Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology



https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb

PayPal https://paypal.me/robbradshaw

A table of contents for the *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal, old series,* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_irish-baptist-historical-society-journal_old-series.php

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

VOLUME TWENTY 1987/88

IRISH BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JOURNAL

VOLUME TWENTY 1987 - 88

EDITOR: JOSHUA THOMPSON, B.A.

©: Irish Baptist Historical Society

ISSN: 0075-0727

Membership of the Society is open to persons interested in the history of the Baptist Churches in Ireland. The membership subscription is £3.50 sterling (in the British Isles) and entitles to the Society's Journal. For overseas members the annual subscription is $5.50 inclusive.

Price to non-members: £3.00 sterling or $4.50 per issue.

Published at the Offices of the
BAPTIST UNION OF IRELAND
117 Lisburn Road,
Belfast BT9 7AF
Northern Ireland
Telephones: Belfast (0232) 663108/9

CONTENTS

		Page
1	Editorial	4
2	Looking Back - Looking Forward	5
3	Baptists in Belfast: The Twentieth Century Challenge of Urban Growth and Decline	12
4	John Storey of Letterkenny. (1817 - 1916)	20
5	The Communion Controversy and Irish Baptists	26
6	What 'The Irish Baptist Magazine' offered its Readers in the 1880s	36
7	Annual Report 1987/88	47

EDITORIAL

Volume 20 of the *Journal* seeks to maintain the standard of its predecessors. John Warke, a town planner and a member of the Windsor church, Belfast, presents a competent paper on Belfast Baptists from his professional viewpoint. His analysis of the effects of urban development on their witness is stimulating. Our President, Dr. Harry Gribbon, stirs memories and susceptibilities with his sideways look at changes which the passage of time has brought in some areas of Irish Baptist life and worship. John Storey of Letterkenny was 'a man of parts' and the account of his interests and leadership of the small original Baptist church in that part of Co. Donegal by Clive Johnston, sometime pastor of the present Letterkenny church, captures something of Storey's spirit. The honorary secretary discusses Irish Baptist views and attitudes to the Lord's Supper and church membership in the context of the wider controversy among Baptists on these issues. Dr. Maurice Dowling's paper on the *Irish Baptist Magazine* of the 1880s reveals the wide sweep of topics, besides sermons, which were of interest to Irish Baptists a hundred years ago. Those topics and how they were treated and repeated reveal how keenly that generation felt their small numbers and isolation.

LOOKING BACK - LOOKING FORWARD

My revered predecessor in office, after a lifetime in the ministry, had a wealth of experience, anecdote and wisdom which, with his gracious presence, we now greatly miss. Certainly I cannot offer you anything of the kind. Instead, and as an introduction to this discussion I want to start by employing an entirely different idiom.

A ship's captain out of sight of land has three possible ways of establishing his position. First, by dead reckoning; that is, knowing his point of departure and using an accurate record of speed and courses steered, he can, with suitable adjustment for tides and currents, work out on the chart where he is now. Second, using the position of the sun to establish latitude and his chronometer to establish longitude he can do the same thing by calculation - or at night he can observe the bearings of and angles made by the fixed stars. (The apostle Paul's navigators knew this method.) Third, he can get a radio fix on two shore transmitters, the further apart the better, and his ship should be at the point where the lines intersect. A wise captain will not rely on one method only but will use two or more, hoping that the results will coincide. Failure to do so may duplicate the experience of the cadet whose calculations showed his ship's position in the North Sea when the Statue of Liberty was appearing over the horizon.

Looking at where our denomination is now, it is obviously the first, or historical, method which is of most interest. Not that we can ignore the other two. Fortunately our celestial guides do not alter; God's principles and objectives remain unalterably the same - more so than even the so-called 'fixed' stars, whose relative positions do change imperceptibly over many thousands of years. It is a pleasing reflection that as our Saviour observed the sky over Galilee he saw the same stars, the same constellations as we do - without the interference of street lights. Job knew the Great Bear, Orion and Pleiades. Meantime the men of science are making known more and more of the 'how it works' of God's creation, to His greater glory: the 'how', of course, not the 'why'. Did you notice the recently announced discovery, based on genetic analysis, that all human females now on earth can trace their origins back to one single woman who lived an immense time ago somewhere in east Africa? Well, few of us would quarrel with the basic idea, and if the location were more precisely defined and scientists would pursue a similar line of enquiry about *men*, there might be a meeting of minds on the subject. So, use, but do not rely on the methods of science.

But to return to historical matters, I want to discuss a few things to which our predecessors attached more importance than we do, and changes which have taken place amongst us, not in belief, but in practice and emphasis. I hope I shall not be accused of nostalgia, or harking back to things simply because they are past. We have to live in the present, but it is a present totally derived from past experience.

