly their view of the church. He became convinced that their insistence upon adult conversion and a rejection of infant baptism provided the pattern for freeing the true church from its Jewish antecedents.'

The account in Baptists Who Shaped A Nation (p.44) relates that Williams 'decided to organise his own church. It would be a congregation based upon the Anabaptist principles of the churches of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys in Holland and England ... (composed) of baptised believers, with immersion the symbol of death to sin and resurrection to a new life.' (p.44).

Williams was baptised as a believer in March 1639 and participated in founding Providence Baptist Church, the first on American soil. The church met in the Williams' home until a meeting-house was built. It is probably that the mode of baptism was by affusion rather than immersion, as was the case in the churches founded by Smyth and Helwys. Further it is almost certainly the cease that the Particular Baptists in England were first to change the mode to immersion, and this did not happen until 1641.

'A few months later', writes Torbet, '(Williams) withdrew from the church, taking the position of a Seeker. Like the Seekers of England Williams despaired of finding the true church on earth through the usual visible structures.' (op.cit.p.202) It is true to say, however, that he never repudiated or denied any Baptist principles. It was his 'rugged honesty', when assailed by doubts about the wisdom of continuing to lead the Providence church as Pastor, that compelled him to withdraw.

Williams' significance to Baptists was not the length of his formal connection with a Baptist church, but (as Torbet points out) his devotion to the cause of religious liberty and the creation of a climate of opinion in which their voice could be heard.

. . . . .

Among many hardy settlers of independent mind were two Baptist emigrés who made important contributions to the cause of religious liberty and its corollary - the separation of church and state. They were John Clarke born in London in 1609, a doctor who became a Dissenter from the Church of England, went to Leyden in Holland to escape persecution, and in 1637 emigrated to Boston- and William Scriven, a native of Somerton in England, born in 1629 who also, about 1668 emigrated to Boston. Both men suffered severe persecution in the colonies for their views - and that at the hands of those who themselves had fled from persecution!

Dr. John Clarke arrived in Boston when the town was in an uproar over the case of one, Anne Hutchinson, who had been ex-communicated by the Puritans and branded as a heretic for holding Bible studies in her home, and encouraging the crowds who attended to express their opinions on spiritual matters. The persecution of Anne Hutchinson sickened Clarke. He wrote in his diary:

'A year in this hotbed of religious tyranny is enough for me. I cannot bear to see men in these uttermost parts of the earth not able to bear with others in matters of conscience and live peaceable together. With so much land before us, I for one will turn aside, shake the dust of Boston off my feet, and betake me to a new place. There I shall make a haven for all those who, like myself, are disgusted and sickened by the Puritan dictatorship. I shall make it a place where there will be full freedom of thought and religious conscience.'
(Armstrongs: op.cit.p.55)

Anne Hutchinson and her family had found refuge at Providence in Rhode Island, and John Clarke followed in her footsteps. Roger Williams welcomed Clarke and those who came with him. The newcomers bought a pleasant island called Aquidneck from the Indians, and there Clarke started his settlement and town, which he named Newport. In 1640 he and several of his settlers organised a Baptist church, the second to be formed on American soil. Clarke was appointed pastor, an office he held until his death in 1676. This church adopted immersion as the mode of baptism about 1644 through the influence of Mark Lukar, who was probably an English Particular Baptist, who joined Clarke's church almost immediately after he arrived in America.

On one of his visits to Massachusetts Clarke and two friends Obadiah Holmes and John Crandall, were arrested for holding divine services without the consent and not under the auspices of the established Congregational church of the Massachussets Bay Colony. At their trial, John Cotton demanded the death penalty for this offence, saying the defentants denied the saving power of infant baptism and thus were soul-murderers! The trial judge, however, refused Cotton's demand and, instead, imposed fines and

expulsion from the colony as the penalty. In default of paying their fines they were to be 'well-whipped'. Friends in Newport raised the money to pay the fines of all three. Crandall and Clarke were released - Clarke's fine being paid against his wishes. Obadiah Holmes refused to acknowledge that his fine was paid, sturdily maintaining that 'agreeing to the payment of my fine would constitute admission of wrong-doing.' Consequently, he was whipped in public - thirty strokes with a triple-thonged whip - and for twenty days after could only sleep by lying on his stomach. The event became widely known throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and served to further the cause of religious liberty.

In 1651 John Clarke went to London to secure a charter from Great Britain for Rhode Island Colony. The Civil War and the Commonwealth era were not propitious to Clarke's mission, and his stay in London stretched to twelve years. The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 revived English interest in the British Colonies, and Clarke succeeded in 1663 in obtaining from Charles II the coveted charter. The declaration in the charter is of great interest. It reads:

> *'Our royal will and pleasure is, that no person within the said Colony, at any time hereafter, shall be in any wise molested, punished, disquieted, or called in question for any differences of opinion in matters of religion, and do not actually disturb the civil peace of the said Colony; but that all and any persons may, from time to time, and at all times hereafter, freely and fully have and enjoy his and their own judgments and consciences in matters of religious concernments throughout the tract of land hereafter mentioned, they behaving themselves peacefully and quietly, not using this liberty to licentiousness and profaneness, nor to*

civil injury or outward disturbance of others, any law, statute or clause therein contained, usage or custom of this realm to the contrary thereof in any wise not withstanding.'

