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IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

VOLUME THIRTEEN 1980/81

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

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EDITORIAL

This is the last edition of the Journal for which I personally shall be responsible, since my resignation takes effect from December 31st, 1981. May I take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the Society's meetings and to the Journal over the last few years. May I also wish my successor (whoever he or she may be) every blessing.

We have also said farewell to our treasurer, Mr. Trevor Lyttle, and the Society is grateful for all the work he has done. We are looking for replacements for both myself and Mr. Lyttle, so we are open to suggestions or (even better) volunteers.

The papers published in this issue were given at four of the Society's meetings in 1980. One other paper was given, Mr. E. Arnold's paper on the history of the Ballymena Church, which will appear in another form.

We are encouraged by the increasing membership of the Society and we look forward to new members and new contributions in the future. Those who have undertaken some research into Irish Baptist history have been surprised to how much there is of interest and challenge in our past. Much more research needs to be done, particularly on the less well-documented periods of our history. Prospective post-graduate research students would have a fairly clear field in which to work!

M. DOWLING
Hon. Secretary

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The Story of the Post - Alexander Carson Period in Tobermore

As we attempt to make a record of the events which followed upon the unexpected and tragic death of Dr. Alexander Carson in August, 1844, we find signs of much confusion and unrest in the church he served so well. There is, unfortunately, very little documented evidence to go on but what we have makes sorry reading. It is the old story of a church being held together by the personality of a much loved leader. When once he is taken, hidden and suppressed rivalries spring to light, differences in doctrinal positions become apparent, controversies arise which are most grieving and very often result in divisions some of which can never be healed.

Such alarming symptoms were not long showing themselves in the life of the Tobermore Church after the good Doctor's demise. The arrangements for the financial support of their late Pastor were of a very free and easy nature. All his life he depended upon the income of his own farm on which he himself regularly laboured for the support of his wife and his thirteen children. He received on an average £25 or £30 per year from the church, and although at times more was promised yet it never was forthcoming. His outgoings, on the other hand, were reckoned to be about £200 annually. The principles of a paid ministry and an adequately paid ministry were at the heart of the division in the church when it contemplated a successor to the loved man who had gone.

Doctor Carson had two sons whose preaching talents were recognised. One, George Ledlie Carson, his parents' second son, was born in 1803 and died at the early age of 35. One of his sisters pointedly records, and I quote, 'He was educated for the medical profession; his parents thought this advisable, as at that time there was no opening whatever

in Ireland for Baptist Ministers. If they could not support themselves by some other calling they must starve'. Having completed his medical training he returned home to practise in Coleraine. Here for some years before his death he officiated as honorary pastor of the Baptist church there. Both at Coleraine and at Tobermore his preaching seems to have been much appreciated. This son predeceased his father by some six years, and thus did not enter into the picture of the Tobermore succession.

It was different for another son, Robert Haldane. He was destined to fill the pulpit his father occupied for the long period of almost fifty years, with a brief break around 1847 to 1850 which he spent in Scotland as a Baptist Pastor in Perth. The circumstances of his call are preserved for us in a pamphlet published as a reply to another entitled 'Christian Liberty' or 'Reasons for Withdrawing from Worship in the Meeting House Occupied by the late Doctor Carson of Tobermore'. Incidentally, the publication of these pamphlets shows how bitter were the feelings and how deep were the divisions in the church at the time.

So that we might get some idea of what was going on them it would be necessary to quote at length from the pamphlet mentioned above. And I quote, 'Immediately after the death of our late highly esteemed and much loved Pastor which occurred on the 24th August, 1844, the whole church, as far as we have ever ascertained, looked to his son, brother R.H. Carson, to fill his place among us. This feeling being so generally expressed to many and particularly to brother William McConway that the latter thought of at once proposing that the church should give him an invitation to that effect. Previously, however, to his making any public proposition of this kind he judged it prudent to submit the matter to some of the brethren. Accordingly on the second Sabbath after Doctor Carson's decease he met a few of them in the retiring room to whom he made known his intention. All, with the exception of one or two, at first seemed pleased, until one of them, the principal leader in the

'withdrawal' movement, proposed a postponement of the invitation for some time for reasons to the following effect:-

> that they did not know whether they could raise sufficient support for a pastor which brother Carson would doubtless expect;
> that it would be well for brother Carson to exercise his gifts for a little to evince more clearly the Scriptural qualifications, and that the church had now an opportunity which it should not at once give up of showing the world that it could exist and conduct all its affairs without a pastor.

Here can be seen a Brethrenistic element in the church exerting itself to the overthrow of vital principles regarding the ministry which are commonly held amongst Baptists.

Mr. Carson was duly informed that it was the wish of a few members that he should preach on trial. To this the pamphlet declares (and I quote) 'Mr. Carson replied that while there was no church he would prefer to the one at Tobermore, yet as he was not then seeking employment as a pastor anywhere, nor did he intend doing so for a considerable time owing to delicacy of health, he did not think himself called on to submit to a trial for that purpose. He stated further that he did not think that the brethren should require a formal trial from one who had been reared in the congregation, was a teacher in the Sabbath School two years, a member of the church six years, the superintendent of the Sabbath School five years and an occasional president and preacher in the church two years. He considered that they had here sufficient means of judging whether or not he possessed the scriptural qualifications and that as some of them appeared to question his possession of them he would not hazard a rejection which might be effected by a single captious individual'.

In passing it is interesting to note that at that time the Tobermore Church clung to the necessity of having an unanimous decision of the members before any resolution could become effective. How wonderful

if church business could be carried out in this ideal fashion.

But the events we are now recalling show how foolish and impractical such a line can be. Surely this makes it possible for individuals out of touch with the Spirit of God to block what the Spirit is leading the majority to do. This results in minority rule and obstructionism of the worst kind.

As a result of Mr. Carson's refusal to consider a call along the lines suggested to him anxiety about the pulpit vacancy increased throughout the congregation and a further move was made to give him an invitation in terms he might be more inclined to accept. The matter was therefore put before the church once again. Objections continued to be raised by some to the following effect:-

> that Mr. Carson should labour among us as his brother, the late Surgeon Carson, had done in the church at Coleraine, that is, for nothing; and that if he proved himself as his brother did worthy of a little assistance, it might be afterwards given him.
> That Mr. Carson had not yet an opportunity of manifesting the qualification, 'given to hospitality', as he had only just now become the head of a house'.

It was agreed to proceed with caution and prayer, and finally the church agreed, with the necessary unanimity, to the sending of a formal invitation to him, the erstwhile objectors justified their previous attitude explaining that they reluctantly allowed the call to go through in the hope that all the scriptural qualifications might ultimately be developed in their new pastor. These dissenters, as they continued to be in heart, got little thanks for forgoing their supposed sincerely held principles and objections, being accused of inconsistency when later they changed their stance once again. Soon after receiving this call Mr. Carson was detained in Coleraine laid low by serious illness. His reply to the invitation may suggest that at Coleraine he took the opportunity to think out some aspects of a ministry which would begin amid certain clouds at Tobermore. In accepting the invitation he penned

the following interesting and illuminating reply:-

> 'My dear brethren in the Lord, I have received with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain your invitation to take the place occupied by my late beloved father among you. I am pleased to find that you are unanimous in wishing for a pastor and also in judging me qualified to become one, but grieved at the recollection of the departure from earth of that revered and much loved parent, who from the first moment of your organisation as a church was your overseer in the Lord. My feelings, however, both of a pleasant and painful nature, I shall endeavour to subdue that I may be the better able to reply to your communication. The exercise of the pastoral office in which you invite me to engage among you is a matter requiring the most serious consideration. To accede rashly to your wishes might perhaps result in great personal disadvantage as well as materially injure the cause with which you are connected. Previously to my entering into the pastoral relationship with you it is necessary that I should be thoroughly satisfied on two points; first, whether I should in Christian prudence venture to labour in that part of the Lord's vineyard which has hitherto been so highly cultivated, and secondly, whether in the event of my doing so I would be adequately supported by you'.

R.H. Carson goes on at great length to enlarge on the two vital matters he here raises, rather it should be said, to expatiate on the latter issue more particularly. He naturally suggests that it would be very difficult for him to instruct a congregation that had been so well served by their late distinguished pastor, as he calls him. The matter of remuneration seems to be the real point at issue. 'Having consulted the different members of my family', he says, 'who have each a separate establishment to support, I have ascertained that less than £100 a year would not be at all sufficient'. He proceeds to enquire if they would be prepared to rise to this amount. He goes on to say, 'From a calculation which I have made I find that, were each of you, supposing your number to be 350 (and this I imagine is below the real number) to contribute 2 pence a week, it would amount to £151.13s.4d, a year, which is one-third more than the sum above stated; so that, if one-third

paid nothing the remaining two would amount to £101.2s.3d. From another calculation it appears that if each of you paid three halfpence it would make £113.15s.0d. by the year, that is £13.15s. more than the proposed sum'. He declares that he puts the matter in this light to let them see he is not asking more than they are well able to give. Just listen to this, and I quote, 'That church', he writes, 'must be poor beyond all degree the members of which could not on an average contribute individually three halfpence a week towards the support of a pastor. Many persons', he goes on to say, 'in the lowest and poorest ranks of life spend four times as much on whiskey, tobacco and snuff. How few attend a weekly market or fair without taking a glass of whiskey and perhaps giving one to a friend, which together will cost 4 pence. The majority of those who use tobacco expend not less than 6d. a week in obtaining that pernicious weed', etc., etc. He continues thus in this vein suggesting that his expectation does not exceed what might be earned by tuition in a private family or public seminary where the duties would not be half so arduous. He hints that if he sought a pastorate in England or in America he would place himself in most confortable worldly circumstances. He concludes this part of his argument, 'The different members of my family are well acquainted with the matter and on whose judgment therefore I rely with the utmost confidence think the above would be an exceedingly limited support even in a country district. They, however, are disposed to think with me that, provided you cheerfully give it, thus evincing your attachment to me, and provided I have confidence in your being always satisfied with my teaching, etc., for I very much fear that no living man will please you, it would then become my duty to sacrifice to your spiritual advantage and the good of the cause with which you are connected'.

The remainder of the letter, this most remarkable acceptance of a call, draws the church's attention to the danger of not supporting the pastor liberally, suggesting that if failing they would risk further chastisement, a reference no doubt to a letter of rebuke sent to the church

by a friend of Dr. Carson named Buchanan of Omagh, of which more anon.

The duty of the church to share sacrifice with its pastor is also argued. He berates the church for its failure to fulfil its promise to make a specified increase to his late father's salary, and declares that even with the increase the salary would not have educated one of his children, not to speak of the thirteen which he had. The epistle concludes with an assurance of his sincere love for them and his desire that God may bless them all.

There is every evidence that the above letter hardened divisions in the church rather than healing them. To meet the challenge it was decided to leave a list of subscribers in a convenient place for increases to be marked. A number of members, however, began to question the scripturalness of having such a list of all. These members were blamed for drawing up a letter in the following terms, and having it rushed through a Sunday morning church meeting without notice, and subsequently dispatching it to Mr. Carson. It is dated 3rd November 1844, and reads thus:

'Dear and beloved brother,

> We received your reply to become our pastor in the room of your late and beloved father, and while we esteem you not only as a brother but also as the son of him to whom we as a church are under such deep obligation, yet we deeply regret the unscriptural manner in which you demand a support from us. The Scriptures instruct us to support those who labour over us in word and doctrine according to the ability which God giveth, and if some are ignorant of their duty in this respect we have a right to teach them, but not lord over their conscience more than in any other ordinance of the Lord's appointment. The Scriptures nowhere bind us to a certain sum and if the Lord has left this open we should not bind ourselves. Therefore seeing that there is such a difference of opinion between us in this matter we are under the necessity of withdrawing our invitation to you to become our pastor, as we feel persuaded that there could not exist that harmony and peace that should subsist between pastor and people, as both our situations would be rendered uncomfortable.

> Finally, though we are urged from supreme regard to the Word to take this step yet we esteem not only you but also the remotest branch of the family of our late and much lamented pastor, while our prayer to the Most High is that the Lord may make you abundantly useful in whatever part of the Redeemer's Kingdom He may please to call you.
>
> From the church at Tobermore'.