I. Sunday Observance

On the matter of Sunday Observance: our predecessors would not recognise Baptist, let alone Protestant Sunday Observance as it is today. We lament, as do all Protestant churches, the very poor attendance at our Sunday evening services, and seek to find excuses for it. I suspect the real trouble lies in misinterpretation of the fourth commandment 'therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed the half of it.' 'Keep Sunday special' we say, but how special? In the secular area there is no problem. So long as men are paid 'double time' for working on a Sunday it will be special. A very long time ago, when it was generally thought that observance of God's law was important, and a man denied the opportunity to attend divine service might endanger his immortal soul, payment of wages not just at ordinary but at premium rates was considered appropriate for Sunday working. Now that there is no danger to his immortal soul, if indeed he has one, the justification for 'double time' rates for the average worker would seem to have disappeared. Does this mean the unions would be happy simply with basic rates? On the contrary, they press in their agreements for a certain amount of overtime and Sunday working even when output does not require it and costs would be much better without it. Yes, for the average British worker, Sunday will always be 'special', but that is not what we mean.

Nor do we mean that Sunday should be a day of repression, long faces and dark clothing, with the only entertainment an afternoon visit to the cemetery. Even if that were acceptable to adults, young people just wouldn't tolerate it: nor should they have to. Could I recollect my own childhood to illustrate what I mean?

Sunday started on Saturday evening. All homework had to be finished; boots and shoes had to be polished ready for the morning; other household chores, like preparation of the vegetables, which could be done beforehand were done; the whole family was together. I suspect that in the north of Ireland we inherited much of the atmosphere which Burns depicts in his 'Cottar's Saturday Night' ('From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs.') In the south, inheritance was more from the English pastoral scene. Both placed emphasis on preparation for the Lord's day. On Sunday there was no rush to school; at breakfast, cereal replaced the usual porridge, there might be an egg. Then the walk to church and home again, for a late lunch put into the oven before we set out, and a special sweet or pudding prepared the previous evening. There was even a special grace, sung, before Sunday lunch. In the afternoon, before Sunday School age, or on holiday, the programme depended on the time of year. In summer, in Coleraine, a country walk to a favourite view, with an adult to explain the various things and places passed, the names of birds, wildflowers and so on. In winter there were all sorts of Sunday books and games. One did not play with a ball on Sunday, but the variety of other things more than made up for that. In place of Sunday School there was a Scottish grandmother who told us the most exciting Bible stories. Everything was cleared away for tea-time, the children washed, the best china brought out for use on this one day of the week. The meal was special too - one could have jam *or* cake on a weekday, jam *and* cake on a Sunday. Evening activity for those not going to

church depended on where one was and the time of year, but inevitably it closed with a gathering around the piano for the singing of favourite hymns. (That was probably the last occasion on which I heard 'There is a land of pure delight where saints immortal reign.') Later, there grew up a practice in the Belfast home for friends from the church, principally Sunday School teachers and choir members to gather in our house after the evening service for a session of more vigorous hymn singing. If the neighbours for a considerable distance around were unfamiliar with the words of 'All hail the power of Jesus' name', they must have been very deaf indeed! Later again, when Sunday started with B.B. Bible class, followed by morning service, Sunday School, evening service and young people's meeting, the day was adequately filled.

Now, I hope I am not conveying an idyllic picture or saying that that is the way things ought to be done, but simply that for one family, sixty or so years ago, and following the practice of those who had gone before, Sunday *was* different, very different.

Parents will say that today's children reject the so-called 'Protestant Sabbath' and demand competitive games, television, trips to the seaside and all the rest. But what else are they offered? In the adult world of the days I have been describing, there were of course problems of which we knew little or nothing. Certain farm work had always to be done; but how much? What was included under 'works of necessity and mercy'? At student level and particularly before exams, was study permissible? It must have been easy, as it still is, to become Pharisaic about Sunday observance, but once it becomes burdensome or feels repressive the whole point is gone - whether in terms of honour to God or benefit to man. One thing the child of God should never experience is 'that Monday morning feeling' - unless it be a feeling of physical, spiritual and mental refreshment.

II. The Bible

One might have been excused for thinking a generation or two ago, that the laws of the Medes and Persians obliged pastors to preach from the Old Testament on Sunday morning and from the New Testament in the evening. Many of you will recall the practice, some perhaps have made a deliberate effort to avoid it. As a child I found much Old Testament preaching dry and tedious. The narrative part was fine - the crossing of the Red Sea, David and Goliath, and so forth, but sermons simply based on Old Testament texts were much less interesting. Looking further back, one has the impression that Old Testament preaching in say the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was more simple and direct. However that may be, there is no doubt that our forefathers were steeped in the Old Testament - to their very great benefit. A few moments ago I used the phrase 'the law of the Medes and Persians' you all know where it comes from and what it means. But would the man-in-the-street today? If you have watched or listened to some of the many quiz programmes on the air you must have been struck by the inability of quite well educated people to answer quite simple biblical questions, questions which we would consider well within the scope of Sunday School children. This sort of ignorance is relatively new and seems to be growing. Is it growing amongst us?