Charles II added these words to the document - 'It is much on their hearts (if they may be permitted) to hold a lively experiment that a most flourishing civil state may stand and best be maintained, and that among our English subjects, with full liberty in religious concernments.'

John Clarke had done his work well. And this was one hundred and twenty years before the principle of the separation of church and state was incorporated in the Constitution of the United States of America! 'If all the American colonies had caught the ideal of granting freedom of conscience and worship that was Rhode Island's, the dark pages of persecutions for spiritual beliefs in the new world would not have been written.' (Armstrongs: op.cit.p.64)

To come to William Scrivan (or Screeven): in 1678, despite Puritan opposition, Baptists in Boston had grown to a sizeable congregation and formed themselves into a church. They built a meeting-house and began public worship. The city authorities passed a law confiscating the property, but, under pressure, allowed the church to retain ownership, but not to use the building for worship. News of this repressive action reached Charles II who directed that freedom and liberty of conscience be respected. This royal directive was contained in a personal letter to the governor. Though, at first, the contents of the king's letter were not made public, the information leaked out, and the Baptist church re-opened its building for worship. In 1680 the city authorities ordered the doors to be nailed shut, and passed a new act forbidding the Baptists to worship there again under threat of punishment. The doors were not re-opened until 1689 under an Act of Toleration passed early in the reign of William and Mary.

Earlier, in 1668, Scrivan had settled in Boston and became a prosperous merchant. Frustrated in his desire to form a dissenting church by the repressive laws of Massachusetts he moved to Maine, which was later annexed by Massachusetts. Scriven with others opposed the annexation, and became a marked man. In 1681 he, his wife, and a young man called Humphrey Churchwood went from Kittery in Maine, where they lived, expressly to be baptised and to join the Boston Baptist Church. The Boston church, in 1682, licenced Scrivan to preach and baptise so that he might found a church in Kittery. The religious and civil authorities opposed the move to establish a church, and summoned Scriven and his friends to appear before a magistrate. They were threatened with fines and imprisonment if they proceeded with 'heretical worship'. Scriven was charged with blasphemy before the General Assembly of Maine on the ground that he 'spoke against the holy ordinance of baptism.' Unabashed, Scriven invited the Boston church to send an elder to come and help to organise a local church in Kittery. This was done in September 1682.

The authorities made known their intention to deal harshly with the members of the infant church. It would appear that meetings were held for less than a year. Scriven was charged with breaking the law in 1683. Life became so difficult for the Baptists of Kittery that in 1696 Scriven and most of the Kittery Baptist families left for South Carolina. Torbet thinks it unlikely that persecution drove Scriven from Kittery, where he was an extensive land-owner and held public office. 'There is no doubt', says Torbet, 'that he met persecution courageously, but being a man of money and having influential friends, he seems to have fared better than some of his fellow-Baptists.' (op.cit.p.208) In South Carolina he acquired land, formed a settlement about forty miles from Charlestown and established a Baptist church. In 1708 he declined a call to the Boston church. He died in 1713 in his eighty-fourth year.

During the years until the War for Independence Baptists spread through the Thirteen Colonies, augmented by immigrants from the Old Country. Churches and associations of churches came into being, the witness gaining a wonderful impetus from 'the Great Awakening', which began about 1726 under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, and continued later under George Whitfield's ministry. The revival movement stimulated Baptist to evangelism.

In Virginia, Baptists from England appeared first around 1700. They were augmented by a contingent from Maryland between 1743 and 1756, and then by a third group from New England about 1760. The 'awakening' reached Virginia about 1785, and one pastor, John Leland, was prominent in this work of grace. The influence of the revival, coupled to the struggle for religious liberty (for Virginia had the Anglican Church as the established religion) united the various groupings of Baptists under the leadership of Leland.

John Leland was born at Grafton, Massachusetts, in 1754 and migrated to Virginia in 1776, principally because he felt impelled to combat the persecution of Baptists and other Dissenters in Virginia, the Old Dominion. He was, by 1788, recognised as the eloquent spokesman for Baptists in the state, pleading the cause of religious liberty and complete separation of church and state. He counted Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry and James Madison among his personal friends.

'Baptist support of the patriot cause in the American Revolution', comments Torbet, 'was regarded by them as support of the cause of religious liberty.' (op.cit.p.238) Isaac Backus, who produced a three-volume history of Baptists between 1777 and 1796, and himself a Baptist pastor, emphasised that the persecution imposed on the Baptists of America had come from the same principles that caused the Revolution. For example, Virginian Baptists had suffered persecution stimulated largely by the clergy of the established church. Numbers of their

pastors had been imprisoned from 1768 until the outbreak of the revolution. Torbet describes Leland politically as a Jeffersonian Republican, who later followed Andrew Jackson. In a series of political essays the forthright Leland voiced his views on government, arguing that the republican form was the best preservative of the good in society, that all power was invested in and consequently derived from the people, and that laws made by legislatures which were inconsistent with the Constitution were not binding. The best government, in Leland's view, was the one that rules least, is economical, maintains a favourable balance of trade, sponsors soil improvement, and affords broad educational opportunities for its citizens.

