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IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

Volume Ten

1977-78

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

VOLUME TEN . . . 1977/78

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Price £1.50 to non-members

Membership of the Society is open to persons interested in the history of Baptist Churches in Ireland. The membership subscription is £1.50 (in the British Isles) and entitles to the Society's Journal. For overseas members the annual subscription is $4.00 inclusive.

Published at the office of the Baptist Union of Ireland, 3 Fitzwilliam Street, Belfast, BT9 6AW, Northern Ireland.

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Editorial

This year's Journal contains as usual the papers presented to the quarterly meetings of the Society - at which attendances have tended to increase - with one omission, the contribution sent on tape from South Africa by ex-Principal D.P. Kingdon. This was entitled 'The relevance of the Old Testament' but is not reproduced here, partly for technical reasons and partly because it was of general rather than of Irish Baptist interest. Those who heard the address, originally given to a meeting of South African pastors and church leaders, greatly enjoyed the wide ranging argument typical of David Kingdon. What he had to say about modern cultural problems, for example apartheid, was amplified for us by Pastor H.M. Carson to whom and to Mr. Kingdon we are much indebted.

The study of the effects of the current period of civil disturbance in Northern Ireland on the life of Irish Baptist churches was not read as a paper but was commissioned by the Society from Dr. Paul Doherty and is presented here for the first time. Unfortunately the study has no 'terminus ad quem'. We can only hope that that time will come in the not too distant future. Meanwhile we are grateful to Dr. Doherty and to all who furnished the material on which he worked.

Suggestions from readers of topics which they would like to see dealt with by the Society or, better still, indications of research areas in which individuals are working and on which they would be prepared to offer papers will always be welcome - as will new members. The Society's meetings as advertised in the Irish Baptist are open to all interested friends.

H.D.G.

The Women's Auxiliary of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission 1929 - 1950/1

It was at a meeting of the all-male committee of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission on 10th October, 1928 that the idea of forming a Women's Auxiliary of the Foreign Mission was first put forward. The Committee accepted a proposal by Pastor F.W. Gracey, then Secretary of the Mission, seconded by Mr. F.W. Carson,

> *"that a Women's Auxiliary be formed and the following women nominated with power to add to their number."*

There followed a list of names suggested by committee members, one from each of 19 churches, and of these four were to be asked "to come together immediately to formulate plans and ideas of organisation". The four selected to form the first Executive Committee were,

Mrs. Frizelle (Cliftonpark)
Mrs. H.C. Gribbon (Antrim Road)
Mrs. Porter (Grove)
Mrs. McKelvey (Great Victoria Street)

At the next meeting of the Foreign Mission Committee on 12th December, 1928 it was reported that a Women's Auxiliary

was "in process of formation."

Although called an Executive Committee, this was really a steering committee. The ladies met at Mrs. McKelvey's home on 9th and 16th November, 1928 and decided to invite one lady member from each of the ten Belfast churches to a meeting of "the general committee" in the Great Victoria Street Church on 23rd November. Mrs. Gribbon, presiding, explained the reason for calling them together - the necessity for each Church to take a deeper interest in the work of the IBFM which had been formed only four years earlier, and Mrs. Porter gave an outline of the work already being done by her church at Grove. Each one was asked to explore the possibilities in her own Church and report to a further meeting on 7th December. No details are given in Mrs. Frizelle's resumé of this meeting, but it was agreed to meet again on 8th March, 1929 in order to elect Officebearers. There is no record of how the other ladies on the original list were contacted, but there must have been informal contact with churches outside the Belfast area as there were seventeen W.A. branches by the end of 1929. Some of those on the list were wives of Committee members, some Pastor's wives, others appear to have been known as active in their own churches. Mrs. Gribbon was the only one of the Executive whose husband was on the Foreign Mission Committee at that time.

At the March meeting, Mrs. McKelvey became President, Mrs. E.G. Combe (Haypark) Vice-President, and Mrs. Gribbon, Secretary. The committee arranged to meet at quarterly intervals, and the Women's Auxiliary of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission was now formally constituted. The first office-bearers were elected for a period of one year, but in the event, they stayed in office indefinitely. Mrs. McKelvy remained President until 1944.

At this point it could be said that the W.A. consisted only of a committee, and its members set out to channel to our own mission the interest and support of those women's missionary meetings already in existence, and to encourage the formation of a

"W.M.A." in churches which had none, for the specific purpose of supporting the IBFM. It is interesting to note that in the Constitution of the IBFM published in the 1929 handbook of the Baptist Union the third item under BUSINESS, reads:

> *(a) To organise Missionary Auxiliaries, and to form prayer Bands in all the churches.*

The original intention, then, did not specify a women-only organisation. Is it idle to speculate that the exclusion of men from the auxiliaries has militated against male recruitment to the mission? Perhaps not, but the reasons for the female emphasis were probably social and practical. Miss Margaret Haggan, writing in The Tie magazine in 1967 throws some light on the philosopy behind it. She says:

> *"The Executive committee had the idea that if a Women's Auxiliary were formed, the mind behind the hand that rocks the cradle and so rules the world might help to increase the interest and educate the rising generation to support this branch of the work."*

The place of women in society has changed so much that it is difficult for a younger generation to appreciate that fifty years ago even the most competent women functioned through husband and children and opportunities for them to exercise their abilities outside the home were severely limited. The place of women in the church today may give us some idea of these limitations. With the notable exceptions of Omagh and Clough where a woman has served as Church Secretary and Treasurer in the recent past, women in churches are still effectively confined to the traditional areas of responsibility, and we realise that a women's organisation was the only acceptable means of giving women an outlet for their considerable talents and energies, the only way to channel these abilities to the highest point of usefulness to the Mission.

The first officebearers exemplified their own philosophy by fostering missionary interest in their own familities. Mrs. McKelvey was well-known in the denomination and knowledgeable about the churches through her first husband, Mr. John Haggan, who preached in many of them. Her second marriage to Mr. W.J. McKelvey, also widowed, was a very happy arrangement for all concerned as the families had been friends for many years. He too was well-known in Baptist circles and a past President of the Union. Miss Haggan was as involved as her mother in WA activities from the very first discussion. Another daughter, Sadie, was the wife of Mr. John Jeffrey, treasurer of the Foreign Mission from 1940 until his death in 1958. Of their children, Helen served as a missionary in India and is now Secretary of the Sandes Soldiers' Homes, and Dorothea has just gone to Africa with the Wycliffe translators.

Mrs. H.C. Gribbon was English, grew up in the Lake District, met her Irish husband when visiting friends at Greenisland, and when she came to live here involved herself fully in local church affairs. She had a most charming and gracious personality, with the gift of inspiring and encouraging others. Her approach to life was cheerful, positive, courageous. The youngest of the group, her four children were still very young at this time, yet she attended every committee meeting and was the most active in visiting and encouraging the W.A. branches. Her husband was a member of the Foreign Mission committee and President of the Union in 1930. The children grew up in an atmosphere of love and service, and all four later served the denomination in a number of ways. Mary, a sister-tutor before her marriage to Mr. Sam Sloan, went as a missionary with the IBFM to Peru in 1953.

Mrs. Combe's family too were involved in their local churches and in denominational activities in later years.

The other, practical reason for confining the auxiliary to women was that sewing circles were already in existence, and even today we do not expect men to sew. Working parties for sewing or knitting for India and Congo were already meeting in older churches like Mountpottinger, Antrim Road, Dublin and Great Victoria Street where Mrs.

McKelvey organised a sewing class in aid of the Zenana mission, a mission which would naturally have attracted the support of women. Most of these did not survive beyond the war years when knitting was done for the forces as part of the war effort, but the Dublin sewing class still existed in 1948.

In the early days the B.M.S. had various supporting groups, including the Ropeholders formed as recently as 1914 to encourage young people in the churches "to do a little extra, love a little more, and pray a little oftener than ever." In 1934 two girl's auxiliary groups were in existence and another was started in Glengormley in 1951, but these petered out.

The first report of the W.M.A. committee to the IBFM in November 1929 reported progress in their aims, and the first Annual Meeting of the W.A. was held as part of the May Meetings the following year, 1930. In the absence of any of our own missionaries, Miss Smith, a EUSA missionary from the Urcos Farm, quite near the IBFM station in South Peru, was the guest speaker, and the only men present were the Mission Secretaries, Pastors Shields and Gracey. Apparently they were so intimidated by the number of ladies present that they asked to borrow the overalls of the helpers in the kitchen so that they could go in disguise! The 1931 Annual Meeting was open to men and women.

At this meeting the President and Secretary each gave reports. An extract from the President's report is informative:

> *"Each branch of the Auxiliary is self-governing, that is, it has the right to draw up its own rules and the members themselves decide in what way their branch can help the mission most. Some of our branches have working parties and others devote the whole meeting to Scripture meditation and prayer. As we cannot send parcels out to the field because of the high duties on imports, the working parties raise money for the work, which is very necessary ..... Indeed I think that the funds raised by the working parties are part of the*

answers to the prayers of the prayer meetings, and because one is the outcome of the other, one is as necessary as the other. Of course, prayer is not neglected in the working parties, nor do the prayer meetings neglect to contribute financially to the work."

The Secretary reported:

"... we have on our committee seventeen churches represented from Belfast and district and in almost every one the story told is of growth and progress in missionary work and interest since the W.A. came into existence ... when Mr. Creighton was due to sail for Urabamba last August a request for articles and garments that might be useful for the work out there received a generous response and he was able to take out with him as large a parcel of things as Government duty restrictions would allow. The Auxilaries have endeavoured to increase the number of collecting boxes given out into the homes ... a few times one or two members have visited some branch other than their own and enjoyed the fellowship together, united by the one bond of interest and sympathy. We believe that the keynote and link between all the branches and the Mission Field has been the believing prayer of the members ..."

The branches were autonomous, like the churches themselves, and there was no attempt to evolve a co-ordinated programme which all or any might follow if they so wished. There has always been a tension between the Marthas and the Marys; the early missionary auxiliaries took the Lord's view and valued both.

The Annual Meeting became a feature of the May Meetings. After the war, as more people had cars, and the hire of a bus was no longer a major problem subject to earnest committee deliberation, a high proportion of members was able to attend and they did so

in their Sunday best outfits. Many a Guest Speaker has been charmed by the gorgeous array of summer hats displayed on Thursday afternoon, and for many years the majority stayed for tea and enjoyed the fellowship valued so highly at the general committees of those early days. Incidentally, the Guest speakers for many years enjoyed the homely, warm hospitality of Mrs. McKelvey's son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. William Haggan. The music at the Annual Meeting in Cork in 1934 was provided by a choir of G.A. members and other young people. It was led by Mrs. James Guthrie, organist of the Mountpottinger Church. Ten years later, she and Mrs. Hugh Burrows then of Bangor Church, started the W.M.A. Choir which has provided the music at the Annual Meetings ever since. Both contributed individual items and musical assistance over many years. At one general meeting, Windsor, 1936, Mrs. Guthrie gave a violin solo, and Mrs. Burrows sang at many of the W.A. gatherings. Both joined the Executive Committee in 1945.