Subsequent to the receipt by Mr. Carson of this letter it appears that great distress was shown by a majority of the membersof the church. Many disowned the letter and assured him that they would publicly disown it at the church on the next Sabbath day. The Sabbath came and at the conclusion of the worship Mr. Carson enquired if the letter had been adopted by the church unanimously. It is recorded that the great body of the church stood up and with uplifted hands solemnly disowned it. It looked as if there was going to be some unseemly disorder in the meeting from Mr. Carson observing that he never expected such treatment from persons who were so deeply indebted to his departed father, and if they did not do him justice he would justify himself to the world. He proposed, therefore, that the church should disperse and that those who disowned the letter should during the following week append their signatures to a paper to this effect. This resulted in the collection of some two-hundred-and-eight names. As can be expected, despite the argument that the so-called withdrawal of the call was not based upon a unanimous decision of the church, all accepting the principle that no church should act except by the unanimous decision of the members, the bitter controversy continued. A number of attempts were made at reconciliation. A final attempt produced the following declaration:

> 'We, the undersigned members of the Church of Christ at Tobermore do hereby solemnly declare that the agreement between brother Robert H. Carson and the principally dissatisfied brethren in reference to their respective letters was to the following effect and no other, that is, that while neither party is required to renounce either his or their views, yet for the sake of the church's peace that both withdraw their letters, thus confirming the invitation originally given and reopening

> the way for subscriptions to be promised towards the support of a pastor. This agreement we further solemnly declare was appointed to be told to the church on the following Sabbath after it was entered into, not for the purpose of receiving confirmation but that the church might know the happy arrangement, namely that brother Carson and the dissatisfied persons present were perfectly reconciled'.

This statement was signed by fifteen of the brethren. It was duly read to the church by one of the former dissenting brethren whose remarks are recorded as being exceedingly appropriate. Alas for the high hopes of that Sabbath day! Mr. Carson left for a visit to Dublin, and the dissatisfaction began to make itself felt once more. One person went so far as to remark that the appointment of a single pastor was a sin; one should not be appointed till a plurality could be obtained. It is apparent from this unrest that there was a small section of the church led by about eight very vocal brethren which had strange views about the nature of the pastoral office and its support. These were, as so often happens, really beyond reconciling themselves to the views of the majority. Any quietness in the life of the church which the above agreement secured was very superficial and of a temporary nature.

When Mr. Carson came back from Dublin he entered upon his labours as the pastor of the church, assuming that the storm had died down. How mistaken he was! In the month of January, 1845, he was detained by business in Coleraine over two weekends. During the second weekend's absence he sent the pastor of the Coleraine church, Dr. Eccles, to take his place at Tobermore. Some of the dissidents objected to his presence and it was with much reluctance and after he had suffered some abuse he was able to minister the Word. On Mr. Carson's return he was subjected to the same treatment, and was so upset he was unable to preach, but recovered sufficiently to be able to preside at the Lord's Table. The record at this juncture becomes heart-rending, and whether it should be given publicity is debatable. The following is an extract taken from the pamphlet quoted so often above, which in the absence of that published by the dissidents we trust may not be considered an unduly

biassed account. And I quote:

'The next Lord's day passed in peace, but it was only the calm which precedes the storm. The leaders of the withdrawal party occupied the week in preparing for another and still more dreadful attack on the coming Sabbath. One of them observed to brother William Donnelly that they had appointed a brother to officiate and would not permit Mr. Carson. Brother Donnelly remonstrated with him against the madness of such a course, but it was all of no avail; he was determined to proceed to the last extreme. Accordingly he mustered his forces and retired with them into the little room prepared for the accommodation of our late much loved pastor, and there awaited Mr. Carson's arrival. Mr. Carson came, but finding the room occupied by those helpers in his work of faith and labour of love, he was proceeding to mount the pulpit stairs when their hard-hearted leader stopped him and asked him if they might read him a paper they had drawn up. He refused, was pressed, and refused again, recollecting what he had suffered the last time they summoned him in the same place. And being previously advised by many brethren not to listen to them unless they showed a disposition for peace. Although thus repulsed in their first attempt they were not altogether routed. In a few minutes one of the dissentients went to Mr. Carson and read to him over the pulpit door the following resolutions which, with the observation of the other dissentient to brother William Donnelly, amounted to this: that Mr. Carson should leave his father's pulpit, although unanimously invited to it, that his place might be occupied by the person they had appointed, and I quote now these resolutions:

'First, that as the church at Tobermore is without a pastor and some difference has arisen as to the propriety of inviting Mr. Robert Carson to that office, and as he presided last Lord's Day and brother McConway on the previous Sabbath some other brother be invited to preside today; that should brother Robert Carson object to this proposal the church will withdraw for the sake of peace and on condition that a statement of the whole case and the whole correspondence be published as a testimony to the truth of Jesus and the ordinances of His Church; that if any other interruption be offered to the church worshipping in quietness and choosing its own elder or president for the time during which the church is without a pastor appeal be made to Mr. Henry, the landlord, and the meeting house placed under his care, and that until the time of Mr. Henry's

decision respecting the meeting house, the church will assemble for worship at Mr. William Nelson's, Tobermore.

The above resolutions meet with our entire approval.

9th February, 1845'.

This document is signed by eight of the withdrawal party.

The writers of the pamphlet from which the above is quoted comment rather caustically on the conduct of the eight named as 'withdrawal'. They are charged with ignoring that a week previously a pastor had already been properly called, and of looking at themselves as being the church or without warrant speaking for the church. The pamphleteer goes on to say that after listening to these resolutions Mr. Carson felt exceedingly ill and was for a moment disposed to leave for good. One of his ardent supporters is said to have found him leaning against the back of the pulpit like one paralysed. He encouraged him not to give in saying, 'Go on, in the name of God, I will pray for you, and the Lord will help you'. Whereupon he agreed to make the attempt. The congregation was made aware of the resolutions during the course of the service. At its conclusion a stormy scene developed. It was suggested that for quietness' sake, the matters in dispute should not be further discussed until the following Sabbath. The troublemakers dissented and finally declared that they would meet as 'the church' at another place in Tobermore.

An so came to a head a controversy concerning the pastoral office which possibly had its beginnings during the ministry of Alexander Carson. The question may indeed be asked if the support the good Doctor received from his little farm harmed the sense of responsibility which the church should have had, or on the other hand was it the failure of the church in this respect which necessitated his need for support from other quarters. It looks as if the latter is the case. Some light is possibly thrown upon this as we quote at length from a letter written to the church following Dr. Carson's death, and referred to above. It came from a James Buchanan who had served as British Consul in New York for many

years, and who, having come to reside in Omagh, ministered to a company of believers there and held many things we would associate with the Brethren movement. On certain matters, however, it is clear that he would differ from the Brethren as we know them, and he writes to the 'church of God assembling at Tobermore' on 22nd September, 1844, from the Isle of Wight, as follows:

'My beloved brethren in Christ,

Participating in the bereavement and afflicting chastisement the Lord has been pleased to dispense in the removal of your deservedly beloved pastor, while to him it was gain yet the manner dispensed is among the many mysterious dealings of God with His chosen ones, as your fellow disciple of the Lord Jesus in the fear of Jehovah and from love to your souls, I exhort you as a church of the living God how you may improve this heavy affliction; and in humility of mind, would submit for your consideration, if not already attended to, that as a church you come together with fasting and prayer, and in humiliation of soul, with earnest supplication to our heavenly Father, that you may, by examination of yourselves, as a church professing obedience in all things enjoined by the Lord and His apostles, discover wherein you have come short in your duty, as afflictions spring, not of the dust, while "many are the afflications of the righteous", and seeing wherein you have departed or have been deficient in your duties, to repent and reform wherein you have sinned, as a church so highly favoured as you have been by the teaching of your departed and devoted pastor, in your becoming followers of the church of God which in Judaea were in Christ Jesus.

You, therefore, my brethren, cannot plead ignorance, like many disciples of Christ, who are united in churches as babes having only the capacity for milk, but the church at Tobermore may be compared to Chorazim and Bethsaida in consequence of the mighty truths and teaching dealt there on every Lord's day, so that the mercy which may be extended to other churches on account of ignorance, such you cannot plead. And I pray God the condemnation of Chorazim and Bethsaida may not be applicable to the church at Tobermore.

Forgive my saying this visitation is not to be viewed as the world views events as "accidental". No! my brethren, He that guards the fall of a sparrow directed the event we all mourn; which calls loudly on you and all who hear it for examination, and for you specially to see why, thus visited, I repeat it, as a

> church thus dealt with by your heavenly Father, you are without excuse before God unless you search out the cause. The inquiry, pardon my suggestion, should be, has this chastisement arisen to punish your or your departed pastor? You certainly are the sufferers by the bereavement, and thus far there is evidence to show that strict examination as to all your duties is called for by the event, but particularly as such related to your duty to him, so as to see have you been careful that he who ministered the gospel of the grace of God among you so liberally and dispensed spiritual food for you and your children so bountifully and freely, that he, with the same zeal on your part, as his labours for your souls should call forth, received from you temporal food for himself and his children'.

And the letter goes on at great length in similar strain.

From this extract it is easy to see that Buchanan at least had some idea of the lack of a sense of responsibility and the niggardliness of the church when it came to the matter of pastoral support. The farm from which Mr. Carson derived the greater part of his income appears to have been handed down to his son, and the church evidently expected the old arrangement to continue. R.H. Carson, however, was not a robust man and suffered from recurring ill health, which made him less able than his father to carry on agricultural pursuits.

Having covered in some detail the tragic events surrounding the Carson succession we come to a period of some five or six years of which no record has yet been discovered. During these years Mr. Carson left Tobermore for Perth, which is mentioned earlier in this narrative. He returned to his home in Tobermore in 1850 due to ill health. There is some documentation covering his ministry from that time onwards; but what happened to the secession?

There existed near the lower end of the village, until it was demolished a few years after World War II to make room for the housing development know as Edmundcourt, a modest two-storey slated building. The ground floor of this building was used as a dwelling and workshop by the local cooper. The upper floor was a meeting hall used by the local Plymouth Brethren assemblies for occasional Gospel services. It

came to light some years ago when it was being acquired to provide a site for modern dwellings that it was held in trust by members of a local Brethren Assembly for the 'Second Baptist Church, Tobermore'. This disclosure encouraged enquiries concerning its function to be made among the oldest members of the present church. It was remembered by one old lady as 'Lorimer's Hall', where she had at one time gone to Sunday School. It is of interest to note that in some of the old copies of the Irish Baptist magazine mention is made of the preaching activities of a certain Pastor Lorimer, a man in good standing in the denomination. Can we deduce anything from these fragments? Surely it is not stretching the imagination too far to come to the conclusion that the seceders carried on some kind of a brethrenistic Baptist witness for a number of years.

We may reasonably assume, as is often the case, that some later drifted back into the Carson fold, whilst others continued their course toward Brethrenism and its so-called 'unpaid ministry'. They possibly became the first of the 'Brethren' in South Derry, the forerunners of the various assemblies in existence today.

But what of Mr. Carson's church and ministry? Our sources for this part of our story is the volume known to us as 'the old Tobermore Book'. It is in safe keeping in the offices of the Baptist Union of Ireland at 3 Fitzwilliam Street, Belfast. It consists largely of letters from the church to the Baptist Irish Society in London, records of certain cases of discipline involving members of the church and a roll of church members. The cases of discipline make interesting reading and reveal much of the ideas and methods of church life in the nineteenth century.

We are, however, more concerned with the history of the period of this present record. The financial position due to the notorious potato famine likely caused Mr. Carson to remove to Perth after a very brief pastorate at Tobermore. Correspondence between the church and the Baptist Irish Society of London reveals reduced circumstances on the part of the

church. Membership had dropped from 250 to 130. This decrease is blamed upon a number of factors. Not only emigration and deaths but many had quit the church, some to join other bodies and some had lapsed completely. The church saw itself as 'sheep having no shepherd' meeting in a building that would seat 700 to 800 people. The purpose of the correspondence is to plead for help from London to support Mr. Carson once again. He had left Perth on account of ill-health, had come back to Ireland and was in receipt of a unanimous call from the church. The church by now had a greater appreciation of its financial responsibility, deploring that it could offer a pastor competent support. Mr. Carson's acceptance of the call was dependent upon means being provided 'in any way'. A reply from the Baptist Irish Society dated 13th July, 1849, asked for greater detail re the amount of assistance expected, and suggesting further that an approach be made to the Drapers' Company Charity, the English landlords of a great part of the surrounding area, to see if they would be prepared to help. A letter to the Baptist Irish Society dated 30th August, 1849, informs them that the church could only expect to raise £25 that year for the support of their pastor, and leaves the Society to deduce from that the amount of grant required.