'As early as 1758' writes Torbet, 'the Baptists and Presbyterians had joined forces in efforts to have the Anglican Church disestablished and dissenting ministers authorised to perform marriage ceremonies.' Thomas Jefferson encouraged them by introducing a Bill for Religious Freedom in the Virginia General Assembly in 1779. This Bill was not however adopted until 1785, and was passed under pressure from Baptists, Catholics, Quakers and Presbyterians acting in concert. In 1787 the Incorporation Act was repealed and the Church of England was disestablished in Virginia. John Leland was in the forefront of these battles for religious freedom in Virginia.

Leland figured in one other notable achievement in the struggle for liberty of conscience. He was invited to stand for election as the delegate to represent Orange county at the Virginia State Convention called to consider ratification of the new federal Constitution. Leland had 'every prospect of success', according to William Cathcart: (The Baptists and The American Revolution, (Philadelphia, 1876, p.95), 'for Orange was chiefly a Baptist county.'

Though the Constitution in Article VI provided that 'no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust under the United States' Leland asked -

'Where are the guarantees of complete religious liberty? Where is the protection for the individual to believe or not to believe, to worship or not to worship, to be free to support his church or any religious cause, and free also from all compulsion of the government to support some church?' In his view Article VI was inadequate. Leland had grounds for reservations because, as Backus notes (A History of New England with Particular Reference to the Denomination of Christians Called Baptists 2 vols., Newton, 1871, II.p.335), the prohibition of religious tests in the Constitution made it many enemies in Massachusetts.

In March, 1788, there was a meeting of the Virginia Baptist General Committee, a body formed to fight the issue of religious liberty. At it Leland put his case, and the Committee afterwards drew up a statement which included these words:

> *'We the Virginia Baptist General Committee unanimously hold that the new federal constitution, proposed to the states for their ratification, does not make sufficient provision for the secure enjoyment of religious liberty; and therefore it should be amended to make such provision.'*

It was recognised that, if Leland were elected delegate for Orange county and argued his case at the Convention, support for his views on Article VI was so widespread that he would be able to block ratification of the Constitution, and without Virginia the Constitution could not be accepted.

However John Leland was faced with a serious decision. His friend, and one of the architects of the Constitution, James Madison, had also been nominated as delegate to represent Orange county at the Convention to be held in Richmond in June 1788. If Leland stood he would receive the Baptist votes and without them Madison would not be elected. As the Armstrong's put it, 'While he did not want to run against the very popular Mr. Madison, Leland ... decided to do everything

within reason and honour to defeat the ratification of the new constitution unless it included a guarantee of full religious liberty with separation of church and state.' (op.cit.p.14)

According to Cathcart (op.cit.p.95) 'Mr. Madison spent half a day with John Leland, and the result of this interview was that Leland withdrew and exerted his whole influence in favour of Madison, who was elected to the Convention, and, after sharing in its fierce debates, he was just able to save the Constitution of the United States.' The vote was close, 89 for and 79 against ratification, a majority of 10.

The version of the incident as narrated by the Armstrongs (op. cit.pp.28,29), is worth repeating. '(Madison) was warned by several friends and supporters that he would have a hard time being elected a delegate to the convention unless he gained the support of the influential Baptist leader.

'With John Leland's Objections to the Constitution in his pocket, Mr. Madison dismounted from his carriage at the front door of the Leland farm home. After the greetings and pleasantries were exchanged, Madison and his host excused themselves from Sallie and the children and strolled out into the side yard. There, under the great oak trees, the two men talked earnestly. Madison still had to be convinced that additional guarantees of religious liberty and other freedoms mentioned in the Objections were necessary. Leland brought all his persuasive powers to bear upon his distinguished friend. Apparently, no record of their conversation was ever made, but soon afterward candidate James Madison spoke to a picnic crowd in an oak grove near Gum Spring, six miles from Orange. Standing on a hogshead of tobacco so he could be easily seen and heard, he told his listeners that he would indeed run for the First Congress and if elected, would introduce the amendments suggested by the Rev. Mr. Leland and many honest and intelligent citizens.'

The inference in both accounts is that Leland struck a bargain with his friend Madison. The new Constitution provided for amendments; if Madison would agree to be a member of the First Congress and present amendments that the Baptists wanted, Leland would announce that he would not run for delegate to the Convention and would support James Madison. It seems a fair deduction from the facts.

In the event Madison was as good as his word and at the First Congress presented and had adopted in the famous 'Bill of Rights' (as the first ten amendments to the Federal Constitution are called) the First Amendment, which states:

> *'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or of the right of the people peaceably to assembly, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.'*

Thus, as far as the United States was concerned, the battle for religious freedom had been won. More skirmishes had to be fought to have the First Amendment implemented in practice in some states, but that is another story. In the long struggle for this great principle of religious freedom and the separation of church and state Baptists, known and unknown, played their part courageously. In this bicentennial year we salute their memory.