The question is relevant because not so very long ago 'religious instruction' at school meant what the term implies. Passages of scripture were learned and had to be recited, Bible stories were told, and catechism memorised. It could be assumed, with compulsory education, that most people had a basic knowledge of biblical facts, and many phrases in common currency indicated a shared acquaintance with places and people of the Old Testament - 'the wisdom of Solomon','manna from heaven','Potiphar's wife','a philistine', and so forth. Our hymns of course abound in references to Zion, Jordan and Jerusalem. Today many of these phrases and references need to be explained and interpreted. It is not sufficient to concentrate on special items like the high priests' garments or the various sacrifices. Our people, particularly our young people, have to be made familiar as their predecessors were with the whole history of God's chosen people. God speaks to the world not only in what He says but in what He does.

I hope I shall not be considered impertinent in reminding you that so much of what happened in Judea and Galilee whilst Jesus was on earth is explicable only by reference to earlier events recorded in the scriptures which He knew and loved. John's exclamation 'Behold the Lamb of God' means little or nothing if taken in isolation, but seen in the context of the Passover lamb it rightly entitles him to be called 'the last and greatest of the prophets'. In the Old Testament we are dealing with an extraordinary and remarkable book. You are all familiar with the genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth as set out in the first chapter of Matthew's gospel, tracing His descent from Abraham, and will recall that it includes some strange names - Tamar, whose relations with Judah her father-in-law were, to say the least, peculiar; Rahab, of whose profession the record leaves no doubt; Ruth the Moabitess, and Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Now, the inclusion of these names in His *legal* genealogy you have all doubtless heard explained and justified. But how did it happen that amongst all the marital and sexual irregularity to which the men and women of the time were prone, these particular people and incidents should have been recorded? Ponder that for a moment!

Nor is it only in a spiritual context that the Old Testament is important. Go into any good art gallery and you will find innumerable pictures by the great masters illustrating biblical scenes - the worship of the golden calf, Jael and Sisera, Elijah taunting the priests of Baal, and much else. When these pictures were painted, indeed until fairly recently, there was no need to explain who the people were or what the picture conveyed: now there is. Pity any art student without a good grasp of Old Testament history! But one need not leave home to hear daily references to Damascus and Jerusalem, Tyre and Gaza. I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet but am fairly certain that the state of Israel, the river Jordan and the land God gave Cain will be news for some time yet. Let us return then and give the sort of emphasis to the Old Testament that our fathers did.

III. Hymns

Now, having led you from Dan to Beersheba, I want to turn to something else. Do you like, sometimes, quietly and thoughtfully, to read through a hymn; not necessarily one of the much-used ones but something perhaps from an old

hymn book, like the one my father was given by his grandfather in 1893? What a heritage our hymn book is - the devotional wisdom, experience and piety of so many men and women over many generations! I sometimes think that in our services we do not pay nearly enough attention to hymns and that congregations tend to treat then simply as part of a routine- which they certainly are not. Get these beautiful words and tunes into the hearts and minds, of children and young people especially, and they are there to stay. No doubt we all have experience of how the words of a favourite hymn learned in childhood can bring comfort to extreme old age.

Now, for the sake of those who don't know, I have to warn you that this heritage is threatened. Hymn books are coming into use in which many of our much-loved hymns have been 'improved', if that is the word, not beyond recognition perhaps, but to their very great detriment. How can you 'improve' the work of Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, John Newton or Philip Doddridge? The process starts with removal of 'thees' and 'thous', which often necessitates other changes to preserve rhyme and scansion, and then progresses to removal of words and phrases no longer in current use, and then to translation of poetic words so that 'At even e're the sun was set' becomes 'At evening...' and so on. If you are unfamiliar with the process, just consider how it affects lines like 'O Love Divine how sweet thou art, When shall I find my willing heart, all taken up by thee?' or 'Come thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy praise.' Would you be happy singing 'The day you gave us Lord is ended, The sun is sinking in the west'?