The upshot of the correspondence carried on between the church and the bodies to which they appealed for assistance was recommendation from the local representative of the Drapers' Charity to his superiors which does not appear to have produced any concrete result. The Baptists of London could only offer a grant of £25. This Mr. Carson deemed to be disappointing and insufficient, but declared himself willing to remain as pastor for the remainder of that year on a temporary basis

The annual letter to the London friends for 1850 speaks of numbers being still further depleted. A more cheerful noteemerges in the letter of the following year, which contained yet another plea for help to enable their pastor to settle with them permanently, or as the letter puts it, 'giving himself for life to the work'. 'During the past year', the

letter runs, 'he had to give much time to agricultural pursuits in direct opposition to his natural tastes and detrimental to study and visitation'. They used their pastor's diligence as an argument for an increase in the grant from the Society. The reply to their plea was very discouraging. The folk in London had incurred debts themselves and had to retrench and so could offer no further help to the friends at Tobermore. This darkest hour heralded the dawn. During the course of the 1850's rapid progress is reported, spiritually, numerically and also financially. Things began to look up. There were, in addition to the work in Tobermore itself, several preaching stations. Surprisingly, from today's point of view, the most prosperous was at Draperstown, where up to 230 persons attended the preaching of the Word. The marked improvement in the church's affairs can also be judged by the fact that from around 1854 contributions began to be made towards the work of the Baptist Irish Society. No suggestion is made that these were the church's part of any whole amount coming from London as a pastor's salary.

The Tobermore church, and indeed the whole district, was caught up in the Revival of 1859. The prostrations and startling conversions associated with this movement affected the life of the church tremendously; many, very many, were added to its membership, and those responsible for the work of God were thrilled because of what was being experienced. More able pens than mine have placed on record the happenings through the Province in those apparently happy but far off days. It comes therefore as a shock that the results of the Revival were not an unmixed blessing. The great influx of members in a time of spiritual euphoria created many problems in a year or two's time. Discipline had to be exercised again and again. Quite a number were excluded altogether from the fellowship of the church. Indeed in one of his annual letters to London R.H. Carson questions whether the awakening of '59 was really a blessing at all. This opinion is a startling one and would need to be weighed up carefully against all we have heard of the fruit that remained

after the wondrous events of that year of grace.

From that time until Mr. Carson's retirement in 1894 things pursued an uneventful course; Bible Class and Sunday School were established, but there seems to have been no regular Sunday evening services. Towards the end of his ministry, which lasted for the round 45 years, the roof of the meeting house was in need of drastic repair. It was then decided to launch an appeal for funds to erect a new building as a memorial to the founder of the work, Dr. Alexander Carson. The matter was taken up with enthusiasm; subscriptions came in from all over Ireland as well as from England and America. The new premises cost, as far as can be ascertained, around £1,400. A great deal of the basic work, clearing the site, etc., was done by voluntary labour. The stone was brought from a quarry on a member's farm and the whole building erected by local craftsmen. Mr. Carson had the satisfaction of seeing the task accomplished before giving up his pastoral care. Thus came to an end this very important and lengthy period of the church's history. Unfortunately, the retirement of Mr. Carson led to the severance of any further connection with, or real interest in the work at Tobermore on the part of his family. It is said that they had hoped that his successor would be the Rev. John D. Gilmore of Dublin, who was a son-in-law. As it happened, the church's thinking was greatly influenced at that time by a very leading and gifted member, Surgeon Colonel Robert Waters of Whitefort. The Colonel had just retired from service in India and was home in time to devote his untiring energies to gather funds for, and to oversee the erection of the new chapel. Under his leadership the Rev. George Marshall of Banbridge was invited to come as pastor. Mr. Marshall, a godly man, accepted and remained for some fifteen years. He was the first occupant of the fine new manse which also had been built largely as a result of the enthusiastic leadership of Colonel Waters. Pastor Marshall was succeeded by the Rev. Mr. Brown who stayed for about five years. He was followed by the Rev. David Henderson who left after four years for the Great Victoria Street Church in Belfast. His ministry covered the period of World War I and he drew

the sum of £100 per year for his services. He was succeeded by a Mr. Maxwell, who remained only for some two years, and was in turn followed by the Rev. George McKillen whose very fruitful and popular ministry lasted from 1921 to 1931. This was cut short by his untimely death at the early age of 40 years. Mr. McKillen's ministry covered the period of the spiritual quickening which was known in Ulster during the 1920's. He was a most energetic worker and as a result of his labours he saw churches established in Magherafelt and Coagh and re-established in Carndaisy. Coming up to the present time Pastor William Weir's pastorate extended from 1932 until 1938, when the writer of this account of Tobermore affairs began a ministry which was to last, in the goodness of God, for a full forty years; and it is hoped that the above record may contribute something to the story of Baptist work in Ulster, where unfortunately there has been an almost total lack of interest in denominational tradition.

This paper was prepared by Robert Boggs and delivered at the meeting of the Irish Baptist Historical Society in Belfast on Thursday evening 27th March, 1980.

Recollections of John Ravey

Every time I read John 1:6 I am reminded of the spring of the year 1925, when John Ravey was inducted as pastor of the small, young, but enthusiastic Baptist Church at Newtownards. The words of that text formed the basis of a never-to-be-forgotten challenge from Pastor Alexander Jardine of Grove to the young church and its first pastor, because there was sent a man from God (and a man of God), John Ravey.

There had been a small Baptist witness in Newtownards in Victorian times and the name of their Pastor was John Douglas who had been in charge of an earlier church in Portadown. I can recall discovering an old memorial stone in the ancient cemetery at Seagoe telling that it marked the resting place of a child of the Rev. John Douglas, Baptist Minister of Portadown. This good man later went south where he 'finished his course'.

The Newtownards church, as we now know it, was formed in 1923 by a group composed mainly of young converts. We had the benefit of having one or two older and mature brethren who had already been baptised and whose wise counsel proved invaluable.

Twenty-two of us were baptised in Hamilton Road Church, Bangor, by Pastor David Burrows. Very soon we felt the force of opposition and for a time we felt also a sense of isolation and uncertainty as to what to do and where to go.

The church began in the Orange Hall when over 100 gathered to hear Pastor Burrows setting forth New Testament teaching on the order, constitution and government of a local church. Not all of these formed the nucleus of the local church; the original group numbered nineteen

For the first two years we were helped and encouraged by the ministry of Pastor Burrows, Shields, Jardine, Ruddock and Hodge, all of whom have long since joined the 'Church triumphant'. We were also well served by members of the Belfast and District Local Preachers Association - a most valuable group - men like W.G. Frizelle and J.F. Pepper. I can recall special occasions when we had stirring ministry from men like Pastor Freeman of Coleraine, whose message on 'multiplied and multiplying machinery' caused quite a spate of correspondence in the local newspaper. His theme was really the conviction that there is no substitute for the local church of the New Testament. We had men of evangelistic fervour like Pastor George McKillen of Tobermore, Samuel Carser of Belfast, Albert Clark of Bloomfield, Jack Atkinson of East End, Arnold Bennet and Jim Messenger (both English men). During Jim Messenger's mission many professed faith in Christ and linked up in the local church. He was introduced to us by Pastor J.W.S. Fraser of Shankill, himself fervently evangelistic.

Now one fine-looking big man came to help us when we met in very cramped conditions in the Good Templars Hall. From the very first we were impressed not just by his appearance but by his clear-cut, straightforward, deeply spiritual ministry. He was John Ravey.

Mr. Ravey was a Belfast man whose family was associated with Mountpottinger Tabernacle during Pastor A. Jardine's great ministry there when congregations of working people were so large that the building had to be enlarged by the addition of copious transepts. After his conversion and baptism he became involved in the Tabernacle. He joined the choir and soon showed a keen aptitude in the study of the Scriptures and like hundreds of others profited much through the ministry of his Pastor. He often referred to the enriching preaching that left an indelible impression upon his life. Much of his earlier life was spent in the world famous shipyard of Harland and Wolff, where his father was employed, and where he met and mingled with many kindred spirits. These men met at lunchtime

for Bible Study and prayer, and many were fitted for public service for Christ who were tutored beneath the gantries of East Belfast. Mr. Ravey used to tell of a group travelling from Bangor to their work in Belfast, engaging in prayerful Bible Study in the old Belfast and County Down Railway Company's railway carriages. Some of them made their mark in the realm of evangelism and Bible teaching. His efficiency as a workman and a leader was soon recognised when he was promoted as foreman in the painting department, where he was highly respected as a Christian gentleman.

Two events in his early life brought much grief to the Ravey family and made a deep impression on John. His father met with a tragic death at the shipyard and his brother, Willie, fell at the battle of the Somme on 1st July, 1916, when the flower of Ulster's manhood died in that fearful but heroic battle.

Mr. Ravey married one of the choir members in the Tabernacle, Miss Jeannie Neilson, niece of Mr. Peter Ewing, a highly esteemed Baptist elder. The Ravey family were among the group that formed the Baptist Free Church in 1914, now the Grove church, where they were enthusiastic workers. John and his wife went to live in Bangor and on 1st September, 1918, were received into membership in Hamilton Road Church on letter of transfer from 'Grove Hall Baptist Church', receiving the right hand of fellowship from Pastor Samuel Ruddock. On 1st June, 1919, Mr. Ravey was called to the eldership. Some time soon after Mr. Ruddock became indisposed and the new elder preached for four months and thoroughly proved himself most suitable for this office. This record stands on the minute book of the church that in appreciation of his work 'the officebearers presented him with a cheque for five pounds for books'! He conducted a most successful Bible Class in the Good Templars Hall and is remembered still for his sound teaching and ready help in the Open Air at Pickie, Groomsport and Craigavad.

The present church building was opened in 1922 and Mr. Ravey was actively engaged putting the finishing touch to the window, to the hour of opening.

When Pastor Burrows succeeded Pastor Ruddock, Mr. Ravey continued to give him wholehearted support. In October, 1922 I met Mr. Ravey for the first time when he assisted as the first Baptismal Service in the new church when I was baptised by Mr. Burrows. This was my first introduction to Irish Baptists and the following week over a score of believers from Newtownards were baptised in the same place. These were mostly young converts from the Nicholson campaign, and, although we never dreamed of this at the time, we were destined to form the nucleus of a new church and Mr. Ravey was destined to be our first Pastor.

So Mountpottinger, the Grove and Bangor had each a share in the 'fitting out' of one of our finest Pastors, and the infant church in Newtownards was given a splendid counsellor, teacher and preacher of the Gospel.

When the Ards church was formed in 1923, Mr. Ravey helped us occasionally as we met in a rented hall. I can recall having to sit on the bare floor to help make room for others, and can remember still the solid ministry, much of which is fresh to my memory still. In fact I have tried to teach others what he as God's messenger taught us. Indeed I used one of his outlines and quoted many of his sayings at a large open-air meeting in County Antrim on sunny Sunday afternoon over fifty years ago, and a man claimed that that day was the day of his conversion

In 1923, Mr. Ravey began his first pastorate in the church at Ballykeel, near Dromara; Ballykeel with its memories of the inimitable Pastor James Hodge, gracious Pastor Samuel Ruddock, warm-hearted Frank Forbes, each gone but remembered. Mr. Ravey stayed there two years labouring earnestly and helpfully and where his sane Biblical ministry made a deep impression on the whole area. He told with great delight of

an occasion when the members of the Loyal Orange Lodges asked him to preach at a Sunday afternoon service. He told them, 'I don't know much about Derry, Aughrim, Enniskillen or the Boyne, but if you come I'll preach the Gospel'. Some of them had been heard to say that they would not come to a Baptist Church, but come they did, in such numbers that the service was held in the churchyard. However, they all had to enter the Baptist church and go out at the back door and get seated on the grass.

Mr. Ravey had three words as the basis of a clear-cut, straightforward evangelistic message: 'Sin, Sacrifice and Salvation'.

Whatever the spiritual results were only eternity will tell, but the collection for the Lord Enniskillen Memorial Fund for the benefit of Orphans of deceased Orangemen was double the amount contributed at a larger church of a large denomination a week previously. Moral - preach the Gospel and money matters will not prove insurmountable.