J. THOMPSON.

John Knox and the Reformation in Scotland

BACKGROUND:

In Knox's time Scotland was regarded by many Europeans as a weird and barbaric land. Even a Scot such as the Earl of Moray, the future Regent, once wrote to a German prince complaining that in Scotland he was "almost beyond the limits of the human race." Nevertheless, that Scotland was not a totally backward country is demonstrated by the existence there of three universities, one more than England had at that time, and Scottish scholars were to be found in many centres of learning on the Continent.

Scotland was independent of England, but the authority of her monarch and government was unstable. (For example, in 1545 a band of thirty or more 'heretics' - among them John Knox - spent four weeks openly marching around the countryside within fifteen miles of the capital, bearing arms and entering churches to preach, without authority, to large crowds.) At this time the Scottish ruling house was linked by family ties to that of England. James V was the nephew of Henry VIII, but there was no love lost between the two, especially as Henry had rejected the authority of Rome. Hostility became war, and the English defeated the Scots at Solway Moss, shortly after which James V died in despair. James left one heir by his French wife Mary of Lorraine (or Guise); that heir was Mary Queen

of Scots, a week old at the time of her father's death in 1542.

The French connection should be noted. Links between France and Scotland had existed for centuries, (although of course hampered by geography.) This factor made Protestant England realise that a Protestant victory in Scotland was necessary for her own security, for if Scotland were to remain strongly Catholic England might find herself facing French invasions from both north and south. In this context the English connection should be noted also. Mary Queen of Scots claimed that she was the rightful heir to the English throne on the grounds that Elizabeth was an illegitimate child of Henry VIII. It was therefore to England's advantage that Protestantism should triumph in Scotland and that Mary's cause should not, and for their part John Knox and his fellow Protestants in Scotland were fully aware that they needed England's help if their cause was to succeed. More of this later.

On the religious side, the Church in Scotland suffered from corrupt and ignorant clergy, a picture similar to that in other parts of Europe. Protestantism in Scotland had its forerunners. Lollard ideas were filtering into Scotland by the beginning of the fifteenth century. In 1407 a Wycliffite English priest was burnt at Perth, and in 1433 a Hussite from Bohemia was burnt at St. Andrew's. But Lollard/Hussite ideas continued to find supporters throughout the century. In Luther's time, trading contacts with Germany brought evangelical teaching into Scotland on a large scale, including many copies of Tyndale's New Testament. The Scottish authorities began to be alarmed, and this alarm took a violent form in February 1528 when the first Scottish martyr of this period, Patrick Hamilton, was burnt at St. Andrew's. Knox in his *History of the reformation in Scotland* said that as a result of Hamilton's death "many began to call in doubt that which before they held for a certain verity." A succession of martyrs followed: James V was violently anti-Luterian, and many Scots, with their long-standing hatred of England, came to identify the "new religion" with

the old enemy. In 1540 a series of laws was passed designed to strengthen the position of the church - an indication of the widespread and growing desire for reform.

But in December 1542 James V died, and the Earl of Arran became Regent for the baby queen. Arran was pro-English, and for this reason the fortunes of Scottish Protestants suddenly improved. Among those who now began extensive preaching activities in Scotland was one Thomas Gwilliam, and according to Jasper Ridley "it was Gwilliam who first converted Knox to Protestantism, though Gwilliam was too moderate for Knox's Liking." (op. cit. p.31).

KNOX'S LIFE UP TO 1549:

Knox was born in 1514. There is some uncertainty about the year, but historians now have largely abandoned the formerly supposed date of 1505 in favour of 1514. Very little is known about his family background, and all that can be said is that his family belonged neither to the highest nor to the lowest classes of society. There is also some dispute about the place of his birth, but the evidence points to it having been the town of Haddington on the river Tyne.

Knox received a good education. Again, there is some doubt on this point but he probably attended the University of St. Andrew's, and according to men who knew him later he did very well academically. In 1536 he became a priest, before he had in fact reached the canonical age of 24. Nothing is known of Knox's life during the four years following his ordination. He was obviously unable to obtain a post as a priest (in the Scottish clergy at the time there was a manpower surplus), for by 1540, when traces of his life reappear, he was working as a small country lawyer. The evidence also suggests that by 1543 at least he was also employed as a private tutor.

We do not know when dissatisfaction with the Church first stirred within Knox, but by the time he heard Gwilliam preach in 1543 he was

sufficiently disgusted with the corruption and hypocrisy of his Church to reject her. A glimpse of his 'testimony' is provided by the last hours of his life: when he was dying he asked his wife to read to him the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel saying, "Go read where I cast my first anchor." But it is not known to which point in his life he was referring.

The course of Knox's life took an important turn when he became part of a group supporting the fiery preacher George Wishart. Knox at the time was tutor to the sons of Sir Hugh Douglas of Longuiddoy, who was a Protestant supporter, and through whose instrumentality Knox met Wishart in December 1545. For the next few weeks Longuiddoy's boys received little tuition, for Knox was part of Wishart's escort, sometimes carrying a two-handed sword ready to defend him if necessary. (Knox, we should remember, was still at this time an obscure ex-priest). But by now the Earl of Arran had abandoned his pro-English policy, and Protestants again faced persecution. Early in 1546 Wishart was burnt at St. Andrews, at the insistence of the notorious Cardinal David Beaton.