This is not simply a matter of taste, but of principle, of conservation and preservation. If the National Trust buy an eighteenth century property they don't decide 'Ah, that kitchen is too inconvenient there, let's move it' or 'Those windows are too small, let's enlarge them' If you go to see HMS Victory at Portsmouth you won't find they have removed the rigging and substituted a funnel. If you go to hear Handel's 'Messiah' you will hear the words Handel wrote in 1742, not an Americanised alternative. Let's be clear what I am saying. There *are* good modern hymns with excellent tunes. Learn them, sing them, praise the Lord in them. Hymn singing does not *have* to be an excursion into antiquity. See how West Indian congregations have adapted hymn singing to their own ethnic style: and don't they enjoy it! But if you are going to sing the hymns our forefathers knew, sing them as they knew them.

The theory which would remove all the 'thees' and 'thous' together with out-of-date and poetic expressions, on the grounds that people today, particularly young people, are unfamiliar with them is a nonsense. It is not done in the schools, where children are still taught Shakespeare's words the way Shakespeare wrote them. 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be, for loan oft loseth both itself and friend and borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.' 'Borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry' is an expression you will seldom hear on a Mount Merrion bus, but could you improve on it? 'To die, to sleep, perchance to dream; when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, what dreams may come must give us pause.' So ponders Hamlet contemplating suicide. It may not be an evangelical sermon, but how forcefully it gets its message across!

Tom Moore is not so highly esteemed as he once was but we still sing and will continue to sing

Believe me, if all those endearing young charms
Which I gaze on so fondly today,
Were to change by tomorrow and fleet in my arms
Like fairy gifts fading away.
Thou would'st still be adored, as this moment thou art,
Let thy loveliness fade as it will;
And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart
Would entwine itself verdantly still.

Beautiful words, lovely music, though I don't know what woman would relish being referred to as a 'dear ruin'! But that is how Tom Moore wrote it and that is how it will always be sung. Finally, can you imagine a packed Welsh crowd at any musical or sporting event singing other than 'Guide me, O thou great Jehovah'?

I have made my point. Let us enjoy and preserve what has been handed down to us. Ignore the passing fad for Americanisation and pass to our children the treasure we have received.

IV. Giving

I don't want to suggest that all our forefathers said and did was worthy of emulation, and I had thought of saying something about an area in which we are probably ahead of them - giving. Many of our churches in the past had a poor enough record in this respect, relying on the contributions of a few wealthy men, and in some cases income from property, to pay their ministers a pittance. Ordinary church members do not seem to have accepted their responsibilities. The topic is one which merits further examination, but we have not the time and I doubt whether this is the place. Instead, and having entitled this talk 'Looking back, looking forward', I want to conclude with a look at the future.

V. Future Opportunities

Reverting to our opening simile, I believe that our denomination is entering on uncharted seas and encountering or about to encounter conditions and opportunities which our predecessors knew nothing about. I was struck some months ago by a topic which arose out of a paper to the Society delivered by the Brannockstown pastor, Mr Robert Dunlop. He referred to the increasing perplexity and uncertainty being felt by many Roman Catholics. This arises from many things. The Latin mass is gone; Vatican II has introduced a new openness to discussion so that topics are now aired which, a generation ago, could not even be mentioned; from being a closed book, the Bible has now become recommended reading; in Europe at least there are numerical and financial trends which must be giving cause for concern. In Ireland there continues to be a body of devoted and devotional Catholics, regular in their church attendance and intelligent in their faith, but there is also a growing proportion whose faith is nominal at best and appearance at chapel confined to christening, marriage and death. I need hardly refer to the strain caused by the professed allegiance to that church of certain organised criminals and murderers. At last, some of

the hierarchy are becoming aware of the damage which their equivocal attitude has caused in a world where nothing is done in a corner, the ideas and attitudes of rebels against Vatican teaching in most European countries and in north and south America cannot fail to have an impact amongst thinking Catholics even in Ireland. Even outward appearances have changed. A couple of years ago I had to attend a wedding in a Catholic church in Malta. The building was new, light and clean inside and out. But astonishingly the Host was carried up the aisle by a girl, bareheaded and wearing green trousers! Such a thing would have been unthinkable a generation ago. Is it that people are becoming more liberal, or careless, more enlightened or emancipated? In an age of increasing cynicism, how does one explain the crowds flocking to see an alleged moving statue. Beyond question there are changes and inconsistencies here which merit investigation.

For us, the problem is: what should be our attitude to Catholics in Ireland today? These people are perplexed and need help. They have the same enemies - sin and satan - as we do and need the gospel. Yet the name 'Protestant' is anathema to them. Unfortunately, at a time of apparent opportunity, the brand of Protestantism most often featured in the media is of the 'No pope here' variety. Significantly, our brethren in the south have had more success in establishing relations with Catholics than we in the north. Our predecessors, north and south, were of course unequivocal in their condemnation of 'Romish error' and would have been sceptical of the view that a man or woman could be both a devout Catholic and a born-again follower of Jesus Christ. Nor could they altogether escape the ascendancy taint of regarding Catholics as, at best, second class citizens. The English-based Baptist Irish Society took a less hard-line attitude and employed them in their schools.