The early committee meetings transacted little business. All were held in the most central church, Great Victoria Street, until after the first Annual Meeting in May 1930 when other City churches were used as a venue. Part of the reason was that the members of the W.A. in Great Victoria Street transferred to the newly-formed Windsor Church in 1931 and from then until 1938 there was no branch at Great Victoria Street. One committee was held in Bangor in 1932 at which Mrs. Warke of Phibsborough was present when she told of the "½d. a week fund" and the "do-without-fund" operating in their branch. Exchange of news was the main business but it is clear from the minutes that tea was a regular and much appreciated item on the agenda. The "social half-hour" usually preceded a hymn, prayer, scripture reading and comment by the President, after which reports from each branch represented were given and missionary news was shared. Eight branches were represented at the first united meeting in August 1930 in the Grove Church to hear Miss Smith from the EUSA Mission, and ten at the second in February

1931 to hear Mrs. Jardine in Great Victoria Street. About the same attendance was recorded for the general committee meetings of this period. A roll call was taken from the beginning in 1932, when each member responded by giving an account of her branch activities. For nearly ten years only eight branches attended the general committee meetings regularly. Transport seems to have been the problem, and apologies for absence are recorded from Mrs. Carleton (Banbridge), Mrs. Forbes (Ballykeel) and Mrs. Campbell from the newly-formed church at Monkstown in the years 1929 and 1930. An invitation from the Portadown church to hold the meeting there was declined on grounds of the time and distance involved in travelling.

By 1924 when the IBFM was formed there were thirty-six Baptist Churches in Ireland. Ten of these were in Belfast, another twenty in the North and six long-established in the South. In the following six years, ten more were formed in the North. The seventeen W.A. branches in existence at the first Annual meeting was therefore a good proportion, as many of the new and some of the older churches were very small. The total church membership in 1931 was 3701; in 1941 it was 3513 and in 1951, 4804. In 1950 the total number of W.M.A. branches had increased to thirty-two, of which thirty were represented at the Annual meeting. The committee had done their job well.

To be considered a W.M.A., a Women's meeting was expected to set aside time for prayer and news of the IBFM and this long remained the criterion. The first period, when interest was stimulated throughout the churches and the W.M.A. movement kept going by the efforts of that small original executive committee, lasted about fifteen years, for although Mrs. Porter died in 1934, her activities had been mainly confined to her own church.

The first break came in 1943 when Mrs. Gribbon resigned as Secretary. As she was going to England to live with her daughter (Mrs. Ian Thomas, Capernwray Hall) for a prolonged period the

committee had no option but to accept her resignation with considerable regret. At the Annual meeting in May of that year, two presentations were made to Mrs. Gribbon, one by the W.A. President, Mrs. McKelvey, of a handbag and £34.0.0., a large sum in those wartime days indicative of the love and esteem felt for her; and the other, a Bible given by the Foreign Mission Committee and handed over by the Chairman of the Mission, Mr. J.H. Corbett of Portadown, after a speech by the F.M. Secretary, Pastor F.W. Gracey. Characteristically, Mrs. Gribbon spent the money on books which she presented to each of the 21 branches of the W.M.A. in the hope that they would form the nucleus of a library which would be of service to all the branches.

Mrs. McKelvey was President from 1929 until 1944. As early as 1932 she made the first of several attempts to retire as she was unable through illness to visit the branches and give as much time to the work as she would have liked to do. She was loved and respected by her fellow members of the general committee, so they took no notice of her resignations except to send loving greetings and request her to continue in office. The first vice-president, Mrs. Combe, had become treasurer in November 1931 when affiliation fees were introduced (2/6d. per branch). The collections at Annual meetings at that time would hardly have justified such an appointment (£3.0.0. in 1930; £1.12.3. in 1932 and £4.0.0. in 1934) but over the next 20 years the financial side of the work was to expand considerably. Mrs. Combe was succeeded as treasurer in 1940 by Mrs. Ivan Neill then of Bloomfield church, who in turn was succeeded by Mrs. Norman Hutchinson (neé Burrows) of Glengormley, in 1948. Mrs. Stewart had become vice-president in 1932, primarily to deputise for Mrs. McKelvey, and this she did most willingly, succeeding her as President in 1944.

Miss Margaret Haggan was appointed secretary in place of Mrs. Gribbon in 1943, and to a later generation, Miss Haggan is the epitome of all that is best in the W.M.A. Alert, perceptive, efficient, but always gracious and self-effacing, she had been deeply involved

in all W.M.A. activities since its inception, supporting her mother's efforts behind the scenes, and present at almost every committee meeting ever held. It was ironic, but also typical, that one of her first tasks was to ensure that her mother's resignation was accepted. Failing health had made it impossible for Mrs. McKelvey to be more than a figure-head and the sensible course she herself desired was to appoint someone else who would be able to fulfil the duties of President.

Mrs. McKelvey was given an illuminated album of the 1945 Annual Meeting. Mrs. Channon, wife of the Guest Speaker, Rev. W.G. Channon, and a former member of the Shankill church was W.M.A. Guest Speaker that year. Mrs. Stewart became President and remained so until several months before her death in 1949. She did not live long enough to receive the illuminated album prepared for her, and it was presented to her daughter, Mrs. McCormick. Miss Haggan relinquished the secretaryship when elected Vice-President in 1955 and she was President from 1958 to 1961. She is still treasurer of her local branch at Windsor.

It is interesting to note that for a short period at the end of 1943 the President, Secretary and Treasurer were all from the Windsor Church as Mrs. Neill had transferred from Bloomfield in October 1943. To date Windsor has provided the W.M.A. with three Presidents, two Secretaries and a Treasurer.

There were changes then for natural reasons, but inevitably growing numbers and larger attendances at general meetings brought about a desire for more definite rules and more democratic procedures, which became pressing.

In September 1945 Miss Haggan and Mrs. Neill met the Executive of the Foreign Mission at its invitation, and a request was made to them that the W.M.A. be represented on the F.M. General Committee. They agreed to "try it for a year". The names of the W.M.A. representatives appear on the published list for the first time in 1948, and in 1956 on her retirement as secretary, Miss Haggan was the first woman to become a member of that committee in her own

right. At this meeting also the question of the title was discussed and it was agreed that while the Women's Auxiliary of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission was the official title, they would keep the "W.M.A." for short.

The W.M.A. executive brought a detailed recommendation to the general committee in April 1948 about the composition of the general committee and at the same meeting Mrs. H.H. Orr (East End) was invited to join the Executive. Later, at the October meeting she became temporary treasurer when Mrs. Neill was appointed temporary vice-president during Mrs. Stewart's illness, as the vice-president, Mrs. J. Ravey (Shankill) was also ill. Rules and regulations continued to be discussed at the 1949 February meeting, which was adjourned until March, when for the first time a business meeting without tea was held and important changes decided upon:

> *"that the President and Vice-President should be elected by nomination from present committee members of the Belfast, Bangor, Carrickfergus and Lisburn churches"*

and

> *"that the term of office should be limited to three years."*

Nominations were received in time for the next regular meeting, and in April of that year Mrs. Ivan Neill (Windsor) became the first democratically elected president of the W.M.A.

Mrs. Neill carried out her duties with skill and diplomacy; she was an excellent chairman and a notable public speaker. Although deeply involved in the work of the St. John Ambulance Brigade (she was District Superintendent for Northern Ireland from 1954 to 1966) and with many commitments as the wife of a Minister in the Northern Ireland Government, she had her priorities well organised and gave her Church work her best efforts. During her years as President she visited every W.M.A. including those in Southern Ireland and was present at the inauguration of many new Auxiliaries. In 1958, representing our denomination, she made the first television broadcast

on its behalf on the subject "Women of the World Church". Lady Neill still maintains a prayerful interest in all the work of the W.M.A.

Mrs. Orr was the runner-up in the voting and therefore became vice-president. Mrs. Hutchinson now became treasurer, and her financial reports given in succeeding years were outstanding for their clarity and witty sparkle. In 1951 she reported a sum of £530.17.11d. given by the auxiliaries to the Foreign Mission in the previous year, and a balance of almost £1000 accumulated in the Hostel Fund, an indication both of increased giving and inflation. Printed Rules were issued in 1952, and revised in 1964, the main change being a reduction to two years of the presidential term of office.

Through the years the W.M.A. committee had organised their Annual meeting at each Assembly and a number of united meetings in Belfast and provincial towns to enable as many as possible to hear individual missionaries home on furlough or just passing through Belfast. They co-operated in the Women's World Day of Prayer annually, and on one occasion a special day of prayer was arranged at Mr. Creighton's request for the Presidential elections in Peru as restrictions on Evangelical work there were threatened. The successful outcome of their intercession was duly acknowledged. Other projects recorded fully in Miss Haggan's review of the work given at the 21st Birthday celebrations and printed in the Irish Baptist were the provision of a kitchen and other items for the Missionary Training School at 3 Fitzwilliam Street; the Welfare Committee which co-operated with the Orphan Society during the war; and much earlier, contributions toward the salary of Donna Rosa de Bettin working in Argentina. At one time, around 1951, the Union offices in Fitzwilliam Street acquired a pungent smell. It was traced to the large accumulation of foil milk bottle tops being stockpiled there by the W.M.A. Ladies. Unfortunately some had forgotten to wash off the milk, and the odour of sour milk became too much for Mr. Forbes and the Office staff! A more ambitious project was the undertaking by the W.M.A.

to pay a proportion of the rent (£40. a year) at 79 Upper Newtownards Road for the use of missionaries on furlough, but their outstanding contribution to the Foreign Mission, in addition to their continuous prayer ministry and direct giving has been the provision of a Home for Missionaries' children.

The W.M.A. had always taken a particular interest in the women missionaries and the children. They marked the birth of Mr. and Mrs. Creighton's first baby in 1934 with a gift sent out with Miss Kathleen McCord (Mrs. Stanley Reid), and they presented each lady missionary with a parting gift, often "a handbag with notes", each time they left for Peru. It was the Reid's three sons Oliver, Paul and Austin, who benefitted most from this Hostel, which opened in January 1950 as there were no other children of appropriate age at that time. The official opening day on 18th February was marked by a "Pound Day", when members of W.M.A. branches were invited to call, bringing a pound of any commodity, and it was so successful that an Annual Visiting Day was included in the W.M.A. calendar thereafter.

The prime mover in the establishment of the hostel was the W.M.A. Secretary, Miss Haggan. She knew of a precedent, the large house in Scotland run by the World Evangelisation Crusade. Quietly she planted the seeds, and gaining the support of other committee members, suggested the "Penny-a-week Fund" specifically for a Hostel.

> *".... She talked it over with Mrs. Ivan Neill (who was then treasurer) suggesting that each W.A. member should abe asked to give an extra penny per week to a Fund for a Hostel for Missionaries' children. This small amount seems ridiculous today, but money values have changed greatly since 1947, and members were not limited to that amount. The suggestion was put before the Executive committee and met with their support, and being recommended to the W.A. General Committee was passed unanimously. The official bodies of the Baptist Union approved,*

so the Fund was started in May, 1947. It had been reported that the B.Y.F. had also been praying about this matter, so perhaps the W.A. Fund was the answer to their prayers."