Early in 1925 a small deputation, of which I had the honour of being a member, went to Ballykeel to sound Mr. Ravey as to the possibility of his considereing a call to the small, infant church at Newtownards. We had no manse and only a corrugated iron hall - valued at £475 - and our financial offer would be very meagre. However, when he consented to consider our invitation we got to business. As the first secretary of the church I was asked to draft the letter (which he kept as a historic document to the end of his life). To our great joy he accepted the call and came with Mrs. Ravey, David, Jack and baby Betty, who is now Mrs. John Hawthorne of Shankill. We obtained a rented house and the Irish Baptist Home Mission gave us valuable financial assistance. I can recall the unfailing punctuality of the arrival of that monthly cheque from 45 Harcourt Street, Dublin, when Pastor J.D. Gilmore was Union Secretary.

From the very outset God set His seal to the ministry and the Greenwell Street building was soon filled to capacity. Conversions are frequent and many were brought to repentance, faith and baptism and added

to the local church. It was not long until the church became self-supporting and a manse secured in a more congenial and convenient part of the town. He saw our Baptist witness growing until its impact was felt throughout a wide area. There was much opposition, but he saw the Baptist church becoming a valuable asset to the evangelical life of the town and district until today it is one of the strongest churches in our Union.

He had a clear voice, a fine delivery, a forthrightness in presenting the truth, and those of us who sat under his ministry in the early days of our Christian life owe more to his faithfulness than I can express. God gifted him as an evangelist, a Bible teacher and an encourager of every member of his flock. I bear witness that when I was thrust out into the work of evangelism his teaching and example and encouragement were a constant inspiration to me, and the truth he taught is as dear to me now as over half a century ago. One young lady who sat at his feet in those early days tells that after the ministry of the Word and the Breaking of Bread she went home and spent some time in prayerful meditation before the Sunday lunch. To this day - fifty years later - she still recalls the spiritual help and instruction she received. This has been the testimony of hundreds to whom he ministered Bible truth - always 'studying to declare the whole counsel of God, rightly dividing the word of truth'.

Now to Shankill. Shankill Baptist Church was formed in 1896, and was part of the forward movement set in motion by the Baptist Union of Ireland. Like most young churches the small group faced many discouragements and their teething troubles continued for quite a number of years. Their roll of pastors is worth recording. I can remember them all, apart from the first three. Let's call the roll:-

1. Francis G. Eland, an Englishman;
2. Samuel J. Reid, a Presbyterian student who became a Baptist;
3. Fenton Bury, a member of a well-known scholarly Baptist family;

It was during his ministry that the Tennant Street Tabernacle was built. It was many years before the debt incurred was wiped out.

4. Alexander Jardine, a big-hearted evangelist;
5. John McKnight, who later became a Brethren evangelist;
6. Richard Hodgett, denominational statesman. During his ministry through sheer grit and much sacrifice, even personal sacrifice, the debt was cleared.
7. J.W.S. Frazer, an Englishman whose ministry coincided with the Nicholson campaign in Shankill's Albert Hall. He was soon preaching to large congregations.
8. Edward Grant, a Scotsman who only stayed a short time, then went back to Scotland where he finished up with the Brethren.

In May, 1931 Mr. Ravey, after a fruitful ministry in Newtownards, was called to the Shankill church in the busy and historic West Belfast. This was destined to be a long, effective and happy ministry. He saw the existing debt on the manse cleared and it was not long until the congregations were too large for the building. This was a challenge to Pastor and people that led to the erection of a gallery capable of seating 130.

The first fifteen years were fruitful years when 308 believers were baptised and 347 welcomed to membership in the local church. In 1943 the church building was entirely re-roofed and decorated, and the year following the main vestry was enlarged to accommodate some 80 people. In 1953 the building that now accommodates the Ballygomartin church on West circular Road was erected by Shankill Church at a cost of over £3,000. In the year 1958 the church membership reached its highest with a membership of 362 baptised believers. Four years later, in 1962, 27 members resigned to form the nucleus of the new local church at Ballygomartin with the blessing and help of the mother church. The new church came into being free of debt, plus a balance in the bank.

At one time during Mr. Ravey's ministry the church had 26 members in full-time service at home and abroad. When he became pastor the membership stood at 147, he saw it advancing to 362 and during that great ministry he baptised 693 believers and welcomed to full membership 626. On two occasions he painted the whole interior of the church building as well as carrying on his pastoral work. During this work not one meeting was cancelled or unnecessarily inconvenienced. He was a true workman, needing not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

He was an active member of several Committees of our Union of churches where his wise counsel was invaluable and in the year 1940 was elected President of the Baptist Union of Ireland, travelling extensively during those grim days. One event in his life showed the esteem with which he was held when he was invited to consider becoming Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, scene of C.H. Spurgeon's mighty ministry. This he declined. In 1962 the years began to show signs that they were taking their toll and God's much used servant resigned, having served the church faithfully for 31 years. With his life partner he went to live with his daughter, Betty, and her husband, John Hawthorne. They found a warm spiritual home in the Bloomfield church where his presence and prayer help were deeply appreciated, and his example of steadfastness was, I know, a tonic to Pastor and people there.

Mrs. Ravey went 'home' first to glory in 1969, and on the last Thursday of December, 1977 his body was laid to rest in Dundonald cemetery to await that event about which he loved to preach - the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We who knew him, and were taught and nourished by his faithful ministry salute his memory.

'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'.

A History of the Irish Baptist College

On Tuesday October 4th, 1892, Rockefeller House, 16 Harcourt Street, Dublin, was opened. This establishment comprised "The Irish Baptist Training Institute", "where promising and approved young men from the churches may receive such help as will equip them more fully for the work of the pastorate; and where other Christian workers may receive stimulus and assistance in any path of Christian service". In addition, provision was made for the "sound education, under healthy moral and spiritual conditions," of a limited number of boys. Elsewhere this is decribed as "a select boys' school" (Hugh D. Brown). Furthermore, a Y.M.C.A. was started, offering facilities "where young men may enjoy all the privileges of social intercourse, without the introduction of many secular adjuncts, which so frequently mar the spiritual usefulness of such associations." "This Y.M.C.A. also offered some accommodation for the residence of young men engaged in business, or otherwise, in the city".

It would be interesting to trace the history of both the boys' school and the Y.M.C.A., and to discuss these examples of Baptist concern for areas which are normally the province of other denominations and/or the state (at least as far as Ireland is concerned). However, our concern at present is with the history of the Training Institute, soon to be known as the "Irish Baptist College".

A number of inportant names figure in the establishment and the supervision of Rockefeller House. Its opening was made possible by the generosity of J.D. Rockefeller and R.G. Glendinning (and of "other friends").

The first President of the Institute and school was Hugh D. Brown, and the committee included H.A. Gribbon, W.H. Drummond, John La Touche and Brigade-Surgeon Waters. The principal and classical tutor was Ambrose V.G. Bury, who had studied at Trinity and Yale, and who had been a tutor at Moody's College in America. R. Best was tutor in mathematics. The Training Institute and the "select boys' school" were not treated as completely separate institutions, and the classics and the mathematics were not only for the boys but also for the budding preachers!

According to the "Irish Baptist Magazine" of January, 1893, there were at that time five students on the roll, training for the ministry of the Word. However, in the magazines of 1893 and 1894 much more interest is shown in the school than in the students for the ministry. In the magazine for November, 1893, there was a photograph of the teachers and boys of the school, taken the previous spring, with the comment that the number of boys had nearly doubled by November, and the staff had also been enlarged. The November, 1894, issue reported the opening of a large new schoolroom or lecture room at the rear of Rockefeller House, "where the lower classes of the school are to be taught, and in which lectures or conference meetings may be held". The evening of the official opening included tea, a survey of the general progress of the pupils, prize-giving, and "limelight views of Japan ... shewn and explained by Mr. T.R. Warner". But no mention of the contribution Rockefeller House was making to the training of men for the ministry is to be found in either of these reports. In May 1894, an address by one of the students, John Lloyd, was printed in the magazine, but no information as such is given about the Training Institute.

However, the Handbook for 1895-96 gives us the following significant information. The description of the College's work reads in part as follows:-

> "The College was founded in 1892, for the purpose of training Irishmen for pastoral and evangelistic work in their native land.

Its position in the seat of the two Irish Universities affords it peculiar facilities for advanced education, while the numerous opportunities for Christian work in which a large city abounds provide for the practical training of the students.

The course is designed to cover a period of two years at least, and the standard of graduation in secular subjects is the Matriculation Examination of either Dublin or the Royal University.

The Committee desire to encourage students to continue their education, with a view to a full University course, and render all aid in their power for that object". (1)

What this involved in practice is illustrated by this example of study approved by the College Committee in 1901:-

FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR
Bible - Introduction	Bible - Historical Portions O.T.	Bible - Analysis of Pauline Epistles
Systematic Theology - Hodge's Outlines ch. 1-8	Systematic Theology- Hodges's Outlines ch. 22-27	Hebrew - Grammar and Exercises
Church History - A.D. 1-590	Church History - A.D. 1517-1648	Classics -) Greek) Latin) Mathematics) English) Course for Second Univ. Examination.
Classics - Greek: Grammar & Exercises. Latin: Grammar & Exercises.	Classics - Greek: Latin -- Course for University Matriculation	
Mathematics - Arithmetic, Algebra, Euclid.	Mathematics - Course for University Matriculation	
English - Grammar, Composition, History, Geography.	English - Course for University Matriculation.	

(2)

It would be interesting to know what proportion of students made use of the facilities which the College provided for preparation for University Matriculation.

One matter which exercised the Committee from early days was that of the Churches' interest in the College - or their lack of interest. In July, 1897, Ambrose Bury published a major article on this subject in the Irish Baptist. The article was in fact the substance of a plea made at the Union meetings in Limerick in May, 1897. The matter of the College was therefore clearly very much in view in the denomination at this time. Nearly all the points discussed by Bury have been raised and discussed many times since then, and reading his article today one is struck by its relevance to our own days. The subject of the article is "the proper inter-relations which should exist between the College and the Churches". Many people in the Churches obviously questioned the need for a College at all:-

> "It is a favourite argument to refer back to the twelve Apostles, affording conspicuous and conclusive proof of the unnecessariness of a College training". (3)

Bury rejects this argument as fallacious and comments:-

> "Unsanctified education may be a curse - a greater curse than even unsanctified ignorance. But if that be so, the opposite is also true; sanctified education may be, must be, a blessing, - an infinitely greater blessing than sanctified ignorance. It is a man's bounden duty to God, to his fellow men, and to himself, to make the most of himself - first, and above all, spiritually, and then mentally; and a properly-constitued College course should contribute to the fullest attainment of this double end". (4)

Writing about the connection between College and Church Bury comments sadly:-

> "The leading feature in the attitude of the Churches is to regard the College as a separate and unconnected agency, and to follow a fatal tendency to dissever the one from the other. This is a ruinous attitude, and one which must soon sap the strength of both College and Church, ultimately dwarfing, if not destroying, both. Although feeling keenly the weakness associated with it, we yet cling to independency as a principle of government and we are in danger of forgetting that there is a principle of interdependancy which is by no means inconsistent with the highest independency". (5)

The aim of the College being to train preachers of the Gospel, the churches have a responsibility to send forth men for training and ministry:-

"Every Church should look upon itself both as the recruiting-ground containing, and the recruiting officer selecting, the material for the Baptist ministry. It should regard this as one of its most important duties, to be on the outlook for promising men in its membership or connected with it permanently or temporarily ...

Since many a man gifted for the ministry lies hid a long time through lack of opportunity for his gift to be recognised, it should be an important care of the Churches to provide such opportunities, in as great abundance as possible ...

There is a great danger of thinking that the College Committee is the proper body to be held responsible for the selecting of the men, that it exists for this purpose, and is quite competent to perform it. This is a-piece with a natural outcome of the error which regards College and Church as two independent entities, and is absolutely contrary to common sense". (6)

A related problem exercising the College Committee was, of course, that of finance. We refer again to Principal Bury, this time writing in the Irish Baptist of March, 1904:-

"May I bring certain facts about the College to the notice of Irish Baptists generally? Our financial year is almost run, and we shall soon have to close our accounts for 1903-4. But before that Rubicon (31st March) is passed, I wish to make a supreme effort to improve our financial position. Last year we had a deficit of somewhat over £100 on the year's accounts, and unless some effort is made there will be a somewhat larger deficit on this year's accounts, which means that, with adverse balances from previous years, we shall be about £300 on the wrong side at the end of the financial year. I do not think there can be any more rigid economy than is already exercised and therefore the deficit will have to be met by a further increase in subscriptions. I am also persuaded that that increase must come <u>from the rank and file of our Church members</u>.