Has the time come for our approach to change? We have always insisted that conviction of error and acceptance of truth *as we see it* go hand in hand. Listening to a born-again Catholic recently it struck me how much more easily he came to the first than to the second, and how much more difficult again it was for him to do anything about it. Can we as Irish Baptists do anything to establish a bridge to make the way easier? Traditional attitudes and methods have produced insignificant results: on the other hand we are uniquely qualified for bridge building. We can claim an antiquity equal to theirs; we do not owe our origin to Calvin or Luther, John Knox or J.N. Darby, much less to Henry VIII. When it comes to persecution or discrimination, we have had our share. But how do we put the case, how demonstrate that we care for them as people, that there is in fact no 'us' and 'them'? Not by polemic certainly, not by concentration on a catalogue of errors, not by a tit-for-tat recital of religious persecutions; perhaps by emphasis, in an increasingly materialistic age, on a great deal we hold in common; but most of all on a remembrance that the final testing of Peter was not 'What do you believe?' but 'Do you love me?'

Looking back then there is much to emulate and preserve; looking forward there are new problems and fresh opportunities. May it be the Society's role, within the denomination, to play a full part in both. H.D. GRIBBON.

BAPTISTS IN BELFAST: The Twentieth Century Challenge of Urban Growth and Decline

At present there are 96 Baptist churches in Ireland, 29 of which are within the Belfast Urban Area.[1] However, Belfast and indeed Ulster was not in the vanguard of the development of Baptist witness in Ireland. The first Baptist churches in Ireland were formed during the seventeenth century at Waterford, Cork and Dublin. Many more were formed in the south during this period but are no longer extant. A Baptist church was formed in Armagh during the eighteenth century but it disappeared around 1750. The earliest Baptist church still in existence in Ulster was formed in Coleraine in 1795. The Tobermore church was formed in 1804 and Knockconny in 1807. It is the only one of several churches formed in the Clogher Valley during the first half of the eighteenth century which still exists. So, by the time the first Baptist church was formed in Belfast in 1847, there were already several Baptist churches in rural Ulster and provincial towns.

In the middle of the nineteenth century Belfast was a developing industrial city. It had its origins in the seventeenth century when a small settlement formed at a ford near the mouth of the River Lagan. The name Belfast is derived from the words 'Beal - Ferset' which mean 'the approach to the sand bank or crossing.' It was here that Sir Arthur Chichester laid the foundations of a new town which was granted a charter in 1613. The town grew gradually, functioning as a market centre and port and, with the construction of the Lagan Canal in the mid-eighteenth century, Belfast was linked to its hinterland. This led to an expansion of trade with England and the colonies. The early dominance of the cotton industry was soon to be superseded by linen although, in the late eighteenth century, linen markets in centres such as Lisburn, Londonderry, Ballymena, Lurgan, Armagh and Dungannon either equalled or surpassed that of Belfast. The linen industry in the city really began to take- off with the growth in the manufacture of white linen (as opposed to unbleached brown linen). The White Linen Hall was built on the site of the City Hall in 1783. Prior to this Dublin had dominated white linen commerce in Ireland.

The Victorian - Edwardian City (1850 - World War I)

Urban Growth

Belfast saw significant expansion during this period as, with the advent of the railway in the middle of the nineteenth century, people flowed into the city. Its development was unique in Ireland in that it was the only industrial city in the British-style. In terms of its economy, development, structure and role, Belfast was firmly within the industrial seaboard region of Lancashire, Clydeside and eastern Ulster. By 1852 there were 28 flax mills in the city, reflecting the development of steam power and the break with cottage-based industry. The city[2] expanded in all directions, although building was largely confined to level slob lands. Terrace housing sprang up around mills to the north

and west of the city centre. Similar housing was built in east Belfast at Ballymacarrett where the industrial base was engineering and the ropeworks. Growth in this area accelerated as the shipbuilding industry expanded following the creation of Queen's Island as part of the works associated with the construction of the Victoria Channel. The population of the city rose dramatically from 100,000 in 1850 to 350,000 in 1900, an increase of 250%. By 1901 Belfast was the fastest growing city in the United Kingdom and, like its mainland counterparts such as Leeds, Bradford and Newcastle, 75% of the working population was involved in industry. The historian Beckett, described the development of the city over this period as being like 'that of a typical English industrial city'. It is significant to note that in 1901 only 20% of the heads of households[3] in the city had been born in Belfast.

Growth slowed down between 1900 and World War I by which time the city's population was around 400,000. During this period middle-class housing was built in Stranmillis, Knock, Belmont and between Malone and Lisburn roads. Central slums were cleared to make way for Royal Avenue and Victoria Street. Donegall Square was built and represents a fine example of Edwardian architecture and planning.