In retaliation, a group of young Protestant noblemen broke into St. Andrews Castle, murdered Beaton and hung his body over the castle wall for all to see. The following year (1547) Knox was persuaded to join the rebels in the castle, and there he found the role of preacher thrust upon him. He was extremely reluctant to assume it, as he had never preached a sermon before. In spite of his fears Knox's preaching was very effective and resulted in the conversion of a number of the citizens of St. Andrews who came to the castle to hear Knox and his fellow preacher John Rough.

The Scottish authorities were unable to recapture St. Andrews Castle, and so the French navy undertook to do it for them. After a few days siege and a few hours bombardment the castle surrended in July 1547, and Knox was among those taken prisoner and put in the French galleys as a slave.

Knox remained a prisoner in the galleys until February or March 1549. Conditions were harsh, and for a while Knox's health

broke down completely. He held firmly to his Protestant convictions, even when threatened with punishment for refusing to participate in Catholic rites. Knox was in fact able during this period to produce the earliest of his writings which has survived. He wrote a summary of a book written by Henry Balnavis on the subject of justification, and also a message of encouragement addressed to all his fellow prisoners.

Knox was eventually released in an exchange of prisoners between the French and the English (who regarded him as an ally in the struggle against the Catholic domination of Scotland), and he landed in England in March 1549.

KNOX IN ENGLAND, 1549-1554:

The England of Edward VI (1547-53) was much more kindly disposed towards Knox than that of Henry VIII would have been, Knox became a preacher at Berwick and by 1551 he was preaching regularly in Newcastle also. Many Scots crossed the border to hear the man who was a rallying - point for the downtrodden Scottish Protestant cause. Knox became the most famour preacher in the area. He was prepared to take risks; when the Protector, the Duke of Somerset, was arrested Knox was virtually the only man who denounced this action. Nevertheless, the man largely responsible for Somerset's downfall, the Duke of Northumberland and the new Protector, saw in Knox a useful ally and had him brought to London in 1552. Knox did not in fact prove to be as pliable as the Protector had hoped.

In London, Knox became involved in a dispute over the order of communion set out in the Prayer Book. The Prayer Book of 1549 had said nothing about whether communion was to be received sitting or kneeling, and Knox and his Berwick congregation had adopted the practice of sitting. However, the second Book of Common Prayer, which was given the force of law in March 1552, contained a rubric expressly ordering that communicants should receive the sacrament on their knees. In a sermon preached at Windsor before Edward and his court, Knox denounced this rubric as sinful and idolatious, as it implied adoration and worship of a

piece of bread. The authorities decided, in view of the widespread support for Knox's opinions on this matter, to insert into the Prayer Book an additional passage stating that the receiving of the sacrament kneeling did not imply any adoration of the elements. This new passage became known as the "black rubric". It was probably drafted by Cranmer, not by Knox as was widely believed at the time. But the rubric would probably never have appeared but for Knox's sermons at Windsor. "It was therefore thanks to Knox that, for the first time, the Prayer Book contained an unequivocal denial of the Real Presence." (Ridley, p. 109). Knox did not in fact believe that kneeling at communion was an entirely innocent gesture which did not imply adoration, but he nevertheless wrote a long, rambling, indeed face-saving letter to his former congregation at Berwick, advising them to submit to the law of the land on this point.

On the subject of the eucharist, we should note that Knox never formulated his opinions on the precise significance of the sacrament with any clarity.

Other points of interest from Knox's stay in England are his refusal to accept the post of Bishop of Rochester, his denunciations of the English Anabaptists (of whom he had personal experience), and his warnings of the danger of a Catholic queen ascending the throne of England. Knox, with all his contacts in high places, obviously knew that King Edward was a very sickly boy, and that Catholic Mary might soon come to the throne. Mary became queen in July 1553, and Knox left England early in 1554.

THE PERIOD 1554-1559:

Save for a ten-month visit to Scotland in 1555-6, Knox spent the duration of Mary's reign on the Continent. He visited a number of cities, staying for extended periods in Frankfort, Dieppe and Geneva. He was for a time minister of the English congregation in Frankfort, but he left there after serious disputes had arisen concerning the order of service that should be used, and also because the Frankfort authorities took exception to remarks he had made about the Emperor Charles V in his *Admonition to England*.

After his brief visit to Scotland, during which he worked hard for the cause of Protestantism at some risk of his life, Knox went to Geneva (not for the first time) with his newly wedded wife Marjory, and there he worked for a year as one of the ministers of the English congregation. In 1557 he decided to return to Scotland but got no further than Dieppe, where he stayed for two months, then returned to Geneva. In 1559 he left Geneva for the last time, and after a further stay in Dieppe and involvement in the Protestant cause there, he finally arrived back in Scotland in May 1559.