Statistics are notoriously dry, but the few following are something more also. They show that <u>the great mass of our members give the College no help</u>.

	1900	1901	1902
Contributions from the Churches -	£35	£35	£36

Besides these Church contributions, we received £167 last year from 28 individual members of various Churches, but their generosity

does not touch the point. There are, according to our latest statistics, 3,000 members of Baptist Churches in Ireland, which means that on an average each of them (of course actually most of them have done nothing so foolish!) has been dashing headlong to financial ruin, for the sake of this part of the Lord's work, at the stupendous rate of 2½d. a year! How can such thriftless prodigality be blessed? Yet I dare to raise a weak voice to ask - Can we make it 5d.? If we are going to be ruined, may we not as well do it decently? Better be hung for a 5d. sheep than a 2½d. lamb!

Will not each of our Church members, who is not already an individual subscriber, undertake systematically to give at least 6d. a year to this work? Many will sensibly refuse to split a good shilling, and others will feel that they can rise to half-a-crown. I cannot imagine that such a proposition is outside the sphere of practical politics! Then perhaps a secretary could be appointed in each church to collect these amounts monthly, and forward them to me once or twice a year. All that is required is an energetic friend in each Church just to poke up forgetful folk.

May I also appeal to those Churches who have not yet sent up a collection this year to do so as soon as convenient? And "Finally, my brethren", may I thank those Churches who have always helped us, not notably those whose contributions have sensibly and steadily increased. One such I have specially in mind; its record runs - 1900, 15/-; 1909, £1 12s.; 1902, £2 0s. 3d.; 1904, £2 7s. 6d. Well done _____!" (7)

However, in spite of a certain lack of interest on the part of the Churches and in spite of financial problems the work of the College, which in 1901 moved to 45 Harcourt Street, continued without interruption. Ambrose Bury was obviously a very gifted man. The articles he contributed to the Irish Baptist indicate a powerful intellect accompanied by a sharp wit. Principal Bury was assisted by James Willoughby, who was appointed tutor in 1901 and succeeded Bury as Principal in 1913. James Willoughby left in 1916, but the decision to appoint T.H. Spurgeon as Principal was not taken until 1921, and he did not in fact become full-time Principal until 1925. By this time Mr. L.E. Deens, whoseassociation with the College goes back to his own student days before World War I, was lecturing, and he continued to give lectures in the College for the next fifty years!

The College Committee had many problems to face, and it is obvious from the Minutes that financial problems occupied much of their time, as indeed is still the case today. There was the day-to-day running of the College, the drafting and enforcing of rules, the processing of applications, and much serious questioning concerning the future of the College. The idea of transferring the College to Belfast was seriously considered as early as 1919. In 1920 a decision was taken to dispose of the Harcourt Street premises, but it was not implemented. The College remained at Harcourt Street until 1940, when it was transferred to 52 Terenure Road, Dublin.

Numbers were smaller than the average student body of the College since 1964. A list published in 1904 gives the names of only ten College graduates. In 1924 the College Committee Minutes list six students and reports are given on their progress - we find such famous names as Weir and Paisley! In 1935 there were seven men in training. The regular reports given by the Principal at Committee Meetings rarely mention more than six students. A 1921 Committee decision made training at the College available for missionary candidates "of both sexes", but only since the College has been in Belfast have members of the fairer sex dared to cross its threshold. It is interesting to note that some applicants were rejected because of "age and family responsibilities", and others (e.g. R.C. McMullan) because they applied later than the closing date at the end of June. Committee policy is rather different today.

The course of study was, and is still, very intensive. The syllabus drawn up in 1927 lists 13 areas of study:-

" 1. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
2. BIBLICAL EXEGESIS
3. BIBLICAL INTRODUCTION
4. ENGLISH BIBLE

5. HOMILETICS AND PASTORAL THEOLOGY
6. CHURCH HISTORY
7. BIOGRAPHICAL AND DEVOTIONAL
8. HEBREW
9. NEW TESTAMENT GREEK
10. LATIN
11. ENGLISH
12. LOGIC
13. HISTORY " (8)

Rules were strict, as the following extracts from a list drawn up in 1932 shows:-

" RULES

8. That each student be expected to remain in the College for a period of not less than four years, it being understood that time lost through non-attendance at classes be made up.

9. That every student accepted for Irish Baptist work give a signed promise to remain in that work if required, for four years after the completion of his College course.

10. That for three years after the satisfactory completion of their courses students shall undertake to continue their reading under the direction of the College.

11. That every student (unless specially exempted) sign on graduation a promise to collect for the College annually.

21. That should a student who received his training in the College eventually leave the Baptist Ministry, either (a) through ceasing to hold Baptist principles or (b) for the purpose of following a secular vocation, the Committee shall have power, at its discretion, to require such student to refund excess cost of his College education over fees paid". (9)

House rules were likewise strict, and it is very illuminating to read in the Minutes of a rule made in 1922, "That smoking in the College classrooms and dining-room be forbidden". No comment!

It is interesting to note the famous names that crop up in the Minute Book. Weir and Paisley have been mentioned; there are also the names of Frank H. Forbes, R. Boggs, H.D. McDonald, W.J. Rowell, T.J. McNabb, H.C. Lutton, W. Lyttle and many others who have rendered valuable service to the Church in Ireland and further afield. (One D.L. Moody was a student at the College for a time - but that was in the 1920's and he came from Bangor).

Undoubtedly the most important event in the history of the College since its foundation was the transferring of its location to Belfast and its reconstitution under the aegis of the Baptist Union of Ireland. These proposed changes were being widely discussed as early as 1953, but in that year the Assembly passed a motion "That the transfer of the control of the College to the Union be left in abeyance until such times as the Council felt it would be wise to make another approach to the subject" - carried by 123 votes to 61.

It was in 1961 that the Union Council made a fresh approach to the Grosvenor Road Church, Dublin, about transferring control of the College to the Union. In June, 1961, the Grosvenor Road Church agreed to transfer control on terms outlined by the Council. A committee was appointed "to make public the grounds on which the project is deemed feasible, and to suggest ways and means for making it practicable". The members of this committee were: J.D. Cameron, J. Greenwood, R.A.L. Mann, S. Neill, G.F. Blayney, R. Campbell, R. Clarke, L.E. Deens, W. Weir, J. Thompson. Much attention was given in the Irish Baptist of January to May, 1962 in preparation for the Council's resolution and the Assembly debate. In May, 1962, the Council's ideas were set out in the following terms:-

" 1. That the College be controlled by a Committee appointed annually by the Assembly.

2. That the College be located in or near Belfast.

3. That its objects be to train men for the ministry, to train men and women for foreign missionary work (not

necessarily Baptist students for Baptist societies exclusively); to train men for home mission work; and to offer evening courses in subjects designed to serve Sunday School Union; Youth Fellowship and other denominational interests.

4. That the College Principal be baptised a believer and a Baptist, with a decidedly evangelical outlook and a public ministry acceptable to our Churches; that he be a graduate of a recognised University with teaching and administrative experience.

5. That the Principal be assisted by qualified part-time tutors (honorary or paid) in ways and to an extent to be decided.

6. That to finance the College sufficient support be obtained from the Churches to augment the Trust Funds income.

7. That the College be residential.

8. That the length of the residential courses offered be three years for pastoral candidates and two years for missionary candidates.

9. That the standard of training offered be such as will command the respect and recognition of bodies outside our own denomination." (10)

And at the Assembly Business Session Joshua Thompson moved the adoption of the Resolution:-

" That the Assembly resolves in the will of God and with His blessing to maintain a College for the training of Candidates for Pastoral and Missionary work subject to the conditions, governing objects, location, staff, finance and curricula outlined in the Council's Report to the Assembly and with the practical co-operation of the Churches; and the Assembly further resolves that the terms as reported to the Assembly on which the Grosvenor Road Church, Dublin, has undertaken to support the transfer of control of the College to the Union be and are hereby approved and accepted". (11)

Mr. Deens seconded. After some discussion a ballot vote was taken and 201 voted for and 4 against the motion.

In September 1962 the Dublin College Committee resolved to wind up the College in Dublin with effect from June 30, 1963, which would

also be the date of Principal Spurgeon's retirement. The Council's sub-committee were not slow in finding a new Principal, and in May, 1963, the Assembly accepted the Council's recommendation that David Paul Kingdon be appointed the new Principal. Understandably, the College Meeting of May 15th, 1963, was a particularly emotional one. (1963 was, incidentally, a year of significant change for Grosvenor Road in another respect: Mr. Deens retired in September of that year, after 38½ years of ministry in the Grosvenor Road Church).

In September, 1963, the Magazine was able to report that "eminently suitable premises" had been purchased at 67 Sandown Road and 12 Holland Park. Considerable repairs and modernisation were required, but it was hoped that the College would be ready for reopening in September, 1964. As usually happens, work got a little behind schedule, and the official opening of the building, arranged for September 26th, 1964, had to be postponed.

However, the Inaugural Meeting of the College was held in the Great Victoria Street Church, on September 21st, 1964. This meeting also witnessed the recognition of Mr. Oakley as College Tutor.

The subsequent history of the College is well known. Mr. Kingdon continued as principal until June, 1974, and Mr. Oakley has held office since then. We may point, with gratitude to God, to a number of encouraging developments:

Firstly, the numbers of students who have received training at the College, in particular the numbers who have come from our own Churches.
Secondly, the numbers of students in recent years who have entered the pastorate in our Churches or have become members of the Missions' staff (if this doesn't sound too parochial!)
Thirdly, the increasing interest and support on the part of our Churches. This is certainly related to the number of former students in the ministry in Ireland. The number of students called indicates a growing interest, and they in turn help to stimulate interest in the College and are a

good advertisement (if this doesn't sound too worldly!). In addition, one is aware of somewhat less suspicion of "College men", of ever better relationships between College and Church, and of greater readiness on the part of more and more Churches to give support both in prayer and financially.

Fourthly, in 1976 the College took the momentous step of having itself classed as a Recognised College of Q.U.B. This meant that students of the College who satisfied the University's matriculation requirements could also be enrolled as students of Q.U.B., studying for a University award in theology, although all the teaching leading to a Diploma or a general Degree in theology would be done by the College staff. This in turn meant that students could be awarded grants which they would not otherwise have received, even if they had been preparing for an external London University award. Students who enrolled for College courses purely for the purposes of a University award, as distinct from students preparing for the ministry, could not be made to sign any doctrinal statement, as this would contravene the Q.U.B. regulations. Fears were immediately expressed that the College would be invaded by Marxists, Hindoos, I.R.A. terrorists, etc., all anxious to study for Q.U.B. theology awards and all littering the place with beer cans and cigarette butts. A great deal of bad feeling was aroused at the time. The motion before the 1976 Assembly relevant to this change was passed by a majority of 132 to 128 votes. People talked about the character of the College being changed so drastically that it was finished, etc., etc. But the dust settled. Nothing disastrous has happened to the College, nor is it likely to, and relations between the College and the Churches are now better than ever.

Fifthly, we should mention the recent recognition of the College by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. This recognition was accorded to the Dublin College, but was suspended when the College moved to Belfast. Recently it has been restored. This means that those graduates of the College who wish to find openings in B.U. Churches will not automatically

be at a disadvantage because of the training they received.

At the time of writing the College numbers 28 students (of whom 7 are ladies), 4 full-time and 4 part-time lecturers, as well as visiting lecturers, a full-time domestic supervisor and 3 other domestic workers, and last but not least our secretary Mrs. Black. We are indeed grateful to God for the continued ministry of the College over the years and for its progress in recent years especially. We can look to the future with confidence, convinced that we are making a contribution to the Lord's work in Ireland and abroad.

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The Life and Work of R. N. Shaw

INTRODUCTION

Roy Shaw was a close personal friend whom I respected deeply as a Christian brother and colleague. His life had many episodes of sadness and disappointment. While humanly abandoned to the intense loneliness of an existence without close relative or life partner, he valued and sought the friendship of his spiritual companions in the Christian family. This study, prepared at the request of the Irish Baptist Historical Society, was presented at its Annual Meeting in Belfast in May 1980.

At the request of a wide circle of his associates in the household of faith and colleagues in the Gospel ministry this account of his life now goes into permanent form.

It was only after deep reflection that I decided to disclose these delicate and intimate details of the inner life of a worthy man of God. They are shared here with the spiritual family where he felt most at home, the Baptists of Ireland, because they add a significant part to the story of his ministry which was characterised by tenderness and compassion. His lifelong love for orphans, single parent families and all who were socially deprived was born in the traumatic discovery of his origins. These facts, discreetly used, give completeness to the story of a man whose praise of the grace and providential dealings of God was unlimited. The only justification for their insertion in this biographical sketch of Roy Shaw, is that of helping us to honour the God who was to him both Father and Mother.