Baptist Witness

It was within this urban framework that Baptist witness took root in Belfast following the formation of the Great Victoria Street church in 1847 as a result of work commenced in the city in 1839 by the Baptist Irish Society. In 1861 there were 55 churches in Belfast - 20 Presbyterian, 10 Church of Ireland, 5 Roman Catholic, and 20 others, one of which was Baptist. By World War I there were nine Baptist churches in the city - Great Victoria Street (1847), Antrim Road (1867), Mountpottinger (1891), Shankill (1896), Milltown (1896), Cliftonpark Avenue (1901), Bloomfield (1903), East End (1904) and Grove (1915). The growth pattern and distribution of churches is interesting and the following points are of significance:-

(i) The early churches took some time to settle into permanent locations. This is hardly surprising, given the presence of few Baptists in the city and its rapidly changing face. Great Victoria Street had its roots in meetings first held in Ann Street and a church was formed in Academy Street around 1843/44. It was re-formed in 1847 and, following the sale of the Academy Street chapel in 1861, the church met in Victoria Hall, May Street until money was raised for the Great Victoria Street premises which opened in 1866. The Antrim Road church was originally based in Regent Street and thirty years passed before it moved to the Antrim Road in 1897.

(ii) The early churches, on becoming established, displayed remarkable evangelistic zeal. Members of the Great Victoria Street and Antrim Road churches living in the east of the city joined together in outreach and this led to the formation of Mountpottinger. At the time specific mention was made that this was 'a working class area'. Cliftonpark Avenue was formed as an offshoot of the Antrim Road church. Mountpottinger itself engaged in outreach which, within 13 years of its formation, led to the establishment

of East End. Eleven years later members of Mountpottinger separated amicably to form the Grove church.

(iii) The role of individual evangelists or leaders contributed to the formation of the Shankill, Milltown and Bloomfield churches.

(iv) East Belfast was already becoming established as a strong centre of Baptist witness with four churches (Mountpottinger, Bloomfield, East End and Grove) being formed in relatively close proximity to one another. By 1918 these churches made up over 51% of the total membership of Baptist churches in Belfast.

(v) Of the 9 churches in the city five were based in primarily working class areas. These churches (Mountpottinger, Shankill, Cliftonpark Avenue, East End and Grove) accounted for around 50% of Baptists in the city. In this Belfast was unlike many English and Scottish cities where Baptists were often perceived as having a mainly middle-class base. For example the author of a similar study in Glasgow concluded that by World War I '....Baptists were far stronger in the areas of middle-class Glasgow.'[4]

It has been seen, therefore, that Baptist witness became established in Belfast during a period of great change and rapid urban growth. By the end of World War I there were 1150 Baptists in the city representing only 0.3% of the city's population. This might not appear to be remarkable growth over a period of 70 years, given that over the same period the population of Belfast increased by 300,000. However, it has to be recognised that many of the new citizens had moved into Belfast from rural Ulster. It is not unusual that people adjusting to a new environment will hold on to something familiar and, in a strongly religious society, what firmer base could there be than to retain traditional denominational links. Indeed it is perhaps remarkable that there were over 1000 Baptists in Belfast by 1920, given the comment of Vedder, the Baptist historian, that in Ireland Baptists had '...ever found this an uncongenial soil'.

The Inter-War Years

Urban Growth

Following the industrial boom of World War I, reflected in the fact the Harland and Wolff's workforce reached 20,000, Ulster was to experience the effects of the depression. In 1933 there were only 2000 men employed in the shipyard, although substantial workforces were maintained in other industries. Furthermore it was during this period that the aircraft industry developed and by 1937 Shorts employed 6000 people.

The population of the city continued to grow and by 1937 just over 438,000 people lived within the County Borough of Belfast[5]. By this date the Urban Area population was over 492,000. Between the Wars over 28,000 houses were built - over 82% of these were built by the private sector which benefitted from new subsidy arrangements introduced in 1924. In comparison to other British cities, few council houses were built and, given this, Belfast lacks the inter-war council estates associated with mainland industrial cities. Furthermore, there was little slum clearance and by the outbreak of World War

II it was estimated that around 70% of houses in Belfast required repairs. There was an estimated need for 23,000 new dwellings.

Within the city house building was concentrated at Ardoyne, Skegoniel, Whiterock, Woodvale, Stranmillis, Orangefield and Cherryvalley. In the wider Urban Area development took place at Lisburn, Dunmurry, Finaghy, Glengormley, Monkstown and Dundonald.