During these years Knox produced a number of important works which indicate the significant direction his thought was taking as a result of his experiences. He developed the theory that the subjects of a Catholic sovereign were lawfully entitled to overthrow their sovereign by armed revolution. For the time this was a truly revolutionary thesis, for it undermined the universally accepted concept of Christian obedience. In 1554, Knox produced among other writings, his *Admonition to England*, the longest and most important tract he had so far written. In this tract he attacks the Protestant nobles for submitting to Mary's authority, he attacks the Catholic bishops for their treatment of Protestants, but most important he attacks the queen herself in language which both Protestants and Catholics interpreted as an incitement to have Mary assassinated. The pamphlet ends with a prayer containing the words, *God for his great mercies' sake stir up some Phinehas, Elias or Jehu, that the blood of abominable idolaters may pacify God's wrath.*

On this point Knox was at variance with Calvin. When the two men discussed the issue in 1554 Calvin told Knox very firmly that under no circumstances whatever was it justifiable for subjects to oppose an idolatrous ruler by armed force, even if that ruler were a woman. (As examples of Calvin's attitude to Christian obedience to the state we may wrote what he says in *Institutes* Book IV chap. 20 and also

his warning to the Huguenote that armed resistance against Henry II would be a sin that would bring disgrace upon the Gospel).

Knox's English enemies at Frankfort made the allegation, and it has often been repeated since, that the *Admonition* caused the fires of persecution to be lit in Mary's England. This suggestion is totally without foundation, for every Catholic ruler in Europe burned heretics and Mary certainly did not need to be incited into doing so by Knox.

In October 1557 Knox sent to the Protestant nobles of Scotland a letter which again would have shocked all Protestant believers in the duty of Christian obedience. He said that it was the duty of the nobility to compel their ruler to introduce the Reformation. He did not say clearly by what means this compulsion should be applied, but he compared it to the action that Moses had taken against Pharaoh. (It should be noted in passing that Knox did not call for the overthrow of civil government by an undisciplined mob: he looked to the nobility to lead the revolt against Catholic tyranny. Hence his idea of revolution was very different from that of certain Continental radicals of the period, but it was still quite radical in its own way).

Not surprisingly Knox experienced some doubts as he developed his revolutionary doctrines. In December 1557 he sent another letter to the Protestant nobles of Scotland expressing himself in much more moderate terms and warning the nobles against taking unlawful action against established authority. The fact is not that Knox had suddenly altered his basic thesis but that he began to fear that the Protestant movement was being used by the lords for their purely selfish ends.

But of all Knox's writings of this period, indeed of his whole lifetime, the one that has attracted most notoriety is *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of women*, the last words of the title meaning against unnatural goverment by women. Knox argued that it was against the law of God, as well as of nature,

for a woman to rule a country. Most of it is simply an attack on the cruelties and tyranny of Mary, and an appeal to the English to overthrown her by revolution. So in fact the arguments about the evil of rule by women in general take up only a small proportion of the book. Although popular belief would have supported Knox in saying that rule by a woman was unnatural and unhealthy for a country, most people in the sixteenth century would have said that men should still obey a queen as they would a male sovereign. From this point of view Knox's book was seditious, because it challenged the divinely ordained power of the ruler.

Knox has gone down in history as a woman-hater, but this is hardly a fair judgment. In his personal life, his relationships with women were marked by courtesy and consideration, and he was twice married. Out of all Knox's letters that have survived, more than half were written to women, and these show the high opinion which he had of his sisters in the faith. He of course held the usual view of his time that women should be in subjection to men, but in this respect he was a good deal less bigoted than many of his male contemporaries. We have to remember that *The First Blast* was written when England was being ruled by the Catholic Mary Tudor and Scotland by the Catholic Queen Regent, Mary of Guise. The cause of Protestantism in both countries was suffering because of women rulers. Had this not been the case Knox would probably never have put into print the anti-feminist sentiments one sees in *The First Blast*, and it is very likely that in his attacks upon the Catholic rulers of England and Scotland he decided to make use of popular prejudices which he personally did not really share. It is significant that in his later dealings with and denunciations of Mary Queen of Scots, the fact that she was a woman was of minor importance: Knox would have taken the same stand against a Catholic king in his land.

The First Blast appeared in 1558. That same year Knox published three tracts which put forward more clearly than ever before his theory of the lawfulness of revolution. The first was addressed to

the Queen Regent, and it put forward the view that men who took no action against an idolatrous prince *are apostate from God.* The second is an appeal to the nobles and the Scottish Parliament against his being condemned as a heretic. In it he wrote that it was blasphemy for men to appeal to the doctrine of Christian obedience in refusing to take action against an ungodly ruler - *And therefore I fear not to affirm that it had been the duty of the nobility, judges, rulers and people of England, not only to have resisted and againstanded Mary, that Jezebel, whom they call their queen, but also to have punished her to the death.* The third writing was addressed to the common people of Scotland: in it Knox said that subjects have a duty to ensure that their rulers protect the land from heresy and provide for them true preachers, and that active resistance against an ungodly tyrant is not only lawful but required by God.

Knox found himself under attack from Protestants because of the views he thus expressed. The most serious repercussions occurred when in November 1558 Mary Tudor died and Elizabeth ascended the throne. Elizabeth disliked Knox because he advocated revolt against rulers, quite apart from what he had said about women rulers - and his remarks about certain exceptions to the rule such as Deborah did not soften her feelings. So at a crucial point in the Scottish Reformation and his own life he found himself in serious disfavour with the queen whose help the Protestants of Scotland badly needed. Knox was refused permission to visit England on his way to Scotland, so he made his way home directly, arriving there in May 1559.