1. THE FORMATIVE YEARS

In the late evening of a crisp February day in 1974 in the solitude of a side room of a Belfast hospital, the spirit of R.N. Shaw passed quietly into the presence of God. His earthly pilgrimage ended after a brief illness in the 62nd year of his life, the 42nd year of his ministry and in the final quarter of his year of office as President of the Baptist Union of Ireland. Although he had lived in Ireland for less than a third of his life he was widely known and deeply loved throughout our country and especially in our Union of Churches.

This biographical summary of his life will show that he was a man who was greatly gifted, severely tested and constantly used in the work of the Kingdom. A carefully preserved panorama of his spiritual experiences and varied ministry, in his own generous hand, gives us an insight into the measure of his usefulness. He was born on 24th August 1912, converted at 18 years of age on 27th June, 1933, and baptized on 5th August of the same year. Within nine months of conversion he had entered Christian service in the city of Bristol where he was ordained to the ministry of the Gospel on 19th October, 1933. In November, 1935, exactly a year after he became a member of the Baptist Tabernacle at Springfield Road, Blackpool, he went as student pastor to Bryher in the Isles of Scilly under the aegis of the Devon and Cornwall Baptist Association. When he was 26 years of age the second world war broke out and he began his wartime service at the Seamen's Institute in Grimsby in April, 1939. Towards the end of the war he went to North Shields where he continued Gospel Witness to the men of the sea. His arrival in Southern Ireland took place in April, 1952, when he became Secretary of Cork Y.M.C.A. Two years later he returned briefly to Britain on his appointment as York City Missioner in 1954. The concluding chapter of his ministerial life opened in January, 1955, when he responded to a call to the pastorate of Cork Baptist Church.

Chosen by Divine Love

In the summer of 1912 a baby boy was born to a refined and gentle Yorkshire girl. This little lady was to find comfort for her aching spirit and a welcoming home for her newborn bundle of life in the hospitable but humble red brick terrace house at 45 Ribble Road, Blackpool, where Harry and Catherine Shaw lived with their two children, Lily and Willie. Mrs. Shaw was a kind and sympathetic woman with a large and cordial heart. The circumstances that brought the gentle governess from a Yorkshire fishing port to a Lancashire holiday resort have been hidden away in the folds of history. But Catherine Shaw could never forget the day when little Roy came in the arms of his mother into her family circle. How tenderly she describes the unusual arrival of the feeble infant who was destined to become her beloved adopted son.

> 'The day lives with me when she brought you across and and laid you on the couch, then she was soon gone and in a minute I went to the door and looked down the street. I could see the neat little lady walking down on her way to the station. How her poor heart must have been aching at having to leave her little love to become my little love. She had a great trouble to carry all on her own and must have suffered a lot'.

Roy was never to see the face of his mother again and she locked away in her heart the whereabouts of her little boy. Not even the immediate family knew of his existance. As soon as Roy was able to read there opened up a remarkable correspondence between him and his beloved 'Aunty Kitty'. Her life was comparatively short, spanning just over sixty years from her birth on October 3rd, 1872 to her sudden death on June 28th, 1936. Her letters to Roy cover a period of eighteen years and they are characterised by a loving concern for his physical, moral and spiritual welfare. In a letter dated 21st August, 1933, she writes to wish him well on his 21st birthday -

> 'May God bless you and guide and guard you from all evil and bring you at last to His everlasting Kingdom, that is my prayer for all those I love. I do hope dear Roy that you

will get on well in your chosen calling, I think you will though it will be uphill work. God's blessing is poured out on those who truly and humbly seek to serve Him and I know you are doing that, seeking only to be guided by Him, though your good parents can perhaps advise you as to how He is seeking to guide you, they know more of the world and the people in it than you, don't they?'

Three years after her death Roy went to see her grave and wrote to describe his feelings to his adopted mother:

'I didn't stay long because the rain continued to pour down; just a few silent moments I spent in prayer, thanking God for permitting me to see the resting place of dear Aunty Kitty. Though I felt how glorious would it have been to visit Hedon when she was alive and to have seen her dear face. But that could have been His will. There must have been some wise purpose in His over-ruling'.

He goes on to reflect in a moving passage on the burden borne by his loved mother:-

'We can quite understand, my dear, how carefully Aunty Kitty must have destroyed all the possible evidence of revealing my identity. What a great sacrifice she had to make, how she must have yearned for the one she brought into the world - it was natural for her to long for some return love. The class of folks amongst whom she was reared would probably have treated her as an outcast had she returned home in her trouble. And you were the good Samaritan, I was yours by adoption, God gave me to you. He can and does over-rule the mistakes of we poor mortals'.

Among his papers I discovered a typewritten "appreciation of a dear friend and benefactor". There is a mystical note sounded in this tribute to his natural mother:-

'The day of sadness has entered with its awesome presence. One whom I have loved and honoured long has been called into the presence of the blessed. Not for her return do I mourn, but for the great loss of an earthly friend. It is of one called Aunty Kitty that I write. Strange as it may seem I have never seen the face of this my late friend and benefactor, yet to me she was an inspiration in my life's endeavour. O noble woman, thou pure and high minded soul, how little or how much thy heart realised its power for

good over me I know not; but this I do know, thy goodness has made me press forward to better and nobler spheres in life's journey. The hand that did me much good I have never touched, the eyes that often read my letters I have never seen their beauty; thy presence has been a spiritual one to me, thus having greater influence than any bodily form . . . . The voice of Him whom in this life she served with unstinting love and energy has called her to Himself and having heard His voice her spirit arose and left this earthly clay with gladness, to find awaiting her, pleasures for evermore at His right hand. Enjoy thy well earned rest beloved one, and we shall look forward to the day when at His Great Feast we shall sit together and praise His Wonderful Name. I sent Aunty Kitty flowers from the beautiful Island of Bryher, these she never saw but instead she saw the Face of Him who is Fairer than All'.

Fashioned by God's Grace

By an act of Divine providence, the tender infant was sheltered, loved and nurtured in the secure and spiritually minded home of his adoptive parents. Harry Shaw was a working man, serving in the Blackpool Corporation. His wife, Catherine, hailed from the beautiful area known as South Lakeland on the Lancashire-Westmoreland border. She came from an old and respected country family, the Staintons. As a young woman she was in service at Brantwood, the home of John Ruskin and possessed some interesting memorabilia of the Professor. While rearing her family in a simple kitchen house she displayed a generous culture and a profound concern for their total development. The family worshipped in Bethesda Congregational Church where Harry Shaw served as a deacon. It was there that Roy, Lily and Willie went to Sunday School and received their early Christian training. But the deepest and lasting spiritual impressions were traced on his tender spirit by the one who had become his mother. After her death as she approached her 80th birthday he wrote:-

'There is every reason why my love to mother should be akin to adoration. She embodied everything that was beautiful in my life, the richest treasures, the ecstatic joys of childhood all fell from her hand. With all the maturing of youth and advance into manhood never was her transforming touch lost on my life. My love of music, my aspiration for Christian work, my personal decision to be a disciple of

> Jesus, none of these things could have materialised without her influence. Though away from home at the age of 18, facing the most adverse circumstances, poor yet rich, lonely often but never alone, the ready pen of my mother would send such messages of cheer and encouragement that I never lost heart. To mother there was nothing impossible with God, yet she was always so humble, always complaining of her insuff-iciencies, though there never was a person who so sufficiently lived the Christian life. For myself, there could have arisen circumstances so vastly different because I was not the child of her flesh but of her soul. I never saw the face of my mother by birth, so mysteriously woven were the circumstances of that event, that while only a few days old she was gone from my presence never again to look on my face'.

These sentiments, so movingly expressed, are reminiscent of the reaction of C.S. Lewis to his mother's death:-

> 'With my mother's death all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life. There was to be much fun, many pleasures, many stabs of joy, but no more of the old security. It was sea and islands now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis'.
>
> (Surprised by Joy, page 23)

Following elementary school education Roy commenced work in the accounts department of the "Blackpool Star and Gazette". He showed a strong diligence and willingness to work hard which won the respect of his superiors. An oft-quoted saying, 'think before you ink', was impressed upon his mind in the newspaper office but this did not prevent him becoming a prolific writer and copious correspondent. His interest in art, music and literature expanded considerably as he approached his early twenties. Encouraged by his mother and adoptive parents he read widely and became fascinated with the great composers and literary classicists.

> 'I am glad you admire Ruskin and his works, they will, I think live always, and continue to enlighten all who have time and inclination to read them. Shakespeare of course is fine, he is another unforgettable, how lovely for you to have all his plays', his mother wrote.

Deepening Convictions

Conversion to Christ came in his late teens through the ministry of a blind Evangelist on Blackpool beach. As the zealous youth was savingly attached to Christ, his conversion was to him the natural climax of the preparatory work of both Word and Spirit. At Oxford, two years earlier, C.S. Lewis had come into Gospel assurance through 'the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet .... That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed; perhaps that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England'. For Roy Shaw, coming to Christ was equally unforgettable but in gentler vein as new vistas of spiritual experience opened up before the youthful disciple. He often spoke of the deep feelings he experienced as he fell into the arms of Christ and found peace and forgiveness. This dramatic event took place on 27th June, 1931, and was quickly followed by the public confession of Christian baptism. The whole course of his life was changed at this point and early the following year he entered Christian service in the city of Bristol. The years ahead were filled with sunshine and shadow, many heartaches but also multiple joys. Above all, the young evangelist was learning 'not to despise the day of small things'. Entries in his diary speak eloquently of the testing and preparation he was undergoing for a distinguished ministry in the Church of God. Repeated references to 'no congregation' give a solemn insight into the struggles of these preparatory days. He and his fellow evangelist, 'Brother Brammer', delivered 3,500 pamphlets in house to house visitation and yet the people remained unresponsive. But no note of defeat ever stains the pages of his well kept diary ...

> 'Had no congregation in the afternoon, once again we claimed the victory in prayer'.
>
> 'God is still moving in a mysterious way. We had no congregation but thank God there was a multitude of God's angels I do believe . . . we continued in prayer. The Masons had a meeting in an adjoining room and someone opened

the door and saw us. May God move their hearts'.

'We had no congregation in the afternoon so we got down to prayer. We agonized in prayer till tears flowed down our cheeks. We claimed the victory through Christ'.

'Still no congregation but we had a great prayer meeting. Three of us, Brother Brammer, myself and "Jesus' other self", the Holy Spirit'.

Further entries tell of encouragement and enlargement,

'The Lord is going to move and then we shall move with Him at His bidding. He is working and we are waiting. Keep us true, Lord Jesus, keep us true'.

'More faith was given us by God saving the souls of 8 children . . . Lord God in Heaven we claim the souls of those little ones and we believe Thou wilt do a work in them'.

A number of interesting influences were at work in the life of the young evangelist. Largely through reading Samuel Chadwick's "Way to Pentecost" and S.D. Gordon's "Quiet Talks with Workers", he took a decisive turn in the direction of Pentecostalism. The diary entry of 1st July, 1933, reads,

'On Saturday evening we had a "waiting" or "tarrying" meeting which for me was a "receiving" meeting. The Lord graciously filled me with His Holy Spirit and I received "the Baptism" as people call it. Praise God for His wonderful love and goodness'.

Earlier that year he recorded:-

'My dear Brother Brammer and I were ordained as evangelists under the auspices of the Evangelical Christian Church. The elders laid their hands on us and the Rev. D.J. Davies (pastor of the Bristol Church) anointed us with oil in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost'.

The Christ-centredness which was a permanent feature of his life and labours blossomed at this time. A letter to Catherine Shaw conveys his inner feelings:-

'We had a real good dinner. Thank you Lord for all your care and love to us: but thank you for such a loving sacrificial Mother. This day I love her more and more not because of any parcel but

because Jesus has given me a deeper love for Himself and I can see a touch, yea more than a touch of Mother-love in Jesus. He is our great Mother-Love. He is our All-in-All. On this first day of February, 1933, I thank my heavenly Father for leading me in the path He has chosen. I am determined by His grace and the power of His Spirit to follow Him wherever He may lead me. May I ever be kept humble at the feet of His Son (who is one with with Him) our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, willing and obedient. O Saviour-Jesus help me to love Thee, may all self be crucified that in all things Thous mightest have the pre-eminence. I am ever your humble co-worker in Thy glorious Service'.