Baptist Witness

During the inter-war years nine new Baptist churches were formed - Strandtown (1926), Lisburn (1926), Haypark Avenue (1926), Church Street East (1930), Windsor (1931), Glengormley (1932), Orangefield (1939) and Carryduff (1939)[6]. The most salient points about the development of Baptist witness between the wars are as follows:-

(i) The pattern of earlier years continued as existing churches played a role in the formation of new churches. Church St. East began as an outstation of Grove in 1916 and Strandtown was formed largely by members of Great Victoria Street. Likewise, Windsor was formed by members who broke away from Gt. Victoria Street, although in this instance the separation arose out of dissension.

(ii) The work of the Belfast and District Baptist Council played a significant role in this period which led to the formation of Haypark Avenue and Glengormley churches.

(iii) The remaining churches came into being through the witness of local people and strong individual leadership.

(iv) With the exception of Mountpottinger and Milltown, all of the churches formed before World War I grew significantly. Shankill, for example, displayed remarkable growth, its membership rising from around 80 in 1918 to over 360 in 1940, more than a four-fold increase.

(v) The consolidation of Baptist witness in the east of the city continued with the formation of Strandtown, Haypark Avenue, Church Street East and Orangefield.

(vi) Churches were established early in a number of important locations - Glengormley, Monkstown, Carryduff and Lisburn - where substantial growth was to occur in future years.

(vii) Whilst most of the churches formed during the inter-war years were in primarily middle-class areas, Baptists continued to plant churches in what would have been perceived as less favoured districts - Church Street East, Haypark Avenue and Orangefield.

This was a period during which there was a significant increase in the number of Baptists in Belfast. Membership of churches within the Urban Area grew by over 80%, rising to around 2,100 at the outbreak of World War II. Nonetheless, despite this considerable growth, Baptists only made up 0.4% of the total population of the Urban Area. On a positive note, however, the

experience of Baptists in Belfast between the Wars compares favourably with that of Glasgow where the number of Baptists in the city remained static.

The Post-War Period

Urban Trends

This period can be divided into two parts, each with its distinctive urban problems. Between 1945 and 1971 the population of the Urban Area continued to increase. However the 1970s saw a dramatic turnaround as from then on the Urban Area experienced a significant decline in the population. These trends are indicated in the following table :-

Year	City Population	Remainder Population	Urban Area Population
1939	438,086	54,152	492,238
	(+5,585)	(+34,658)	(+40,243)
1951	443,671	88,810	532,481
	(-27,815)	(+58,852)	(+31,037)
1961	415,856	147,662	563,518
	(-53,774)	(+72,529)	(+18,755)
1971	362,082	220,191	582,273
	(-52,082)	(-20,191)	(-72,273)
1981 [7]	310,000	200,000	510,000
	(-10,000)	(-5,000)	(-15,000)
1986	300,000	195,000	495,000

The post-war era up to 1970 saw considerable expansion within the suburbs of the city. Immediately following the end of World War II largely uncontrolled and haphazard housing development took place at Finaghy, Glengormley, Dundonald, Castlereagh and Andersonstown. This development only confirmed the trend that had been established before and during the War. Several planning reports addressed the problem of uncontrolled urban expansion but these did not result in the necessary legislative changes to give force to their recommendations. Estyn Evans once described the setting of Belfast as '..a great cup....destined to hold the brimming city' - at this stage it was in danger of spilling over the rim of the cup. It was 1964 before a limit was set to the outward expansion of the city. In that year the Belfast Regional plan was published and it established a Stopline around the Belfast Urban Area. Growth was to be directed to a number of 'centres of development' including Antrim, Carrickfergus, Bangor and Newtownards. In the 1960s the population of the County Borough continued to decline as some redevelopment took place. The blighting effect of major road proposals also contributed to this decline. By 1971 the County Borough population had dropped to 362,000, representing a net loss of over 80,000 during the period 1951-1971. In the same 20 year period the population of the Urban Area rose by almost 50,000, reaching 582,000 by 1971. The combined effect of these population changes is illustrated by the fact that the urban fringe experienced a net increase in its population of over 130,000. Large scale public authority housing schemes were implemented at Rathcoole, Dundonald, Seymour Hill and Twinbrook. Middle-class housing

continued in the attractive suburbs of Glengormley, Carnmoney, Holywood, Castlereagh, Carryduff and Lisburn.

The great turnaround of the 1970s is graphically illustrated in a Government report[8] in 1977 which stated that 'Belfast faces a combination of economic, social, communal and physical development problems unparalleled in any major city in Europe'. Economic depression led to unemployment and 'the troubles' exacerbated the grave problems facing the inner city. Government policy, which in the 1960s had addressed the problem of urban growth, now sought to resolve the politically sensitive issue of urban decay in the inner city.