THE EVENTFUL YEARS 1559 - 60.

Knox arrived in Scotland at a critical moment. The Queen Regent and the Protestants were in sharp conflict, which when Knox arrived became open revolt. At Perth, for example, the effects of his preaching were sensational, and crowds went on the rampage destroying all vestiges of Catholic idolary, and much the same occurred at Stirling and Linlithgow. Two factors aided Knox's cause: one was that the Queen Regent and her French troops lacked the necessary

force to deal with the Congregation (as the Scottish Protestants were known), and the second was that the lords did not turn against the popular movement as the princes of Germany had done. So Knox was able to make his way to Edinburgh and he preached in St. Giles Cathedral just seven weeks after his first sermon at Perth.

But Knox knew that complete Protestant victory in Scotland could only be won with English help, as the Queen Regent could continue importing French troops. For her part, England was ready to help for she could not afford to have the country to the north dominated by France and garrisoned by French troops, especially since France supported the claim of Mary Queen of Scots to be the lawful successor to the English throne. Complicated negotiations were conducted between England and Scotland, in which Knox played a vital part. He could not be said, however, to have dictated the course of events, and he was becoming aware that the Protestant movement in Scotland, because of the political problems involved, was losing some of its idealism as the land and the Congregation became pawns in international power politics. Where Knox was a key figure, however, was in his inspiring the Protestant faith in Scotland. He preached and worked tirelessly in St. Andrews and Edinburgh.

Events took a dramatic turn when an English army and fleet began to coerce the French to leave Scotland. In July 1560 the French were forced to recognize the inevitable and agreed to withdraw all their troops from Scotland. The Queen Regent had already died the previous month. On July 19th Knox led a great public service of thanksgiving in St. Giles Cathedral, remembering in his prayer "our confederates of England, the instrument by whom we are now set at liberty."

The Scottish Parliament then passed the necessary legislation to abolish the Catholic religion in Scotland and establish Protestantism as the state religion. Papal authority was repudiated and

mass was declared illegal. In St. Giles, Knox expounded the book of Haggai, the prophet of the restoration following the Babylonian capacity. He and other ministers drew up a confession of faith strongly Calvinistic in tone. Knox and his colleagues also worked on a system of Church government which was set out in *The First Book of Discipline* presented to Parliament in January 1561, although completed long before then. The *Book of Discipline* laid down detailed stipulations for Church order and discipline, but most interesting are its provisions regarding education: it provided that every child was to have some education, and it also drafted a new syllabus for the universities. Although it never received the force of law, the *Book of Discipline* remains one of the principal documents of the Scottish reformation.

Knox now settled down to his duties as minister of the Edinburgh congregation. By contemporary standards he had a very high salary. But personal tragedy struck him in December 1560 when his first wife died, leaving him two young boys to be cared for. Knox lived a very busy life as a minister, having his preaching and pastoral work, and there were many problems to be dealt with during this period of transition in the land.

1561 - 1567, the conflicts with Mary.

In August 1561 Mary Queen of Scots returned to her realm, aware that in Knox she had her most difficult opponent. Knox was first of all infuriated by Mary's being allowed to have mass celebrated in the chapel royal: he feared that the presence of a Catholic Queen and the saying of mass in her chapel would enable Popery to regain a foothold in Scotland. From his pulpit he fiercely denounced her and her masses. Another serious bone of contention was Mary's permitting dancing at her court. Knox seized on this as a stick to beat the Queen, although he seems to have said nothing about the dances held at the courts of Edward VI, Mary Tudor, Elizabeth, and the French monarchs. His dislike of Mary was intensified by news from France of the persecutions of Protestants in which Mary's Guise uncles were involved. Knox also held forth on the subject of

Mary's marriage prospects, warning the nation of the danger of Mary marrying a Catholic. All these criticisms were made publicly: this again shows the revolutionary side of Knox. He did not believe as did most Christian ministers at the time, that a sovereign should be granted the privilege of being admonished only in private. Mary was treated like any other citizen.

In fact Knox did have five interviews with Mary, each time at the queen's request. Invariably she had the worst of these encounters, even bursting into tears on one occasion. This was when Mary rebuked Knox for his pronouncements upon the danger of her marrying a Catholic, saying: "What have ye to do with my marriage? Or what are ye within this commonwealth?" To which Knox gave his famous reply: "A subject born within the same, Madam. And albeit I be neither earl, lord nor baron within it, yet has God made me (how abject that ever I be in your eyes) a profitable member within the same: yea Madam, to me it appertains no less to forewarn of such things as may hurt it, if I foresee them, than it does to any of the nobility: for both my vocation and conscience crave plainness of me." Here Knox was voicing his conviction that an ordinary subject of the realm has the right to challenge a ruler when he considers that God's law is being broken.

Mary had no power to restrain Knox's attacks upon her, any more than she had to reverse the anti-Roman laws passed by Parliament. In Scotland at this time there was a paradoxial situation in the co-existence within the country of two churches: the Protestant church was allowed to function everywhere and to control the lives of the people, but did not own land: the Catholic Church was forbidden to celebrate the mass, but retained much of her wealth ,and the clergy retained their ranks and titles.