(Extract from The Tie, 1967)

Prayer and practice are both necessary to achievement, and behind the scenes Miss Haggan negotiated an arrangement whereby the W.M.A. committee was able to rent a suitable house at 21 University Avenue. Miss Haggan feels she should still protect the anonymity of the person who made the house available, but it would be of interest to record that the person concerned was not someone with a large income who could well afford to make this gesture, but someone who bought the house with the help of a mortgage, and sold it to the W.M.A. in 1957 for £650 which was less than half the cost price and well below the current market value. When the house was eventually sold by the W.M.A. in 1976 the price realised was £5,500.

An unusual, but highly successful choice as first Warden was the indefatigable Mrs. Gribbon, returning permanently to Belfast, more as a grandmother figure than a matron. Another W.M.A. Secretary, Miss Mary E. Weir (Bangor) was Warden from 1954 to 1957. Appointed Assistant Secretary in 1951, she followed Miss Haggan as Secretary from 1955 to 1963 and today her work for the W.M.A. continues with unabated zeal - she is secretary of the Windsor branch.

Two of the boys who stayed in the Hostel became missionaries themselves: Paul Reid, who took an honours degree in modern languages at Queen's University, with his wife Audrey is working with the Child Evangelism Fellowship in Europe, and Dr. Tom Geddis (Lurgan) who lodged there during his years at Queen's, with his wife Ethel is serving as a missionary doctor with the Acre Gospel Mission in Brazil.

The Home for Missionaries' Children gave the Committee a concrete project of importance and the members at large a focal point for their interest and giving until it ceased to be used for its

original purpose in 1960.

Thus the story of the first twenty-five years; it would take another paper to bring the account up-to-date, but that is not my brief. An impression remains of a leadership with vision and enthusiasm, single-minded in their objective of focusing the interest of the women of the denomination in their own foreign mission. Their pioneering efforts, based as much on example as precept, created an organisation which became a vital component of the denomination's foreign missionary programme. The denomination has grown - has it been paralleled by a similar rate of growth in the Women's Auxiliaries? In her review of the first twenty-one years the secretary mentioned the need for younger women to take an interest in the W.M.A:

> *"Do they think their branch meeting dull? Then let them go and brighten it up. Do they feel unable to take part publicly and think that therefore they cannot help? Let them go to their branch meeting and learn from the older women how to pray ..."*

Good sound advice! It would be interesting to survey the branches today and judge from the numbers, age-group of members, programme content and the achievements of the intervening years whether her advice had been taken.

MRS. JOAN THOMPSON

Looking back 50 years - Strandtown and Limavady

Strandtown

My remit for this paper can be put in the form of a question:

The Question - In the context of the history of Strandtown Baptist Church, to what extent did the development of Baptist work reflect movement rather than growth of population or have churches been built from existing Baptist families moving into new districts, with successive generations coming into membership, or has there been growth based on attracting non-church going people from a growing suburban population?

Serious historians are well aware of the dangers of 'periodicity' in the interpretation of history and perhaps in dealing with a span of 50 years it is unwise to think in terms of periods at all - but with the permission of expert historians in our company that is precisely what I am going to do.

The history of Strandtown Baptist Church divides into seven fairly distinct periods.

(a) The immediate pre-establishment period with
   (i) industrial and social factors of significance
   (ii) spiritual awakening and Baptist development on the Co. Down side of the Lagan

(b) The founding of the church in Dundela Street

(c) The move to Belmont Avenue West - acquisition of site, building etc.

(d) The church on its present site - 1928-41

(e) The War years - East End / Strandtown together

(f) The Post-War Period 1945-60

(g) The Recent Period 1960-onwards

(a) The Pre-Establishment Period:

The period immediately before Strandtown was opened in 1926 was a fairly prosperous time in East Belfast. Harland & Wolff and Workman Clarke were employing about 20,000 men, engineering works such as Sirocco and Musgraves were also sound and the linen industry, both in spinning and weaving was flourishing. The Belfast Rope-works were also making a valuable contribution to the economic welfare of the locality.

Socially too, improvements were occurring. The riots of the early '20's had largely gone and there appeared reasonable hope of civil peace and normality. A considerable housing programme was continuing and the relatively new Northern Ireland Government was attempting to build the necessary infra-structure to provide for a projected improvement in living standards. Many of the new schools (designed by Wiltshire) were being planned at this stage and made their appearance in the early '30's e.g. Mersey Street, Elmgrove, Beechfield, Strandtown Primary School and Orangefield on this side of the town. There was a general feeling of optimism and anticipation and I suppose not without reason. The 1914-18 war had been concluded successfully, civil unrest had largely ended; a new Northern Ireland Government had been established and we appeared to be at what Rostov would have described as a take-off point. Unfortunately there were economic forces at play at international level which were soon to dispel such hope - but this is more correctly the field for economists and trade cycle experts, the Schumpeters, Hicks, Keynes or Jervons of this world and not for us this evening.

There was considerable spiritual awakening and opportunity for

the preaching of the gospel at this time too. Rev. W.P. Nicholson's compaigns were having remarkable effects in the Newtownards Road district - older members of the denomination will recall marches from the shipyards to Nicholson's meetings and how 'scoffers remained to pray'. I believe there were evidences of revival blessing in some of the existing Baptist churches e.g. East End.

Perhaps it is interesting to note that Strandtown comes fifth in the succession of churches established in East Belfast in the period 1890–1939. The order is Mountpottinger 1891; Bloomfield 1902; East End 1904; Grove 1914; Strandtown 1926; Church Street East 1930 and Orangefield 1939. Against this background the new church at Strandtown was established.

(b) The church at Dundela Street 1926:

For some reasons no longer clear, a number of people from the Bloomfield Baptist Church felt constrained to establish a new work at some distance from their church. The district around Dundela Street and Wilgar Street offered a challenge. Housing was of minimal standard even by 1926 criteria; there was considerable overcrowing and some 'hard' families presented social welfare problems because of alcohol. There certainly was a need to be met and how far this need was met eternity alone will reveal. I can recall it said by a prominent Baptist who lived at the turn of the century that 'What we need is plenty of small buildings among the people', and the early Strandtown church certainly met this prescription. A chip shop and billiard hall at 79/83 Dundela Street were acquired and a witness known as Strandtown Baptist Mission established. An opening conference was held on 31st July, 1926 when Pastors Fraser and Ravey were the speakers. The first official Sunday Services were held on 1st August, 1926, conducted by Pastor Alex Jardine.

The constitution of the church was formalised on the 29th August, 1926 and appears to have been based largely on that of Milltown Baptist Church. The pioneers in Strandtown were clearly an enthusiastic group and decided that the following meetings should be conducted:

The normal Sunday Services; Sunday School and Bible Class and Children's Meeting (all under the direction of Albert Clarke); Tuesday Gospel, and Saturday Prayer Meeting.

A mission was undertaken by a Pastor Leslie Smith, and 15 persons professed conversion - many of these were baptised by Pastor Ruddock at East End Baptist Church. The church still has in membership one of those converted at this mission.

A report of the 1st Annual Church meeting indicates attendances thus: Morning Service 40-50; Communion 25; Gospel Service 200; Tuesday Gospel meeting 50-100; Sunday School 45-50; Bible Class 10-20; Children's meeting 100.

Two aspects of outreach are important in this period (i) the regularity with which missions were conducted and (ii) the starting of 'home' or 'cottage' meetings. In 1927 two missions were conducted, one by Mr. S. Johnston and the other by Mr. S. Hinds and in each case the minutes record a number saved and added to the church. Also in the summer of 1927 - Mr. Glover (a founder member) used his own tent in a mission at Dundonald and cottage meetings were commenced there. This was probably the first Baptist witness at Dundonald.

(c) <u>The move to Belmont Avenue West:</u>

Towards the end of 1927 the need for better premises was being felt and early in 1928 the deacons began their search for a new site. Two possible sites are referred to in the minutes of this period, one at the corner of Ranfurly Drive and the other at Sydenham Drive. Negotiations for these with Ephraim Brown the estate agents proved abortive and eventually the site at Belmont Avenue, at a ground rent of £4 p.a. was acquired. A church member of the period and happily still in membership recalls sites also being sought at Gelston's Corner, the corner of Earlswood Road/Belmont Road and the present site of the Edenvale Flats.

The new building was largely constructed by voluntary labour, including non-Christians in the area and gifts of bricks, mortar, slates and

timber etc. were received. In certain cases these materials were promised before the work began. The story of the pews in Strandtown is interesting. They were used by the R.A.C. at the T.T. races at Dundonald in 1928, having previously been used in Ballywalter Presbyterian church, before being purchased for £30 for Strandtown Baptist Church. The building cost £379 approx.

The new church building was opened at special Conference Services on 5th January, 1929 with Councillor W.J. Chambers in the chair and the speakers Pastors A. Jardine and J. Ravey and Messrs. J. Atkinson and H.A. Johnston. Meanwhile the evangelical zeal of the church was maintained - missions seemed to be very much the order of the day.

(d) The church on its present site 1928-1941:

Four features mark this period of the church's history - (i) an early enthusiasm for evangelistic missions; (ii) considerable financial difficulties (no doubt the depression of the 1930's must have severely affected small new causes), (iii) minor traumas, at the human relationship level and (iv) a very slow and not always consistent rate of numerical progress.

At least six missions were conducted in the first four years of Strandtown's existence and throughout its early years evangelical outreach was always a major concern of the church. The first two pastorates were concluded however because of the church's inability to provide anything approaching a reasonable stipend. Nothing would be gained nor would it be fair to the memory of men with enthusiasm and many fine qualities to dwell on inter-personal problems. Sufficient to say that it must have been almost inevitable for people of the character and determination requirements to start and persevere in this work in such difficult circumstances to have had occasional differences of opinion. However, speaking at a human level, one is tempted to speculate what might have been had these

differences of opinions not arisen.

Numerical progress (or regress) during this period is interesting. Figures for membership during the years 1928 to 1941 - range from 32 in 1928 to 24 in 1940.

The figures are:- 1928-32; 1929-35; 1930-33; 1931-35; 1932-33; 1933-34; 1934-34; 1935-34; 1936-25; 1937-30; 1940-24;

The pattern of baptisms reveals how static the whole affair seems to have been.

1928-0; 1929-3; 1930-0; 1931-2; 1932-3;
1933-0; 1934-1; 1935-2; 1936-0; 1937-9;*

*The year 1937 will be commented upon later.

The picture for this period shows something of an uphill struggle attended by the doggedness of a faithful group of people who felt it was God's will for them to maintain a Baptist witness at Strandtown.

(e) <u>The War years - East End/Strandtown together 1941-43:</u>

Understandably these years were not notable for any great advance.

Evacuation and prevailing war conditions had an adverse effect on both congregations. But two features emerge very clearly from this period.

(a) The harmony with which both congregations worked together under the pastorate of G.H. Weir. The financial arrangement between the two congregations revealed a very genuine feeling of responsibility for one another. Each church received its own free-will offering envelopes, the loose offerings were divided - two-thirds to East End and one-third to Strandtown. East End was responsible for the pastor's stipend and any expenses incurred with their own building in Templemore Avenue; Strandtown was responsible for all overheads and expenses in the running and maintenance of the building in Belmont Avenue West.