The Scriptures were becoming more precious and powerful in the moulding of his ministerial life.

'Arose early to have a quiet time, retired again till about 8 o'clock. After breakfast had a good read of the Book. Then did an errand after which I continued my reading of "the Book". Found to my surprise but utmost delight and great encouragement 25 pages can be read in one hour. Thus the whole Bible can be read in 60 hours. So by reading this wonderful book of God, one hour each day you will be able to read through the Revelation 22:21 in two months and four days'.

The Merry Heart

The warm sense of humour which was always present in his relationships also expressed itself in Bristol.

'Had tea, after which we had a chat and a real good laugh concerning a "testimony" which amused us very much. Thank God for innocent fun and for all His goodness in giving us our faculties'.

Writing to his mother he tells of a hospital visit.

'I went to the hospital last Saturday and put on one of Mr. Davies' clerical collars so that I wouldn't have any bother getting in and every nurse I passed smiled and said it was alright because of my collar. Mrs. Davies had to laugh when she saw me. It did seem strange - I'm afraid I scared one of my patients! They hadn't seen me with a collar on before'.

In a letter to Blackpool he is amused by reports of excessive physical movement in the services at the Bethel Church:-

'I'm sorry for poor old Pastor Dunn. It's a pity he's so like an old Colonel!! He must think his congregation are soldiers!

He takes them on parade now and again, doesn't he?!'

A heavy cloud of division descended upon the Bethel movement and with some of his colleagues he had to part company with the leaders because of financial and moral irregularities. Roy felt deeply about these things and acted decisively as this extract from a letter to Ribble Road reveals:-

> 'So you've been to Bethel again!! I wouldn't go a yard to hear their double tongues - talk about Mr. Facing-both-ways - they are Mr. Facing-anyway for £ s.d. . . . He can preach as much as he likes about Pentecost, or he could raise the dead and it wouldn't impress me because I know the doubleness of his tongue!'

The relationship with Rev. D.J. Davies became stronger as they "strove together for the faith of the Gospel" and maintained the integrity of Christian living in a time of compromise and serious spiritual disorder. A close friend through the crisis was Mrs. Simmons:-

> 'this dear sould whom I shall ever respect for her piety and faith and consistent life which has given me encouragement to go on in the service of God'.

Under the supervision of Mr. Davies he engaged in a course of Biblical and theological studies to equip himself more fully for his sacred calling. Contact with the family back in Lancashire was regular and consistent. He sent his mother the complete Greek alphabet so that she could follow his progress and at the same time counselling her to heavenly mindedness.

> 'There will be no such thing as worry there. No more wall-papering! No more visitors and certainly no more grumbling. So the best thing is to start practising to be sweet tempered and joyful or else you'll be out of place up there. No more Greek up there. Hallelujah!, or English either, we'll have a new language, the language of heaven, and we shall all have a new name, the new best name of love. You'll have to leave all those old pipes of yours behind, Dad, so you'd better get used to doing without them now'.

Always anxious to improve his knowledge of Scripture he made a number of attempts to enter a theological college. An application to Paton College, a Congregational Institution, was not successful. A letter from his "Aunt" records the event:-

> 'I am sorry you have been disappointed by the County Union Committee not giving you a recommendation to the Pastors College and I do hope and pray that you will be more fortunate with the Baptists. I really think you would be more happy amongst them, as you say your leaning is towards their views. I trust that in the end all will be well with you, dear boy, and in the meantime you are happy and can do good work for the Great MASTER'.

Enquiries were also made to the Bristol Baptist College but this never materialised and his formal training was completed in the Bethel Bible College at Bristol, mainly under the personal tuition of D.J. Davies.

2. A WORKMAN APPROVED BY GOD

MINISTRY AT BRYHER

In November, 1935, a new chapter opened in his life when he went as student pastor to the little Baptist Chapel at Bryher in the Isles of Scilly. The tiny church there had been founded by the evangelistic endeavours of C.H. Spurgeon and was supported by the Devon and Cornwall Baptist Association. The next three years were among the happiest and he settled into the life of the island community residing in the preacher's bungalow beside the little granite chapel. Life on Bryher was simple, quiet, but not impoverished as the following extract from a letter written in 1936 shows. After telling Mother Shaw the good prices the islanders had been getting for their flowers, he continues in typical fashion,

> 'No one is really poor on the island, such a thing as poverty is unknown. It is certainly a thriving business, flower growing. Of course you must not divulge these prices to outsiders. People here will tell things to "The Preacher", which they wouldn't think of divulging to anyone. You see how important a person one

is!!'

In some ways Bryher was Roy Shaw's 'Arabia', where he developed his personal godliness and broadened his knowledge by extensive reading. Close friendships were formed especially with the Sampson family, of whom he often spoke. When the time came to leave Bryher, the secretary of the Association, Rev. W.T. Kershaw, wrote, in a letter dated March 17th, 1939:-

> 'We shall be very sorry to let you go, but recognize that there was no other course! Your attitude since the disappointment in being turned down by the B.U. has been exemplary, and we know that in due course a door will open to you for continuing the work of the Master you love so much. Please accept our thanks for all your work in Bryher. Our prayers will follow you in your future career for you have won our love and respect.'

Setbacks and Reversals

There were many dark threads in the canvas of Roy Shaw's life and he suffered some severe setbacks and bitter disappointments. His musical expertise was widely known and he gained the A.L.C.M. and won many other awards while still in his early twenties. Opportunities were open to him to become a popular concert pianist, but these overtures he steadfastly rejected believing that all his gifts should be used directly in Christian service. It was a bitter blow to him when he lost an important finger on his right hand through a freak accident with a ring and a cup hook. Readjusting to this new trial he quickly learned to cope and soon overcame the limitations of an absent finger.

In the deeper personal tragedies of his life he displayed great courage. A former member of Cork Baptist Church recalls,

> 'For a person who was normally quite emotional his reactions in times of shock and stress were marvellous and he was always a tower of strength to those around him even though he himself was suffering deeply'.

While remaining unmarried all his life, he had a wartime sweetheart and had serious intentions of proposing marriage. His friendship with

this godly Cornish girl from Penzance tragically ended when she was killed in a German air raid in the early years of the war. Roy has left on record his visit to the family after her death:-

> 'Mrs. Beare seems to appreciate my coming but her load of grief is very great. I have occupied dear Dorothy's room. All is left as she last used it. My own photograph was on her dressing table. Dear Dorothy - she was a true and devoted Christian beloved by all. The funeral was held on Wednesday - the Baptist Chapel was crowded to overflowing and the streets were lined by hundreds of people. The service was the most impressive ever held in town, the whole population was moved by the catastrophe. God intends that we should live more faithfully for Him. Those dear ones gone are <u>living</u> more gloriously in the Heavenly Home - let us live so here on earth for God's glory'.

While in Bryher he sought recognition by the Baptist Union. Although his medical report seemed good he was turned down partly on health grounds. Mr. Kershaw arranged for the Committee to re-consider his case but goes on to tell him

> 'that they were unanimously against him on the day of his interview and he would now have to change their deep convictions'.

With characteristic resignation he accepts their findings.

> 'It does not mean I must be too hopeful because one never knows what these committees are about!'

A letter from the Union Secretary, M.E. Aubrey, informed him with cold courtesy that his application had been turned down. But Roy reacted with warm spirituality:-

> 'One never knows for what purpose these things happen but we must believe that "all things work together for good". The Word of God has greatly consoled and I am much strengthened thereby. The fact of having been turned down by the Baptist Union does not mean I am so treated by the Great Shepherd of the sheep - the Lord is my Shepherd. He is the chief Shepherd. His hand will guide continually'.

A further trial came in the form of a negative response from the committee of the London City Mission, to whom Roy had applied for work.

W.P. Cartwright, the Secretary, wrote to convey their decision,

> 'You will be sorry to learn that the committee came to the conclusion after prayerful consideration, that your sphere of work was not to be with the City Mission. I think all the examiners but one felt that you were more cut out for a pastorate than for the humdrum and grind of a city missionary's life of visitation. I don't doubt that you will look back upon your visit to us some day as being a step towards the work which God has for you to do in some other part of His vineyard'.

A church of England vicar wrote personally to advise the young Baptist preacher to 'go forward with your study and preparation for some form of ministerial work to which God may call you. Quite frankly, I think you have gifts for a pastorate in the country where culture, sympathy and learning will be much used'.

In the Valley of Tears

Family sadness came in the form of sudden death. His mother died when he was twenty-four and his only brother, Willie, was killed in action. He had earlier emigrated to Canada where he joined the Calgary Highlanders and died on the battlefield near Antwerp on 30th September, 1944. Roy was deeply affected by his death and had an unfulfilled desire to visit his grave in the war cemetery in Holland. His only sister, Lily, was very close to him and in many ways she became the object of the warm affection he had lavished on both his natural and adopted mothers. Her death came very suddenly on Wednesday, 12th September, 1962. I was present when a young Garda (Irish policeman), broke the news to Roy on the steps of the Y.M.C.A. hostel in Tramore. He was severely shocked but after prayer went as planned to conduct the marriage service of Stanley Black and Dorothy Hill in our Waterford Church. The dignity and decorum which he showed through that service was an impressive example of the spiritual stature of the man. Few of the guests or wellwishers were aware of the breaking heart that lay behind the measured tones of the controlled voice that joined the friends he loved and respected in marriage. Amongst his closest friends was a young Cork Christian named Micheal Dennehy. While

on holiday in Blackpool in July, 1959, Roy received news that his young friend had been tragically drowned on a youth outing near Vancouver, to where he had emigrated just six months previously. This was a sad blow to him but he immediately broke his holiday and returned to Cork to break the news to Michael's family. He stayed with them for the twelve days their son's body was missing and later helped the heartbroken mother and her children to emigrate to Canada.

Here was a man truly "chosen in the furnace of affliction" and yet he constantly submitted all his pains, cares and dissappointments to the better judgement of his faithful God.

> 'In the most adverse circumstances I have proved His unfailing grace. This last great loss (Dorothy's death) came very close to my heart but I know that God doeth all things well. It is the "bread of tears" which one finds most difficult to eat. Yet under the tender but strong hand of the Son of God we are called to partake of such food. For our souls it is ultimately good, though immediately we may not see reason for it'.

Wartime service brough him to Grimsby where he engaged in relief and spiritual work at the Queen Mary Hostel. In a letter to the person who recommended him for this work the Superintendent of the Mission describesthe extent of his activities:-

> 'Early in 1939 you recommended Mr. R.N. Shaw, of the Scillies, to me. We engaged him and he has been remarkably successful in his work amongst fishermen. With the advent of war we were called upon to sleep some 300/400 naval men nightly, and to feed them, this gave heavy work, and Mr. Shaw, who had been made assistant Superintendent worked in a remarkable manner in the interest of these men. When we received over a period 3,625 survivors all needing clothing, food and general attention here again Shaw shone. I was very proud to find him washing the feet of some injured Chinamen on one occasion. I am grateful to you for influencing my mind in Shaw's direction nearly six years ago and we are all glad at Grimsby that we had the privilege of meeting such a man'.

At the end of the war he was appointed Superintendent of the Fishermen's Institute at North Shields and threw himself wholeheartedly into a ministry directed to the bodies, minds and souls of men. An Asian seaman

whom he befriended wrote to tell him:-

'I never had such a friend as you, you have been so kind to me and I do hope every missionary in the world is like you'.

3. IN THE LAND OF HIS ADOPTION

The Irish Ministry

Roy Shaw arrived in Ireland to take up the Secretaryship of the Cork Y.M.C.A. in April, 1952. He was welcomed into the membership of the Baptist Church worshipping at MacCurtain Street on 19th June, 1952. As a church member Mr. Shaw shared fully in the trials and limitations of a small and struggling congregation. His earlier experiences in many places made him a trusted counsellor and negotiator.

When he came to Cork the church had been vacant for some time. F.W. Gracey had ministered in the pulpit and given leadership for over 40 years from 1910 until his death in 1950. During the vacancy the church appointed a pulpit Committee which "recommended that Mr. Shaw be asked to supply the pulpit for about five months". Repeated approaches were made to him to consider a call to the pastorate but he was adamant and told the church that he "would not accept a call to the pastorate while he was secretary of the Y.M.C.A. lest he split the Cork company".