What Knox feared came to pass in July 1565 when Mary married Henry Lord Darnley, an English Catholic. The danger to the Scottish Protestants was not as great as if she had married a French or Spanish Catholic (as she might well have done but for English

pressure), but it was great enough to cause concern. The concern of the Protestant lords assumed a violent form in the murder of Mary's Italian secretary David Riccio. Riccio was really an innocent pawn in the whole business: he was not Mary's lover nor was he a Catholic agent of any importance. But the effect of the murder was to create a bitter antagonism between Mary and Darnley, who was involved in the conspiracy but then deserted his confederates. All the evidence indicates that Knox knew in advance of these plans, though he was not one of the organizers of the plot. Knox certainly approved of the murder and expresses his approval in his *History*. His attitude here is markedly different from that which he adopted in the galleys in 1548, when he advised some of his fellow Protestants that they should only try to escape if they could do so without taking the life of any of their jailers.

Mary faced a greater storm in 1567, when Darnley was murdered. The precise circumstances of his death are not certain, but Mary was of course suspected of complicity. Shortly afterwards she made matters worse for herself by marrying the Earl of Bothwell, a divorced English Protestant. Knox now became particularly outspoken in his demands for the execution of Mary, who had in fact been deposed by the Protestant Lords without any direct help from Knox, as he was away in England at the time. Knox argued that a queen was as much subject to the law as anyone else, and that it was the right of subjects to punish wicked rulers. Mary was not in fact executed yet; in 1568 she escaped to England, where she was kept a prisoner until her execution in 1587. Her infant son James had been crowned king in 1567.

Aside from all this political turmoil Knox had been hard at work on his *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, which has always been the most widely read of his works. He had begun to write it in 1559 and had been working on it intermittently since then. He himself is the central figure of the work, although it is not really an autobiography but the history of a movement. The work was not completed by Knox but possibly by his secretary from notes made by Knox during his lifetime.

The last years, 1567 - 72.

Although in poor health, Knox continued his busy preaching life, also playing a leading part in the affairs of the Church. Although he held no official position except minister of the congregation of Edinburgh, he supervised the congregations in several areas. The political situation in Scotland continued to be unsettled: there was a strong faction anxious to see Mary returned to the throne, and in January 1570 the Regent, the Earl of Moray, was assassinated. Civil War followed and the queen's party occupied Edinburgh. In May 1571 Knox left Edinburgh, and arrived in St. Andrews in July: there he stayed for over a year.

While Knox was in St. Andrews he become involved in a struggle which, after his death, was to have a profound effect on the church of Scotland. It concerned the appointment of new bishops. As the old Catholic bishops died, new Protestant ones were appointed to succeed them, even though they had no place in the structure of the Scottish Protestant Church. The new bishops were appointed by agreement between the Church and the Privy Council of the King's lords, and a new bishop usually agreed that he would hand over the greater part of his revenues to the lord who had nominated him. As St. Andrews was then without an archbishop, Morton, a future Regent, nominated John Douglas, an old friend of Knox to the post. Knox refused to take part in the service of inauguration for Douglas, but he did not make a great issue of the affair. By now he was ageing and tired, and he did not wish to split the unity of the king's party. Though Knox did not publicly denounce the new system of appointing bishops, he reacted against any attempt by Douglas to interfere with the functioning of the church.

In August 1572 Knox, now very ill, returned to Edinburgh, although the Castle was still in the hands of Mary's supporters. Knox resumed his preaching in St. Giles Cathedral: he fiercely denounced the St. Bartholomew's day massacre in Paris, accusing King Charles of France of being a traitor and the murderer of his people.

Eventually Knox succumbed to the worsening state of his health, and he died on 24th November 1572. Morton, who had been chosen as

Regent on the day Knox died, declared at the funeral that Knox "neither feared nor flattered any flesh" - a fitting epitaph.

Conclusion:

Knox's death in no way proved a boon to the Catholic cause in Scotland. By about 1570 Knox as an individual had ceased to count as an important factor in politics, and his contributions to the Church of Scotland were such as not to be undermined by his death. It was thanks to Knox's work that Presbyterianism and Calvinism were established in Scotland. It is true that the overthrow of Catholicism in Scotland owed much to English help, but it was because of Knox that the Church of Rome was replaced by Calvinism and not by Anglicanism. The doctrines which Knox taught, and the systems of Church organization which he and his colleagues enshrined in *the Book of Discipline* had deep roots among the people of Scotland, and even later hostility of King James VI could not oust these.

Knox may also be regarded as a great contributor to the cause of human freedom generally. His doctrine of resistance to rulers on grounds of conscience was very much in advance of his time, and his importance has been overlooked because of the way he expressed his ideas (using so many biblical and religious terms).

No one can deny that he made his mark upon the age in which he lived, and that his influence has lasted long after his death. To many he appears as the epitome of the hard, unfeeling, uncompromising (even, some would say, bigoted) dour, Scottish Calvinist. But he was a man gripped by a conviction of the rightness of his cause, he was undoubtedly loved by many, and to reverse Shakespeare's language, the good which he did was not interred with his bones but lived after him.

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