(b) The second notable feature was that, despite the harmony between them, each congregation perserved its own separate identity and there was no transfer of members between the two congregations as a result of this enforced sharing of worship.

Throughout the period Pastor G.H. Weir provided true pastoral care for both flocks.

(f) The Post War Period 1945-1963:

This period represents a period of fairly steady (if not spectacular and consistent) growth. The membership statistics between say 1947-1963 would show an average around 50 with a top figure of 55 in 1953. Sunday School work, C.E. and W.M.A. also revealed considerable growth. During this period at least 6 evangelistic campaigns were conducted and the church enjoyed blessing perhaps not hitherto experienced. The middle of this period coincided with the pastorate of J.G. Kernohan 1949-1953 and also the return of the much loved S. Ruddock for his second term as pastor, 1954-1963; but more of this in the final summary.

Considerable development and renovation were carried out to the church building and altogether the fellowship at Strandtown enjoyed very considerable blessing as a church and as individuals.

(g) The Recent Period 1964 - onwards:

This period coincides with the ministry of I.J.W. Oakley in two spells as pastor (i) 1964-1969 and (ii) 1972-. Membership figures show that an all time high for this small church was reached during the first period. Between 1965-1967 a peak of 57 was reached, the average for the period 1965-1975 would be in excess of 50 and a measure of stability has been preserved. Sadly during the latter period the church has suffered great losses by the home-call of many of its finest members and while additions have been made - these have been more than offset by losses - so that the number in membership now stands at 51.

SUMMARY:

Reverting to the original question - what sort of expansion and development does the work at Strandtown show, an impact on a non-church going suburban population or Baptists moving into the district and their children forming part of the church subsequently?
If a graph were produced showing membership and number of baptisms, three points of growth would be obvious - each coinciding with the early years of ministry of three pastors.

(a) W.E. Clarke 1937-39 - 20% increase in membership and 9 baptisms reported for the year 1937
(b) J.G. Kernohan 1949-53 - 33% increase (20 baptisms)
(c) I.J.W. Oakley 1964-69 - 25% increase (21 baptisms), later period 13 baptisms

These three periods would appear to be the best to answer our original question.
What appears to emerge from this investigation is that in a very few cases the church has reached a few families or members of families who certainly were not Baptist and not very church-orientated. In the least two cases such families have provided church members who have made an outstanding contribution to the life of the church both in Strandtown and elsewhere. However, in the main, what development there has been has resulted from the movement of Baptists or baptised believers into the district, or the building in of 2nd and 3rd generation members from the families of original members.

We talked originally of the impact of socio/economic effects in the early days of Strandown and the explanation of the current position would be very incomplete if we were to ignore certain social factors occurring since the end of World War II - that is, the development of housing in the periphery of the great Belfast region i.e. Newtownabbey, Bangor and Lisburn. The small congregation at Strandtown has lost very considerably to these growth areas both in quality and quantity.

Established during a period of social and economic change, the church

has put down roots and achieved a certain measure of growth. But change continues, particularly in contemporary attitudes to religion - an optional extra as many see it. Starting with a question I finish with one, applying not only to Strandtown but to all our churches. How do we convince men, in any state or social condition, that their real needs are not material but spiritual, and can be met only in Christ?

J. HUNTER

Looking back 50 years - Strandtown and Limavady

Limavady

The name Limavady comes from the Gaelic and means "the leap of the dog". Long before the Plantation of Ulster in the early sixteen-hundreds, the old town of Limavady nestled around the castle of the Clan O'Cahan on the east bank of the river Roe. The site of the original town was about 1½ miles from the present town. It was formerly known as Gort-in-anima (Garden of the Soul) its present name is Deerpark. The new town was built by Sir Thomas Phillips, to whom King James I granted the "Horse Pond" an area of about 3500 acres . By charter grant from King James I the town was created a Borough on the 31st March in 1613, and from then until the Act of Union of 1800 Newtown-Limavady returned two members to the Irish Parliament. On two occasions the town was burnt down, the first was during the wars of 1641 and again in August 1689 the Earl of Antrim's regiment burnt the town while almost the whole of the male population was helping to defend Derry in its famous siege of 1688-1689...

In 1835 Limavady lost its Royal Charter and, ceasing to be a Borough was governed by magistrates until the appointment of Town Commissioners in 1846. From the passing of the Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898 until the present time the town has been an urban district.

Limavady can claim to have a close association with famous names

of the past. In the early nineteenth century William Makepeace Thackeray visited the town, and a small inn in Ballyclose Street, is where he is reputed to have stayed. In honour of the innkeeper's daughter he wrote the poem "Peg of Limavady", which later appeared in his Irish Sketch Book.

A plaque in the Main Street, marks the house where Miss Jane Ross (1810-1879) lived when she heard a street musician playing a haunting lament on a penny whistle. She brought the man in, and while he played the tune she annotated it. Thus the world was given the famous "Londonderry Air" . Two of the Council Estates also bear famous names, there is Massey Avenue named after the Rt. Hon. William F. Massey, the Prime Minister of New Zealand from 1912-1925. William Massey was born in Limavady in very humble circumstances in the year 1856. Crawford Square is named after two brothers, David and John Crawford, co-founders of the internationally known Parkersburg Rig and Reel Company of America.

In the early 1900's there was much blessing in our Province, as the result of the Nicholson campaigns. While it is true that the famous Rev. W.P. Nicholson did not have a mission in Limavady, others were also being used of God in those days, and many trace their conversion to those missions. In 1926 Limavady was a small rural market town, in the midst of a large farming area. We want to consider now how the Limavady Baptist Church came into being. Already there were disturbing trends in many of the established churches in and around Limavady. The beginnings of Modernism, the practice of unbiblical rites, and a failure to declare the whole counsel of God, were causes of unhappiness to many of those who had recently come to saving faith in Christ. The result of this trend in the churches led to the establishing of meetings in and around Limavady under the auspices of the Christian Workers' Union and Prayer Union. Most of the converts of those days would have attended these meetings, and it has to be said, that in them they found a warmth and fellowship that was sadly lacking in many of the churches. However these meetings made no provision for the observance of the ordinances of a New

Testament church, and consequently some of these people got together with a desire to form a Baptist Church in Limavady. They felt a great need for, and a desire to have the whole counsel of God expounded to them, and the opportunity to obey and observe the ordinances of the baptism of believers by immersion and to break bread in remembrance of Christ as He had commanded them to do.
One young man who played a very prominent part in the forming of the church in those days was Robert Warke. It was while he was training to be a solicitor that he came under conviction of sin and was gloriously saved. He was however to discover that his intended profession was to bring him into a crisis of conscience, and not long after his conversion he resigned his position in the office as he found that he could not do all of the things that were asked of him, and maintain fellowship with the Lord. Robert Warke was both an able and an enthusiastic preacher of the gospel; he conducted many missions in those days, sometimes in an old barn, and at other occasions he would use a tent. Prior to the actual formation of the church, Robert Warke had gone to the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow for training. It was on his return to Limavady that he souught out Pastor Freeman of Coleraine with the view to establishing a Baptist church and witness in Limavady. It was during these days that a number of folk were meeting in the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Dorrans, and this ultimately led to the formation of the church. On the 13th August in 1926 a small company gathered in that home and formed themselves into the Limavady Baptist Church. Sixteen people signed the Membership Book that evening, and the following were the original appointments. Robert Warke was asked to act as Elder of the fellowship while James Nicholl was to act as a Deacon and also Church Treasurer, William Morrison was also elected as a Deacon and Church Secretary, a position which he held for almost fifty years. Not long after the church had been formed the Orange Hall was booked for their meetings, and though they enjoyed a bit more space in this building, they were keen to have a place of their own. A hall previously used by the Salvation Army, but now used as

a garage by the local undertaker would have suited the church, so they approached Mr. Thorpe the owner with the intention of renting the hall; this however he declined, but said he would sell the hall to them for £300. The church just so recently formed did not have any money, but such was the desire to have a place of their own that they decided to buy the hall. To do this they had to borrow money; some came from the Baptist Union of Ireland, the rest from the Ulster Bank, where six men of the fellowship undertook to act as guarantors for the loan. Limavady and the surrounding area is strongly Presbyterian, as illustrated by the fact that of the original sixteen members of the Baptist Church at least twelve were Presbyterian. And it is to be noted that almost all the men had associations with farming, either as farmers in their own right or as farm labourers. The reaction of the town to the new Baptist Church was somewhat mixed; some it seemed could not care less, but those who had strong church loyalties made their opposition known in no uncertain manner. It would appear that some family links had been severed with various churches and this was not only an unpopular thing to do, but to some it was quite wrong. Such was the feeling in some cases, that those who joined the Baptist church found friends who accused them of "leaving their own church" and some would say that many years later this still had not been forgotten nor forgiven by family friends. How glad we should be that some were willing to stand for truth in those days, knowing "that to obey is better than sacrifice". The Sunday Services were held at 12.30 in the morning, this rather late hour by today's standards was no doubt to accommodate the farming community, and it must be remembered that if you lived six or seven miles from church, as many of them did, it would take quite a long time to cycle, or travel that distance by pony and trap. Today we find travel is not such a problem yet people still amble into church late, and some find difficulty in coming to both morning and evening services.

The evening service was at 6.30 and the time for the meeting has remained constant down through fifty years. The church soon began to make

itself known in those early days, and perhaps the most successful means of doing this was by open air meetings. If you can imagine a street full of farmers and their workers, no motor cars or buses to disturb or distract; a strong clear voice proclaiming "salvation by faith" could reach many an ear, and with the Spirit's blessing many a heart too. Such was the preaching of Robert Warke, who was mainly responsible for the preaching in the church and in its outreach efforts too. The church had a formal opening on Thursday, 9th December 1926. The chairman on this happy occasion was Pastor J.W.D. Freeman from Coleraine, who had been a great help to the church at Limavady in those early months. Pastor Freeman was much loved by the folk at Limavady; he was described by them as being "a big man with a big heart". Pastor Freeman really undertook pastoral oversight of the church until the appointment to the Pastorate of Robert Warke in 1929. One of the foundation members recalls an occasion when Pastor Freeman conducted a series of meetings in the church for one week, this entailed him travelling by bicycle each night 14 miles from Coleraine to Limavady, and another 14 miles home again when the meeting was over. At the end of the week he was given £1.00 for his help in the meetings! The speakers at the opening meeting of the church were Pastor Hodgett and Pastor Kerr. Fellowship with other Baptist Churches was not easy in those days because of the difficulty of travelling, and also the fact that the nearest churches to Limavady were Londonderry and Coleraine. The church at Londonderry was formed in 1898 and was some seventeen miles from Limavady, while the church in Coleraine, established away back in 1795 was fourteen miles away. In 1929 Robert Warke was appointed to the pastorate of the church in Limavady; this was actually a joint pastorate with the church at Kilrea. To help both as much as possible he preached in each church on alternate Sundays, and helped out with the mid-week meetings. It should be remembered that Kilrea is some nineteen miles from Limavady.