While at the Y.M.C.A. he had to overcome a severe rigidity and bondage to tradition in a section of the Association but his enthusiasm and warm spirituality made a considerable impact on the city. Many more young people came into the premises and the Sunday evening Gospel service was frequently crowded out.

When the time came for him to make yet another change in his ministry he returned for a short time to the North of England as York City Missioner. It was not really a surprise to him when an official call was made out by the little church by the Lee where his heart really lay. An interesting aspect

of the procedure which issued the invitation was the request that he would reply within about ten days, in time for the next business meeting. A minute records that he complied with this requirement and 'notified his acceptance of our call by telegram dated 20th October - thus bringing our long search and vacancy to an end. Thanks be to God'.

> At a church meeting on the 14th October, 1954, the pastor elect 'spoke of his sense of the Divine call and asking for unity, loyalty to the Lord, to the church and to the pastor, who should have the leadership in spiritual things. The 21st anniversary of his ordination to the Lord's work occurs this month - the present was one of the holiest moments of his life. A season of prayer followed - ending, unusually for us, with the Lord's prayer'. (Cork Church Minutes).

The Church Secretary, Mr. Alfred Thornton, had written to him on 25th February, 1954, expressing warm appreciation of his ministry and regretting his proposed departure from Cork. He went on to explain their hesitancy in extending a call but assuring him of their continued interest:-

> 'The Church would like you to know that at this meeting they expressed regret that they had felt unable to call you in the past to the Pastorate, but your position as Secretary of the Y.M.C.A. prevented any action being taken. The members realize, of course, that you are already committed to an appointment in York, and they would pray God's richest blessing on your new work for Him. At the same time if the church is willing to leave the matter of the Pastorate open, for say, six months, would you be prepared to return to Cork as Pastor?'
>
> His response to this enquiry was so typical of the man. Before he left Cork he spent a day in the meeting-house when he asked the Lord to bring him back again if that were His will. What was later described as "Mr. Shaw's five points" were placed before the church meeting as arrangements were finalised. Although the church was quite at home discussing the more Famous Five Points their new pastor had less theological things in mind; the call to be unlimited as to years, holiday arrangements, free Sundays, stipend and the spiritual responsibilities of the minister!

From the beginning of his new ministry R.N. Shaw was strongly aware that he had come into an ecclesial community with a rich heritage. He quickly adjusted to an Irish lifestyle and became a familiar figure in the city where his ministry was to reach its final stage. He was fascinated

with the story of the church and had a thorough knowledge of its historical development.

A Notable Foundation

Into the mid-17th century County of Cork came a Baptist named Major Edward Riggs. He was a member of Parliament for Bandon and Commissioner of the Peace. On his estate, Riggsdale, he set up a fruitful church fellowship in his home and notable conversions took place. Eventually a meeting-house was provided in Fishamble Lane (now Liberty Street) and occupied until the close of the 18th century. Another site was procured in Dunscombe Marsh (now Marlborough Street) where Baptists worshipped for 90 years. In 1892 the present building was erected in King Street now known as MacCurtain Street.

Mrs. Riggs procured a burial ground, sited outside the walls of medieval Cork and formerly used as the graveyard for St. Stephen's Priory and Hospital for Lepers. During the turbulence of Charles the 2nd's reign Protestant Dissenters were disallowed meeting in public for worship. For 20 years a spiritual resistance movement was maintained by a godly few, mostly women, who met secretly until the Restoration brought religious liberty. Notable names in the pastorate include Joseph Pettitt, Ebenezer Gibbons and John Coleman. Thomas Delaune was one of the more prominent members who founded a Grammar School in London and absorbed himself in the cause of religious liberty ending up in Newgate prison where he died in his early forties. Into this historical setting came a friendly little Englishman who was to encounter much discouragement and decline in the life of the small church. Yet he was always anxious to produce a body of people, no matter how small, who were faithful to the God of the Church . . . .

> 'By the grace of God we are not without those whose name and character are worthy of the history we bear'.

He prays for the little flock:-

> 'May grace be given to those who bear the responsibility, to

keep the banner of truth displayed in this propitious field and the fair name of our Redeemer unsullied before the eyes of all, until the Captain of our salvation deigns to remove us to Glory'.

While a loyal Baptist Roy Shaw had a large heart for all God's people and he was ready to throw himself into genuine evangelistic endeavour. He was responsible for training and conducting a Gospel choir at a united Mission in the City Hall led by the Rev. George Duncan. One close friend has written:-

'He never tried to influence people to believe in things which he held very strongly - he always said that the word of God should do its own work'.

The Gospel Enthusiast

A long and keen interest in outdoor evangelism continued in his early days in Cork. At first he joined the Salvation Army at the Grand Parade but later expressed dissatisfaction with their style of presentation. With his accordian, and sometimes only one other companion, he faithfully held forth the Word of Life in the city centre in all sorts of weather. During the second half of his ministry the Baptist Home Mission Open Air Team came together with a burden and vision for reaching the fairs and markets, mainly in Connacht. With characteristic concern for Divine guidance he invited the emerging team to his flat at 2, Vernon Place for a day of prayer and planning. This was the beginning of a decade of widespread travel and great opportunity for Gospel proclamation as towns and villages became accessible for the first time in years. Memories of rich fellowship and united labour abound. 'R.N.' as he was affectionately known, was the senior member of the team but he was always satisfied to take the place of an equal brother and contribute his own distinctive style to a happy and united team. He kept careful records of those ten years when 900 meetings were held in 189 different towns. Over 60,000 people heard the Word of God and we travelled 91,000 miles in each of the four Provinces but mainly in the West of Ireland. He had a strong dislike for amplifiers either inside or outside and it was only in the latter years

when the fairs went into decline that he was willing to accept the usefulness of loudspeaking equipment. It was his view that their use created an artificial barrier between the preacher and the people and introduced a foreign body which broke the natural means of communication, the naked voice. His enthusiasm was boundless and he cared little for personal comfort so long as the Gospel went out. After a meeting filled with an unusual sense of God's power and attended by hundreds of men in Tuam Square, Co. Galway, the team paused for praise on the outside of the town and tears of gratitude flowed freely as he poured out his heart to God in gratitude for such a peaceful entrance and unhindered hearing in a Galway fair.

4. THE AROMA OF CHRIST

Close acquaintances have fragrant memories of Mr. Shaw's Christlike characteristics.

His Love for People

Roy Shaw never waned in his personable and gracious interest in others. His friendship was valued by hundreds but there were those to whom he was specially close. His church secretary in Cork, A.S.E. Thornton, an unusual man but full of godliness and respect, was a dear and trusted friend and fellow elder. Andrew Kerr, Chief Engineer on the M.V. 'Innisfallen' had a close friendship with his esteemed pastor and they spent hundreds of happy hours on ship and ashore exchanging insights in Gospel truth and discussing the latest religious publications. His love of the country brought him often for relaxation to the welcoming Christian home of the Misses Clarke at St. Edmunds in the mountains of West Cork. His pastoral care of ageing members of the church provided him with a spiritual intimacy with the unique Dorothy Washington and the serene Mrs. DeCogan whom he baptized when she was in her eighties. Everywhere he went there

were special friends who loved and respected him - the Sampsons on Bryher, Mrs. Simmons and the Davies in Bristol, the Gillies on Tyneside, the Beares in Penzance, the Fitzsimmons in Belfast and the Rev. W.H. and Mrs. Davies in Blackpool. Few ministers were as willing to 'condescend to men of low estate' and like his Saviour he was at home with the common people. At his memorial service in Cork a retired Major from a prominent Cork military family was present along with three bus conductors and a multitude of all sorts and conditions of men. He had a special love for children and young people and he was a natural winner of souls. While a patient in the local hospital he talked freely and naturally to the other patients of the things of God. While holidaying in London and other cities he made a point of avoiding religious meetings apart from Sunday worship usually at Westminister Chapel but spent hours in personal evangelism on park benches, buses and in cafes.

His Deep Humility

Although greatly gifted intellectually, musically and spiritually he never projected himself in any way. Small in stature he was ever humble in the sight of God and men. This revealed itself in a number of ways. As an able preacher he was an enthusiastic recipient of the faithful ministry of other men and never regarded himself as possessing every spiritual insight. His library was large and varied and his books were diligently read and clearly marked. He had an unbounded admiration for the Puritans, the leaders of the Evangelical Revival and the Great Classics and the major historians and serious novelists. All his gleanings were turned to spiritual advantage and the nurture of his soul. Spurgeon was a special favourite. His assessment of the biography of the Prince of Preachers by W.Y. Fullerton speaks for itself:-

> 'It is a moral, mental and spiritual tonic. No biography has stirred my soul so deeply. It made C.H. Spurgeon real in a sense which only those in affinity with all great souls can understand. It enlarged my own heart and helped to re-adjust my outlook and on the ministry as all pertaining to the Calling, Election and Salvation of Mankind'.

His Positive Godliness

Those who knew him well cannot forget the closeness of his walk with God. Prayer seemed his second nature and his spirit ruminated in the rich pasturage of God's Word. A deep dislike for religious cant or superficiality stayed with him all his days. If he had one fear it was lukewarmness in the things of the Spirit. His letters, even those written when scarcely out of his teens, breathe the very atmosphere of heaven and display a mature mind and an intense piety. Always troubled when anyone showed signs of lapsing spiritually he spoke or wrote directly but with compassion. A letter to Mother Shaw counsels her 'not to waste money on Judge Rutherford's books'.

A warning is given about other influences:-

> 'I hope you're not wandering off to the Christadephians. I've never read such twisting of Scripture to suit their own views. They may get sincere people but I shouldn't mess about with them if I were you'.

When he suspected that his father wasn't showing a deep relish for the things of God he pleaded with him:-

> 'Read God's Word more, not as you read your twopenny "John Bull" but read it with a praying heart and ask God to reveal its hidden truths which alone are revealed to His own. Gems! Rubies! Priceless! God breathed! If you don't, ask God to make you do so. Then read, making yourself wise unto Salvation, Sanctification and Holiness'.

Mention must be made of his culinary arts and generous hospitality. In the restricted facilities of small apartments he managed to entertain with a precision and to a standard envied by the most gifted housewife. In his closing years at Cork he had the additional comfort of a detached house bequeathed to him by a church member. Here the elderly, the lonely, the traveller, the student and even the outcast felt the glow of his welcome and heard something of the Saviour's mercy.

He often spoke appreciatively of the way Irish Baptists took him to their hearts. His knowledge of events in all the churches was considerable

and he promoted cross-border co-operation and was enthusiastically behind every effort to further the cause of Christ in the churches. As a preacher he was received in all the churches and his enthusiasm endeared him to those who had doctrinal emphases about which he had reservations. As a member of the Council he contributed to the united mission of the denomination at home and abroad and as Union President graced the office with dignity and spirituality.

There were, of course, defects in his nature. Because of his emotional make-up there were times when his feelings ran to excess. As a child he went through fits of temper and all his life was most impatient. This side of his character comes out in a wartime letter to the family house:-

> 'I had a pleasant jaunt around Lewis's. They don't seem short of goods there. Queues of fearful length were gathering around stalls where biscuits and chocolates were being sold. I'm afraid your worthy son was not patient enough to wait any length of time. Miss Shaw ought to have been there!'

As an astute judge of human nature there were occasions when his impressions were far astray. And in latter years he developed a habit of over-reacting to a piece of information which he had not taken time to hear properly or analyse thoroughly. But these were minor faults in a man whose most natural redeeming feature was his ability to laugh at himself - a quality not universal in either Christians or preachers! It was no ordinary man who could weep publicly during a performance of Handel's "Messiah", who crossed the Irish Sea to be with a distressed church member or who washed the feet of an ailing Asian seaman. The fragrance of his Christlike character will remain with me to the end of my days. It was an honour to know and to work with this Great-heart in the Gospel and our churches were privileged to have a man of his calibre in their ministry. How his heart would thrill with the reception of the Churches in Donegal and Sligo into the Irish Baptist Union, the moves towards a Housing Scheme for the elderly and the many encouragements in the renovated meeting-house at Cork. Perhaps his greatest contribution to our

corporate witness was his natural and fervent love for souls. With his earthly work now ended and his spirit with Christ which is far better, we must give ourselves to the God who made him what he was and used a frail vessel to glorify His name. All that was mortal of a beloved brother awaits the resurrection trumpet in the secluded serenity of Brannockstown Baptist churchyard, in Co. Kildare. The epitaph on the simple gravestone sums up the life of a servant of God, who more than most 'fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith'.