Robert Warke was undoubtedly a gifted preacher of the Word of God, a tireless worker in the service of His Saviour, whose ministry was richly blessed of God to both congregations in those days. It was the

controlling and moving energy of Robert Warke to live for God, to proclaim the good news of the gospel to men, and in this respect his efforts were used of God to help many in their pilgrimage towards heaven and home. It was a sad day for the church at Limavady, when in 1931 Robert Warke left to become the Pastor of the Phibsborough Church in Dublin.

The growth of the church in those early years was steady, if not spectacular. The number of meetings in the church increased, a Sunday School was begun, as was a Women's Missionary Auxiliary and one or two out-stations. The Sunday School though never very large, has in the more recent years proved itself to be very efficient as far as the Gribbon Shield is concerned having won it on four consecutive occasions from 1968-1971 and gained the shield a total of six times. It would appear that great difficulty was often encountered in the old church building which was originally heated by a large coal stove, as it was exceptionally difficult to control the temperature of a room heater of this type, so that on occasions it was very hot and at other times people complained of being cold. Electric light was installed in the church for the sum of £6, and later electric heating replaced the old coal stove, and this provided a more even temperature in the meetings. The folk who are able to go right back to those early years are unanimous in their opinion that the church then enjoyed a greater sense of fellowship, and a greater degree of loyalty than is the case in many churches today. As an illustration of the kind of loyalty enjoyed by the church in those days, one lady member cycled some seven miles to church, and seven miles back home again twice every Sunday, and that in all kinds of weather. It has to be confessed that such faithfulness is very scarce among God's people today. When the Golden Jubilee was held in 1976, the church was privileged to have still in its membership four foundation members, three men, each of whom hold the office of elder in the fellowship, and one woman; we regret to say that recently the sole surviving lady member

has gone to her reward in Heaven. The church was well served by its Pastors, and here we pause to reflect for a moment on the ministry of two former pastors. In 1934 Pastor W.H. Rea was sent to Limavady at a time when the church was small and had been discouraged by the sudden homecall of Pastor A.W. Ross who had been in the pastorate of the church for just under one year. During the eleven years of Pastor Rea's ministry the church was strengthened and a great deal of outreach was done in the surrounding districts; Pastor Rea conducted many Gospel Missions in those days, and the blessing of God was upon the effort in the signs following the preaching of the Word. When Pastor Rea left in 1945 to go to Cookstown he could look back on eleven years of service rendered to the Lord with a sense of achievement, and of praise to the mercy and faithfulness of God. In 1946 Robert Martin came to take up the pastorate of the church, though only a young man in his late 'teens', he was an ardent student of the scriptures, and a very able expositor of the Word. It was during the days of Pastor Martin's ministry that it became evident that a new church building was required, the size of the congregation having now outgrown the old church building. In the late 1960's the Housing Executive first published their plans to re-develop completely the area in which the church was situated. After much consultation and numerous meetings, the church was finally offered the choice of two sites. One of these was almost immediately ruled out as it ran alongside an entertainment hall, which had a seven day licence in operation. The other site was then accepted by the church and on it the present church building now stands. The building of the new church was entrusted to Messrs. David McKeown of Ballymena, who were engaged by the Housing Executive in building houses in that re-development area.

Unfortunately, not long after work had begun on the church building the firm got into financial difficulties, and building work ceased for a while. The task of completing the church was then undertaken by a local builder, Mr. Thomas Callaghan and it is the

opinion of all who have seen the church that a really splendid piece of work was done. There was the usual last minute rush to have everything ready for the opening ceremony. But just two days before the church was due to open, the carpet for the floor unfortunately was "strike bound" in a container in Belfast Docks. After some hurried negotiations and the invaluable assistance of a local businessman, the carpet finally arrived in Limavady on the top of a load of meal, late on Thursday evening, it was laid on Friday and we were ready for opening.

The church was opened on Saturday, 14th October, 1972. A short service was held outside, and in this service the four remaining foundation members were able to take part. Mr. Morrison conducted the service and recalled the mercy and goodness of God down through the last fifty years. Mr. Forsythe read the Scriptures, while Mr. Nicholl led us in prayer for the blessing of God to rest upon the work and witness of the church. It was the privilege of the late Mrs. Irwin to declare the church building open. At the subsequent capacity meeting inside the new building Mr. Kenneth McCluskey, President of the Baptist Union of Ireland for 1972-3 acted as chairman. Greetings were brought by many others with long and valued association with the work in Limavady.

The new building cost in excess of £37,000; this sounded a lot in 1972, but it is remarkably cheap in comparison with the highly inflated prices of new church buildings today. The outstanding debt on the building was all cleared within a year of opening. We give thanks to the great generosity of God's people, and the faithfulness of our God to us in all things.

Our story and our song is surely this - "To God be the glory great things He hath done". Our hope and expectation is from Him "who knows no change" but whose "mercies are new every morning". May the church be able to declare itself as the apostle Paul did so long ago, "Having obtained help of God I continue unto this day witnessing to both great and small..."

J.K. McBRATNEY.

Recollections of the Willoughy brothers

About 100 years ago the Willoughby family lived near Tinahely, Co. Wicklow. Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby had nine children, eight boys and one girl. They were brought up in the Church of Ireland. George, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, became Chief Superintendent of the Metropolitan Police. John graduated M.B. in 1927, and served in a Wesleyan Mission Hospital in China. James and Charles, graduates of Trinity, became Baptist Ministers, and the Irish Baptist Historical Society, considered it fitting that something of their life and work should be placed on record.

It is now 27 years since Charles, after an illness of more than 9 years, passed from this earthly scene on the 25th February 1950, to be "at home with the Lord". His brother James, 4 or 5 years older than Charles, outlived him by about 6 years.

JAMES WILLOUGHBY

After graduation JAMES held pastorates in Lower Gardner Street, Dublin, for a short time, then in Kingstown. He served the Irish Baptist College first as Student-tutor, and became Principal in the year 1912, when war clouds were darkening the horizon and there was much tension and apprehension in European countries. In 1914 the first World War shattered the peace of Europe, and made normal life difficult. James Willoughby continued as Principal until 1916. He later accepted a call to a church in England, and ministered there for a short time. When the Strict Baptist Bible Institute was founded in 1923 he was invited to become the first Principal, and played an

important part in drawing up the doctrinal basis of the Institute, and the rules for its conduct. He accepted this new responsibility as a call from God. To quote his own words:-

> *"In about 1921 a strong impulse caused me to refresh my memory on subjects taught by me many years before. I did not know why until a little later, when the Principalship of the S.B.B.I. was offered to me. The impulse had been from God."*

He was a strong advocate of the need to provide training for those who desired to become better equipped for pastoral responsibilities. After serving as Principal for 15 or 16 years, he wrote:-

> *"The Institute is very necessary, and there is no difference in principle between reading say 'Hodge's Outlines' therein, and reading 'Philpot's Sermons' in one's home, nor is there any difference in principle between studying English in the Institute in order to preach in proper English to English people, and in studying Chinese elsewhere in order to preach in proper Chinese to the Chinese."*

Since the later years of his ministry, until his retirement in 1938, were spent amongst Strict Baptists in England, he was not so well-known in Irish Baptist circles. However, from the many references to his life and work, we are assured that he was a man of sterling Christian character and strong convictions. One of the first students in the Institute was George E.J. Bird, who visited our Assembly meetings in May 1974, and whose ministry was greatly appreciated. We quote his words:-

> *"It is no exaggeration, but only the simple truth, to say that our Principal, James Willoughby, was a man of beautiful character and lovable personality. There was nothing in the least sanctimonious about him, anything in the form of religiosity was foreign to his nature. He was human, genial, humorous, with*

his genuine goodness always shining through, and a sincerity that was as transparent as the day. He had strong convictions, which he was fearless in proclaiming. One remembers with gratitude his strength and his simplicity, his real greatness, and not least his unconquerable modesty."

Eleven years ago a number of Strict Baptist pastors came to our Pastors' Conference held in Bangor in March. On that occasion we had the privilege of entertaining Pastor J.E. Hoad (London) for the week-end in Portadown. His ministry at the Sunday Services was greatly appreciated. He knew James Willoughby, and gave me to understand that he exercised a helpful modernating influence upon the attitude and outlook of Strict Baptists in England.

On retirement Mr. Willoughby returned to Ireland, where he spent the last eighteen years of his life. While remaining true to his Strict Baptist principles he had much wider sympathies, and was ever willing to minister to others when invited to do so. After his death a fine tribute appeared in The Protestant (official organ of the Evangelical Protestant Society). It was headed "A Standard-Bearer in Israel". We quote part of this tribute:-

"Rev. Principal James Willoughby, M.A., ... an earnest Christian, and a staunch Protestant, often wrote in our columns, and was greatly interested in our work .... He always displayed a broad Christian charity, which was consistent with his principles and beliefs. He preached for different denominations, especially where the doctrines of grace were cherished, and old and young alike rejoiced in the sweetness and earnestness of his expository preaching ....

Mr. Willoughby was a robust Calvinist, and rejoiced in the theology of Calvin, Knox, and the English Reformers....

His piety and zeal are still before us, and we thank God for the memory of a man so gracious, noble, and loyal as James Willoughby."

Pastor Minnis Mills knew Mr. Willoughby more intimately than most, especially during the last years of his life, and I asked him to give his impressions of him as a man and 'a servant of Jesus Christ'. We are indebted to him for the following:-

"Principal Willoughby worshipped in Orangefield Baptist Church for a period of 8 to 10 years. He regularly occupied the pulpit, but never joined us in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper. As a Strict Baptist this would have been to him a compromise of his principles. He was a strong Calvinist, but not hyper. He loved and preached the doctrines of grace, including a definite atonement. When we sang Charles Wesley's hymn 'Arise my soul arise, shake off thy guilty fears' I observed he never sang the line 'His blood atoned for all our race'. He revelled in preaching the uniqueness of the person of Christ. He magnified not only the person of Christ, but also the work of Christ. He loved to speak of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. One of his favourite quotations was

'If Thou hast my discharge procured
and freely in my place endured
the whole of wrath divine,
Payment God will not twice demand,
First at my bleeding surety's hand
and then again at mine.'

When preaching he stood erect, with feet apart and both arms by his sides. The only movement was his mouth, and occasionally his eyelids. His collar was several sizes too big, and his boots lightly laced. This, he said, gave him a relaxed feeling. One got the impression that here was a preacher more concerned about the truth he was proclaiming than his

personal appearance.
He was strict in his observance of the Lord's Day. He told me that during 50 years preaching in all parts of Britain he never found it necessary to use public transport on Sunday.
His public prayers were impressive. In most reverent tones he always began his prayers with the words 'Almighty and ever-living God'. I never heard him use these words without an immediate sense of the greatness and presence of God. He was a man who lived much at the throne of grace.
Visiting him in hospital after major surgery at 82 years of age, I ventured to suggest that he must find the day long and tiresome. 'Not so,' he replied, 'for many years I have prayed daily for about 150 people, now I lie here and try to remember as many as I can, and pray for them.'
He was a man who greatly feared the Lord. God was never less to him than the most high God. Although a man of wit and humour I never heard him speak an irreverent word - such would have been out of keeping with his whole demeanour.
He loved to be out of doors. He celebrated his 80th birthday by walking from his home to Bangor and back - a distance of 25 miles. He knew all the hills and mountains around the city, he tramped over them many times. If the weather was good he would walk to Newtownards and back home on Tuesday evenings.
Loving to be out of doors, he preached out of doors. He had a number of sermons consisting of Scripture only. These were very impressive to hear. In the Castlereagh area he would arrive at a road junction, take his stand, place his hat at his feet, and proceed to deliver his Bible sermon. In the late evening he

could be seen outside Dunmore Park waiting for the end of the dog racing. As the crowd rushed out of the park, he would take his stand and recite the 10 commandments. He would continue until the park was empty.

He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit. He was a most gracious man. It was said of C.H. Spurgeon that he never advertised his greatness but he could not hide his grace. So it was with James Willoughby. He was a man of true humility. He used the great gifts God had given him, but never set them up for display.

During his last illness it was my privilege to be at his bedside many times. Never once did I hear a word of complaint. To faith and zeal and humility he added patience. One evening he said to me 'I wonder what it will be like at the end?' He then quoted the entire hymn:-

'Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing;
But oh, the joy when I shall wake
Within the palace of the King.'

He entered the palace, and saw the King on 8th September 1956, aged 87."

Mr. Willoughby's attitude to the Lord's Day as the Christian Sabbath was well known. Mr. Mills has referred to this by recalling that during the years when he had to travel extensively he never used public transport on Sundays. One story illustrates how conscientious he was in subjecting every part of life to the beliefs he held. I have known the story for some time, but had almost decided not to mention it in this talk as I could not have it authenticated. However, Pastor James Armstrong told me recently that he had the story from Mr. Willoughby himself. He was in the act of shaving late one Saturday night when he heard the clock striking the midnight hour. Apparently something had

gone wrong with his watch, and it was nearer the Lord's Day than he realised. Although he had only one side of his face shaved, when the clock struck twelve he immediately "downed tools". And on the Lord's Day he appeared in public with one side like Jacob and the other side like Esau.

CHARLES WILLOUGHBY

CHARLES WILLOUGHBY became Pastor of Waterford Church in 1907, and, for the next 33 years until his last illness, served the denomination in pastoral work and on various committees. He was, therefore, much better known in Irish Baptist circles than his older brother James. He was appointed Chairman of the Southern Baptist Association, and, after coming to Belfast, he served as Chairman of the Belfast and District Baptist Council. He was a member of the Baptist Union of Ireland Executive Committee. In the year 1923-24 he was honoured by the Denomination electing him to the Presidential Chair of the Baptist Union of Ireland.

After his early schooldays Charles Willoughby entered business. It appears to have been about this time that he came to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. This led later to a change of plans for his future. He began to witness to others, and to take some part in various meetings. He was brought up in the Church of Ireland but became attracted to the Wesleyan Methodists, and later became convinced that baptism in the New Testament meant the immersion of believers - those who exercised a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Accordingly he made application, and was baptised in Harcourt Street Baptist Church. Soon after taking this important step he became a Baptist, and entered the Irish Baptist College, then located in Dublin. These student days must have been packed with many hours of hard work. In addition to his theological studies he served the Waterford Church as Pastor, and, for full measure, he studied in connection with Trinity College, Dublin, graduating with B.A. in 1908. Two years later he was awarded M.A.

After serving for a brief period in Athlone Church he accepted a call to the pastorate of Mountpottinger Baptist Church, Belfast, in 1913. This ministry continued for 27 years until 1940, when in the inscrutable wisdom of God his public earthly ministry was brought to an end by an illness of more than nine years.

Pastor Willoughby became a well-known figure amongst the people of Belfast. Not only was he a frequent visitor in the homes of his congregation as he sought to be faithful in his pastoral care, but he was an assiduous worker in the interests of his Master in every situation. He had the facility for making contact with complete strangers, often witnessing for his Lord to fellow-passengers in tramcars or on the streets.

On one occasion two girls met Mr. Willoughby about the junction of Holywood Road and Newtownards Road - the old Holywood Arches. They were going to a meeting where they were expected to take some part, and, feeling rather nervous, they asked the Pastor to think of them in prayer. He readily agreed, took off his hat, and in his sonorous voice commenced to pray for the two sisters. As the streets were thronged with people passing to and fro, the girls, who told the story to Pastor M. Mills, felt somewhat embarrassed. But he believed in the lines of William Cowper's hymn: "Jesus where'er Thy people meet; There they behold Thy mercy seat. Where'er they seek Thee, Thou art found, And every place is hallowed ground." Perhaps the girls would have preferred if the words of the Lord Jesus had been taken quite literally: "When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father." However, those who knew Mr. Willoughby could never imagine that this spontaneous on-the-spot exercise was motivated by the desire to be seen of men - the ostentation that marred the religious exercises of some Pharisees, and of which the Lord warned His disciples. All the spiritual blessing he enjoyed during his years of ministry he readily attributed to the sovereign grace of God. Because of his sense of utter dependence upon God's free grace, the secret place of prayer and communion with God was given priority as he planned his day. It has been said of

him that he spent on an average two hours every day in private prayer.

It was in the year 1923 that Mr. Willoughby gave his Presidential Address in Harcourt Street Baptist Church, Dublin. The subject he chose was "Godly Fellowship", and something of his own character and outlook finds expression here. He reminded his hearers that Godly fellowship involved the fellowship of believers with God and with one another. These two aspects of fellowship are closely related, and must be fostered by earnest prayer and continual Bible study.

In the early twenties many of our Churches were rejoicing in the remarkable awakening associated with the evangelism of Rev. W.P. Nicholson. It is not surprising that the Presidential message made reference to this gracious movement of the Holy Spirit, and contained an exhortation intended for the whole denomination. Here is an extract:-

> *"We should have a warm heart for the Lord's children, and each assembly should be united together in loving harmonious fellowship. We are living in days of marvellous opportunity. Thousands recently professed to trust Christ as Saviour, and young people are watching our lives. Let us tell them of Christ and His boundless love, of His glorious Gospel, of His two blessed ordinances, of His precepts and example, second coming and millenial reign. But let us also be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."*

This address also gives an impression of evangelistic fervour that was faithful in sounding a note of solemn warning concerning the eternal consequences of continued impenitence:-

> *"We who are saved from an awful hell, and bound for endless glory, ought to be the happiest and most attractive people on earth .... Our opportunities for fellowship here in leading souls to Christ and edifying saints will soon be over .... Is one here unsaved? Don't wait any longer. Trust now in the*

atoning merits of the blood of Christ and be saved."

Mr. John Young was connected with Mountpottinger Tabernacle in the early years of his life, and he remembers with gratitude the gracious and helpful influence that Mr. Willoughby exercised in teaching and leading him and many other young people in the ways of the Lord. We are indebted to Mr. Young for supplying the following:-

"Charles Willoughby was known in East Belfast well beyond the vicinity of his Church in Templemore Avenue as a gracious Christian Minister, whose life was consistent with his preaching.
He was generous with both his purse and his pulpit. He gave unstintingly to the poor of the district.
Sunday for him was the Christian Sabbath, and he kept it carefully.
His encouragement and example led members of his Church to follow him in Bible reading and in devotion to his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
I understand that during this earlier years at the "Tab" he held classes in Greek and in homiletics for young men of the Church, some of whom became Pastors, Missionaries, and Christian workers.
When inviting sinners to come to Christ for salvation he sometimes used the phrase "Caid Mille Failte" - Irish for "a hundred thousand welcomes". His smile was itself a welcome to both young and old.
During his pastorate, particularly in the middle thirties, the Church seemed to be almost on the verge of revival, when the work in the Sunday

School, among the young people, and the more senior members made its greatest impact."

The Rt. Hon. Sir Ivan Neill, P.C.,D.L.,B.Sc.Econ.,F.R.G.S. had first hand knowledge of "the earlier years" to which Mr. John Young refers, and we are grateful to him for writing to fill in the following details. He expressed his interest in this meeting and regrets that he was unable to attend. He says that the subject for discussion brings back memories of two fine Christian gentlemen.

"In the mid 1920's, when Pastor Charles Willoughby was Pastor of the Mountpottinger Tabernacle, East Belfast, like many other centres, was still under the influence of the Revival blessing attending the ministry of Rev. W.P. Nicholson. Pastor Willoughby was one of those Christian ministers who were anxious to preserve the fruit of the Nicholson campaigns. I recall how active he was in helping with the many Tent missions which were a feature of Evangelical witness in those days, when there was an abundance of budding local preachers. He saw the need for a helping hand and some sound pastoral advice for the young men whose enthusiasm often outran their ability and experience.

My particular recollection is in connection with his effort to help a group of us who were interested in Christian witness, and some who were interested in training for the Ministry. In 1924 and 1925 he organised a class which met in the Mountpottinger Y.M.C.A., to teach New Testament Greek. He started us off with Grammar from H.P.V. Nunn's textbook, and although we did not reach the stage of being able to read the Testament in the original Greek, we got a good grounding in Grammar and Vocabulary.

For some it was the starting point for training for the ministry.

The group included: R.W. Kerr, Herbert Hunter and Thos. McClure all from the Grove Baptist Church, and all of whom later entered the Baptist Ministry; W.P. Rankin from 'the Tabernacle', who also entered the ministry; Thomas Beattie and myself, who were then members of Bloomfield Baptist Church; and Frank Scott from the Iron Mission Hall. There were others whose names I have forgotten.

Pastor Willoughby's kindly character influenced us as much as his scholarly prowess, and I should like to go on record with my tribute to a Natural Gentleman, a Charming Friend, and an outstanding Christian Minister."

Mr. Young has mentioned that Pastor Willoughby was well-known far beyond his own Church connection, and exercised a gracious influence with young people. He was an ardent 'Endeavourer' and had a flourishing C.E. Society in the Church. He was President of the Irish Christian Endeavour Union in the year 1923-1924. The following tribute to his life and work appeared in the January 1924 issue of <u>The Irish Endeavourer:-</u>

"Pastor Willoughby possesses all the Southern Irishman's natural geniality of disposition, and this, added to a deep spirituality and graciousness of temperament, has made him a brother greatly beloved by all who are privileged to enjoy his acquaintance and friendship .... He has a heart big enough to find room for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth; convictions strong enough to keep him thoroughly loyal to his own denomination; and a spirit magnanimous enough to offer the hospitality of his pulpit to every preacher who comes along with the story of Jesus

and His love .... He is thoroughly sympathetic with young people's interests and aspirations, especially when these run in the direction of the highest things, and, in consequence, is always very much at home in meetings where young life predominates.

Pastor Willoughby is a familiar figure in East Belfast and further afield, and he leads an exceptionally busy life, for, in addition to the oversight of his own large congregation, he serves on many committees in connection with the Baptist Church and other bodies."

Thirteen years later Mr. Willoughby was honoured again by the Endeavour Movement, when he was appointed President of the East Belfast Union. The following acknowledgment of his ability and faithfulness appeared in the March 1937 issue of The Irish Endeavourer:

"During his year of office our President attended every meeting of the Executive Committee and conducted the business with the maximum of efficiency and good humour, being always ready to speak appreciatively of the work done by the various members of the Committee. He has a fund of good stories and is never at a loss to find one suitable to any occasion. Our President makes an ideal Chairman at a public meeting, and all the rallies at which he has presided have been pervaded by his genial personality.

Pastor Willoughby is the third President of the East Belfast Union, which was formed in 1934, and is the first President to have the honour of wearing the beautiful chain of office presented to the Union by Mr. F.W. Browne."

Mr. Willoughby remained a bachelor until 1938, when he was married in his own Church to Miss Mary S. Gilliland - an earnest Christian who

had been serving in The British and Foreign Bible Society office. She gave herself wholeheartedly to the work in Mountpottinger Tabernacle, and was a great help to her husband. The wedding day was marked by such an interest that Templemore Avenue was thronged with people anxious to catch a glimpse of the happy couple, and by their very presence express their good wishes for the days ahead.

Little did the people who shared in the excitement of that occasion realise that two or three years later the Pastor, so well-known in Mountpottinger area, would have to retire from active service because of a trying illness, which lasted for more than nine years. On the 25th February 1950 Charles Willoughby rested from his labours, and "his works follow him."

COMMENT BY PASTOR WEIR:

As we study the lives of those who have lived and laboured in the service of God and His Kingdom, we may learn lessons "for our admonition" and "for our instruction". The hope that inspired them, the faith that sustained them, and the devotion that characterised them should be to us a challenge and an inspiration. It may be equally instructive to note any mistakes they may have made, or any prejudice or bias that may have hindered them from realising their full potential, and limited the effectiveness and extent of their service. We may be warned of similar tendencies in our own character.

I would, therefore, mention another matter that may contain a salutory lesson concerning our attitude toward others "who follow not us" (Luke 9:49) - some who undoubtedly love and serve the same Lord Jesus.

Pastor Mills has told us that Principal James Willoughby worshipped in Orangefield Baptist Church for eight to ten years, and often engaged in public ministry; and yet he would not participate in the fellowship of the Lord's Supper. He would have considered

this to be compromising his Strict Baptist principles.

Mr. Torrens (Lurgan) told me that, when in England, he was in touch with Strict Baptists, who found it very hard to believe that any of their Pastors would have fellowship with our Churches in Ireland.

In more recent years there has been on the part of some a relaxation of these very strict attitudes. As Irish Baptists we have much in common with our Strict Baptist friends in England, and we were glad to welcome a number of their Pastors when they accepted an invitation to join us in our annual Pastors' Conference. As they preached in our Churches, and entered into fellowship with us, we believe that this proved mutually beneficial. But one of their number said to me that this would not have been possible ten years earlier. We do not know if there were any who were unhappy about this changing attitude, but surely it marked a real advance.

Separation from evil and "damnable heresies" (2 Peter 2:1) is called for, but we should beware lest our zeal in this direction degenerates into an exclusivism that would erect unnecessary barriers between brethren. The Apostle Paul was concerned about the divisions that had developed in the Church at Corinth. The opening salutation in his letter to them is significant, as suggesting a largeness of sympathy and brotherly love toward "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2).

There may be situations when it is difficult to determine the attitude or action that is both Christ-like and consistent with continual loyalty to "the faith that God has once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). I suppose it is generally accepted that one must endeavour to maintain "a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9) - a "conscience clear before God and man" (Acts 24:16). In this connection one may be "Strict" with one's own life and conduct. However, Paul reminded the Church at Corinth of the necessity to have due regard for "the other man's conscience" (1 Cor. 10:29). It is

possible to injure our own conscience by compromising the principles we consider to be essential, but if we try to impose our strictures upon others it is possible also to wound their conscience, and thus "sin against Christ" (1 Cor. 8:12). We may grieve the Holy Spirit and dishonour the Lord who prayed for the oneness of His people, if we allow our scruples to mar fellowship and become a cause of division between those who should "live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic and love as brothers" (1 Peter 3:8).

If we become over-zealous in "passing judgment on disputable matters" (Rom. 14:1 NIV) we may, almost unwittingly, develop an attitude that presumes to sit in judgment on others who do not share our opinions, even when their soundness concerning the essentials of the Faith is not in question. Such an attitude is roundly condemned by the question Rom. 14:4 "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea he shall be holden up for God is able to make him stand."
.... God hath received ... (Rom. 14:3) "Wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Rom. 15:7).

We may feel obliged to avoid any association with evil that would involve guilt on our part. Surely we must also feel obliged to avoid the guilt of passing judgment upon those whom God has received by reckoning them unworthy of fellowship.

WILLIAM WEIR

A survey of the efforts of 'The Troubles' on Irish Baptist Churches

In 1975, the Irish Baptist Historical Society initiated a survey of all Irish Baptist Churches to determine the effects of the current civil unrest on church life. An interim report on the survey appeared in Volume 8 (1975-76) of the Society's journal. This discussed the objectives of the survey, the questionnaire design, and problems encountered in the course of the project. The present paper seeks to present the findings of the completed survey.

The preliminary report indicated that copies of the questionnaire were sent to all secretaries of the 85 churches affiliated to the Baptist Union of Ireland, at the end of August 1975. By the end of November 1975, 46 churches had replied. A second letter produced a further 13 replies. Further letters were sent to Pastors and Church Secretaries in 1976 and an additional 19 replies were obtained. In total, 78 of the 85 churches responded in some form, a 91.8% response rate which, though not complete, means that the results herein are based on a very high sample. It should be noted however, that in some cases not all the questions were answered, so in some instances in this report the figures quoted do not sum to 78, as might be expected.

The survey data was supplemented by the church membership figures for 1968 and 1975, as published in the 1969 and 1976 Assembly Handbooks. The analysis was performed using SP55 (Nie, Bent and Hull, 1970), a computer package for the analysis of social surveys. Discussion of the results will follow the layout of the questionnaire, looking first at background information on the churches, then at the physical effects of the troubles, the effects on church organisation and the effects on spiritual life. This will be followed by a discussion of patterns and trends in the response.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE CHURCHES:

Of the 85 churches in the Union in 1975, 7 were in the Republic of Ireland, the remainder in Northern Ireland churches. 44 were in cities or large towns, 34 in rural areas. Two churches did not provide membership statistics for 1975, the remaining 83 churches had a total membership of 7,253, and an average church size of 87.4 members. In 1968 there were 77 churches in the Union, with a total membership of 6,924, and an average church size of 89.9. Thus in the first 7 years of the troubles, 8 new churches were formed (including one in the Republic), and total membership rose by 329, or 4.8 per cent. The slight decrease in average church size during the period is due to the formation of the new churches, which have small memberships and also to the decline in membership experienced by some of the larger churches (in 1968 the largest church had 521 members, in 1975 the largest church had 493 members).

Information was provided on the religious composition of the church's immediate neighbourhood, in 1968 and 1975. This is summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1: RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION OF THE CHURCH'S IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

		1968		1975	
		No. of Churches	Percentage	No. of Churches	Percentage
0 - 25%	Protestant	7	9.1	9	11.7
26 - 50%	Protestant	7	9.1	6	7.8
51 - 75%	Protestant	19	24.7	21	27.3
76 -100%	Protestant	44	57.1	41	53.2
		77	100.0	77	100.0

Of the churches in areas which are less than 25 per cent Protestant, 5 in 1968 and 6 in 1975 were in the Republic (one Southern Church did not return a questionnaire). It can be seen therefore, that the vast majority of Northern churches are in areas which are strongly Protestant. Only 9 Northern churches in 1975 were in areas which were less than 50 per cent Protestant. It is not surprising to find Protestant churches in Protestant areas, but does this bias in the distribution of our churches mean that our evangelism has had little impact on Catholics, and has this in any way contributed to the development of the troubles? The majority of the churches experienced no change in the religious composition of their area from 1968 to 1975. However, 3 churches were in areas which became more Protestant, and 9 were in areas which became more Catholic.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF THE TROUBLES:

Just over two-thirds of the churches, 58, experienced no damage to church property due to the troubles. But 17 churches (20 per cent) had been damaged by explosions, 1 had been subjected to malicious attack, 1 to breaking and entering and 1 to damage from explosion

and malicious attacks. Of these 20 churches, 9 experienced damage which could be termed 'slight' (broken windows and other superficial damage), 8 experienced moderate damage, while 3 experienced severe damage (structural damage). The total cost of this damage was £23,442, an average of £1,172 per damaged church. The maximum damage to a church cost £8,000. Thus while most churches have experienced no damage to their property, some have experienced severe and repeated damage.

Most churches have had their congregations entirely free from physical harm. However 5 churches have had a member killed, and 1 church has had an adherent killed. Of these deaths, 3 were the result of shooting, 3 resulted from bombings. Nine churches have had a member injured in some way, 3 churches have had an adherent injured, and 1 church has had 3 members injured. Of these injuries, 8 were due to explosions, 4 were due to shootings, and 3 due to assaults. It should also be noted that churches have experienced deaths and injuries due to the troubles which occurred after they returned the questionnaire.

The other physical effect of the troubles considered was the movement of members. The total number of churches affected in this way was small, as shown in Table 2, and the number of persons involved was also quite small, 109 in all. One church had 24 members

TABLE 2: NUMBERS OF CHURCHES EXPERIENCING MOVEMENTS OF MEMBERS OR ADHERENTS DUE TO THE TROUBLES.

	To other parts of N. Ireland	To other parts of United Kingdom	To places outside United Kingdom
Churches with members moving	6	7	6
Churches with Adherents moving	4	3	1

or adherents who moved, the remaining churches in Table 2 had small numbers of persons moving due to the troubles. While some churches lost members due to the troubles, others gained. 9 churches reported a total of 30 members who had moved and joined their congregations, 6 churches reported a total of 30 adherents who had joined their congregations. Some pattern in this movement is discernible: of those 12 churches loosing members or adherents due to the troubles, 8 were in inner Belfast or close to a troubled area, while of the 10 churches gaining, 8 were in suburban Belfast or towns in the surrounding area. It should be noted that the motivation for a family moving is usually complex, with no single influence being responsible. It seems probable that for some families, the troubles were not the main reason for moving, but were a contributary factor, and it is doubtful if all these moves were recorded in the survey. However a significant number of moves have been recorded, and these reveal a distinct pattern of movement.

EFFECTS ON CHURCH ORGANISATION:

A total of 14 churches indicated that their attendances had been affected by the troubles: 5 had experienced increases, while 9 had experienced decreases. Of the churches whose attendances had been increased, 3 were in suburban Belfast, 1 was in a provincial town, and 1 surprisingly was in a troubled area, although this increase was in a youth organisation and not in Sunday Services. Of the 9 churches whose attendances had been decreased by the troubles, 7 were in inner Belfast or troubled areas of the city, and 1 was in a small town with a Republican element in the population. The other church affected was in the Republic, where it was noted that since 1968 summer congregations had been seriously depleted by the decline in holiday-makers from the North.

Considering the impact of the troubles on various church activities,

only 1 church had experienced a decline in Sunday morning services, this church being in a very troubled area. Four churches noted a decline in Sunday evening services, 2 by as much as 50 persons. Two churches reported an increase in Sunday evening services due to the troubles. Decline was also noted in 2 Sunday School and 1 mid-week activity, while increase was noted in 1 uniformed youth organisation. In response to the troubles, 6 churches changed their meeting times, 5 in Belfast and 1 in County Londonderry.

Nine churches reported a total of 19 members who had been motivated by the troubles to become involved in social work, only two churches reported members involved in official or unofficial peace movements. This seems surprising in view of the widespread impact of the troubles on society in Northern Ireland; and this may indicate that Irish Baptists have not realized the full social implications of the Gospel. Involvement in the security forces is much more widespread. Only 28 churches (including 6 in the Republic) had no members or adherents in the security forces. The remaining 50 churches had 149 persons in Police, Army or UDR.

EFFECTS ON SPIRITUAL LIFE:

The effects of the troubles on spiritual life are impossible to measure, but the questionnaire sought the opinion of the respondents as to what these effects were. Table 3 shows the responses obtained in answer to the question 'What effect do you think the troubles have had on the readiness of people in the area of the church to listen to the gospel?' From this it would appear that

TABLE 3: THE EFFECT OF THE TROUBLES ON THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA OF THE CHURCH.

	Number of Churches	Percentage
A considerable hardening against the gospel	4	5.2
A slight hardening against the gospel	4	5.2
No effect	45	58.4
Slightly more readiness to listen	22	28.6
Considerably more readiness to listen	2	2.6
	77	100.0

that in almost 60 per cent of churches, the troubles had no effect, in 30 per cent there was a greater readiness to listen, while in only 10 per cent was there a hardening against the Gospel.

Respondents were also asked to comment on the effect of the troubles on the spiritual lives of their church members: 58 churches indicated that there was no effect, 10 replied that they had been stimulated to increase their prayer, while other positive responses included 'a deepened fellowship', 'a turning to the Bible', and 'a better response from Roman Catholics'. Three churches indicated that their members were confused, 3 others indicated a general adverse effect, while another indicated depression amongst the members. It is difficult to see any pattern in the answers, with churches in troubled areas indicating both favourable and unfavourable effects. What is perhaps more noteworthy is the fact that three-quarters of the churches indicated that the troubles have had no effect on the spiritual lives of their members. While we can praise God that there has been no adverse effect in so many churches, at the same time it seems strange that traumatic events can occur over a seven year period and leave

people spiritually unaffected. Can it be that we have lost our sensitivity to the need of people all around us, and that we live ostrich-fashion, hiding from the responsibility of getting to grips with the issues involved? Surely the events of recent years should have had a much greater effect on our spiritual perceptions and attitudes?

THE EFFECT OF CHANGE IN THE RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF A CHURCH

It has already been noted that 3 churches were in areas which became more Protestant, and 9 churches were in areas which became more Catholic. Have these churches been subjected to more violence and damage, and has this change in the church's neighbourhood had any effects on the life and work of the church? From the responses to the questionnaire, it is clear that these churches have not been especially subject to damage to property, to death or injury of the membership, or to membership change due to the troubles, but have suffered these happenings in much the same measure as the rest of the churches. Some effects are however observable. Of the 9 churches in areas which had become more Catholic, 3 reported a decrease in attendance, and churches in areas which had change were also more likely to have changed meeting times. It is interesting to note that 3 (25 per cent) of the 12 churches in these 'areas of change' had members involved in social work, compared with 6 (9 per cent) of the 65 churches in 'areas of no change'. In the areas which had become more Catholic, 5 churches noted a greater readiness to listen to the Gospel, and 2 noted a beneficial spiritual effect amongst their members. Similar consequences were not noted in 'areas of no change' or areas which had become more Protestant.

PATTERNS OF CHURCH GROWTH AND DECLINE:

The data on church membership obtained from the Assembly Handbooks for 1969 and 1976 provided a useful insight into patterns of church growth and decline. A 'Church Growth Index' was calculated, which enabled the growth of each church over the period 1968 to 1975 to be assessed taking into account its size and the average rate of church growth during the period.(1) The churches were then ranked in growth order, and grouped into 4 classes(2): rapidly growing churches, growing churches, churches with near-average growth rates, and declining churches. This ranking and classification is presented in Table 4. Care must be observed in the interpretation of this table, to ensure that misleading deductions are not made. It should be noted, for example, that no account is taken of the age of churches, yet it is perhaps to be expected that the history of a church will show a 'youthful' phase of numerical growth, followed by a 'mature' stage of comparative numerical stability. (In some cases there may even be an 'old age' stage of declining numbers if the area of the church begins to decline). It should also be noted that while general trends may be evident in the table, circumstances unique to a church may radically affect its ranking, for example, the presence or absence of a pastor, or a split in the membership over a specific issue.

However, with these caveats in mind, some general observations can be made based on Table 4. Of the 85 churches in the Union, 24 (28.2 per cent) are in Belfast. Of the 23 churches classed as declining, 12 (52.2 per cent) are in Belfast, and in fact 50.0 per cent of the churches in Belfast are classed as declining. Only 1 of the 8 new churches was in Belfast. If the declining Belfast churches are considered, it can be seen that they are mainly in older, inner city areas. Growth, on the other hand, would seem to be taking place in the Belfast suburbs and the area immediately surrounding Belfast, and growth centres such as Antrim, Craigavon, Larne and Bangor. It seems that a pattern has developed of decline in inner Belfast, and growth in the Greater Belfast region. This pattern merely mirrors the general

trend in population movement in Northern Ireland in recent years: the population within the old Belfast County Borough has declined as people have moved outwards to the suburbs and surrounding towns. This form of population movement is to be found in most Western cities today and is not unique to Belfast.

TABLE 4: A CLASSIFICATION OF CHURCHES BASED ON GROWTH RATES FROM 1968 TO 1975.

Rapidly Growing Churches

1. Portstewart
2. Gilnahirk
3. Rosemary Park
4. Enniskillen

Growing Churches

5. Omagh
6. Monkstown
7. Downpatrick
8. Larne
9. Coagh
9. Waterford
11. Ballyclare
12. Lisburn

Churches with near-average growth

13. Dungannon
13. Glengormley
15. Lurgan
16. Newtownbreda
17. Dunseverick
18. Poyntzpass
19. Cookstown
20. Carryduff
21. Limerick
22. Knockconny
23. Orangefield
24. Phibsborough
25. Newtownards
26. Killyleagh
26. Magherafelt
28. Ballynahinch
28. Grosvenor Road
30. Carndaisy
31. Newcastle
32. Kilkeel
33. Coleraine
34. Finaghy

Average growth

35. Kilrea
36. Holywood
37. Comber
38. Brannockstown
39. Hamilton Road
40. Thomas Street
41. Milltown
42. Lisnagleer
43. Ballymena

TABLE 4 Continued ....

Churches with near-average growth

44. Dromore
45. Grange
46. Grove
46. Haypark Avenue
46. Stonepark
49. Banbridge
49. Tobermore
51. Ballykeel
52. Limavady
53. Church St. East

Declining Churches

54. Castlereagh
54. Shankill
54. Carrickfergus
57. Windsor
57. Rathcoole
59. Armagh
59. Strandtown
59. Clough
62. Mountpottinger
63. Antrim Road
64. Bloomfield
65. Ballygomartin
66. Gt. Victoria St.
67. Gortmerron
68. Cliftonpark Avenue
69. Tandragee
70. Londonderry
71. Dundonald
72. Bellaghy
73. East End
74. Cork
75. Killicomaine
76. Warrenpoint

New Churches

Antrim
Carr
Central Craigavon
Grace, Dublin
Newry
Portrush
Rathfriland
Tullycarnet

NOTE: It was not possible to calculate a Growth Index for the 8 new churches, or for Bethel for whom no 1975 membership figure was available.

There is, however, a contribution to this movement by the troubles, which have had a sustained expression in inner Belfast. This is illustrated by Table 5, which summarises the movements of members and adherents caused by the troubles. While the average numbers per

TABLE 5: MOVEMENTS DUE TO THE TROUBLES, BY CHURCH GROWTH CATEGORIES, IN TERMS OF AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS MOVING PER CHURCH.

	Members Leaving	Adherents Leaving	Members Joining	Adherents Joining
Declining	2.5	0.7	0.3	0.1
Near-average growth	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.3
Growing	0.3	0.0	0.9	1.7
Rapidly growing	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.3

church are small, there is a clear trend: members and adherents are leaving the declining churches due to the troubles, and joining the growing churches outside Belfast. The survey also revealed that in some ways the declining churches were experiencing a greater impact from the troubles. While the declining churches did not appear to have had a greater incidence of damage to property or injury to persons, there was evidence of an impact on church activity. Thirty per cent of the declining churches indicated that there had been a decrease in attendances due to the troubles, and 5 of the 6 churches who had had to change meeting times were in the declining category. There was, however, no discernible difference between declining churches and others in terms of the spiritual impact of the troubles.

CONCLUSIONS:

The main finding of the survey would seem to be that the troubles have had little or no effect on the vast majority of Irish Baptist

churches, and the pattern of church growth and decline which has developed is explicable largely in terms of normal population movements. Despite the troubles, for most churches life seems to have continued as normal, and the churches overall have sustained a modest growth. For a few churches, the effects of the troubles have been very serious, with damage to property, injury and death. Almost a quarter of the churches experienced some physical impact from the troubles, and effects were even noted in a Southern church whose holiday congregations were diminished.

The reaction of the churches to the troubles must surely provide most food for thought. While we can thank God for the protection He has given the churches, is it not strange that there appears to be so little response in people's hearts and lives to such continued civil distrubance? Few have been motivated to social action, few to spiritual action. Replies indicated little evidence of self-examination, repentance, fasting or intercession. Spiritually, the troubles seem to have had very little overall effect. If this survey accomplished nothing else, may it at least encourage us to consider how churches should react to traumatic social events. It is always difficult to look objectively at events as they happen. Perhaps this survey, and the material which it has gathered and archived with the Irish Baptist Historical Society, will help those who in years to come may wish to look more objectively on this important period in the history of our churches.

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NOTES:

1. In calculating the Church Growth Index, the growth rate was first calculated for each church, as follows:

$$Ri = \frac{M75i - M68i}{M68i}$$

where Ri is the growth rate of the ith church for the period 1968-1975

M75i is the membership of the ith church in 1975

M68i is the membership of the ith church in 1968

This growth rate was then converted into a Z - score, as follows:

$$Zi = \frac{Ri - \bar{R}}{\zeta}$$

where Zi is the Z - score (or Church Growth Index) of the ith church,

$\bar{R}$ is the mean growth rate for the churches

ζ is the standard deviation of the growth rate

The Z - score scale has the proportion of mean zero and standard deviation unity. Positive Z - scores mean that church growth is above average, negative Z - scores mean that church growth is below average, and the greater the deviation above or below zero, the greater the deviation from average church growth.

2. The Z - score scale was divided in our groups as follows:

$-1.5 \leq z < -0.5$	:	Declining churches
$-0.5 \leq z < 0.5$	:	Churches with near-average growth rates
$0.5 \leq z < 1.5$	:	Growing Churches
$1.5 \leq z$	:	Rapidly growing churches