Belfast, unlike many of its United Kingdom counterparts, saw very little comprehensive redevelopment in the 1960s. A study by the Housing Executive in 1974 estimated that within the area of Belfast District Council 24.2% (25,000 dwellings) of houses were statutorily unfit. Most of these were located within the inner city. During the early 1970s 'the troubles' resulted in 9000 dwellings being irreparably damaged. A massive house building programme reduced the number of unfit houses to 12,000 by 1984, that is about 10% of the housing stock. This rate of public authority house building was seven times greater than in mainland Britain over the same period. The face of inner Belfast changed rapidly as tight terrace houses were replaced by lower density dwellings with gardens. The rate of population decline has slowed down - since 1981 the city's population has dropped by 10,000 compared to over 50,000 in the 1970s. Since 1971 the population of the Urban Area as a whole has declined by 87,000. The limiting effect of the Stopline along with the other factors already referred to, contributed to the overall decline.

Baptist Witness

Over the post-war period 11 new Baptist churches were formed within the Urban Area - Rathcoole (1951), Dundonald (1953), Newtownbreda (1954), Gilnahirk (1959), Finaghy (1961), Holywood (1964), Ballygomartin (1964), Castlereagh (1964), Bethel (1968), Grace (1972) and Carr (1972)[9]. The significant points to emerge from an analysis of the growth of Baptist witness in the post-war period are as follows:-

(i) Church planting by established churches continued to play an important role during the 1960s. Finaghy was an extension work established by Great Victoria Street, Mountpottinger played a similar role in Holywood, Ballygomartin was formed as a direct result of outreach by Shankill and Carr had been an outstation of Milltown since 1915.

(ii) Local Baptists attending existing churches some distance away separated to form Rathcoole, Dundonald, Newtownbreda and Gilnahirk, all of which were located in growing suburban areas.

(iii) Inner city redevelopment led to the loss of the Church Street East premises and the erection of a new church in Dee Street, re-named Calvary when it opened in 1979. Furthermore members of Church Street East forced to move out to the suburbs formed the Grace church at Tullycarnet in 1972.

(iv) Redevelopment had a significant effect on the membership rolls of established churches in the inner city. This is illustrated by the following table:-

Church	Roll 1970	Roll 1980	Roll 1986
Shankill	370	250	296
Mountpottinger	174	139	126
Cliftonpark Avenue	146	94	50
East End	124	69	75
Grove	210	160	121
Gt. Victoria Street	552	360	291
	1576	1072	959

Net loss 1970-80, 504; 1980-86, 113. Total net losses 617 (39%).

(v) With the exception of Dundonald, churches located in the growing suburbs experienced considerable growth from the 1960s onwards. The table below illustrates this point:-

Church	Roll 1960	Roll 1986
Lisburn	143	311
Glengormley	114	161
Carryduff	30	129
Rathcoole	52	101
Newtownbreda	37	261
	376	963

Net gain 587 (156%)

(vi) There has been little emphasis on church planting since 1964 when Holywood and Ballygomartin were formed. The four churches formed after 1964 were in many respects already in existence - Castlereagh and Bethel were founded in the 1960s as 'free' churches which later became Baptist, Grace as already seen had its roots in redevelopment and the Carr church dated back to before World War I.

(vii) Since World War II about half of the new churches formed have been established in middle-class areas, the exceptions being Rathcoole, Ballygomartin, Castlereagh and Grace.

Over this period the number of Baptists continued to grow steadily during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Each decade saw an average increase in membership rolls of around 240 or 8%. By the beginning of 1980 there were 3443 Baptists within the Belfast Urban Area. However by the end of 1986 this figure had only increased to 3456 and during that year only 5 new members were added to church rolls. Baptists still represent less than 1% of the total population of the Urban Area and, although overall population levels have been declining there is still a need for a considerable extension of Baptist witness within the city.

Conclusions

This examination of Baptist witness since the mid- nineteenth century has been set within the context of the changing urban framework of the city. There appears to be a clear link between growth and church planting. No new churches have been formed within the Urban Area over the past 15 years and it is not without significance that since 1980 there has been little or no growth in church membership. A slowing down in the rate of the growth of Baptists is hardly to be unexpected, given the decline in the population of the Urban Area since 1971, but this factor does not explain the negligible growth of the 1980s. It remains a strong likelihood that Baptists today have lost the zeal for evangelism so evident in earlier years. Increasing affluence, mobility and the spirit of the age may have affected the church. There is no doubt that increased car ownership has widened the choice of churches people may attend, and, in many ways this factor has redefined the meaning of 'local'. It is difficult for commuting members to identify with their church and the needs of its immediate environment, although it has to be acknowledged that such members may play an important role in the life and witness of existing churches adjusting to changing urban circumstances within the inner city and its fringes.

The low growth rate is, however, difficult to reconcile with the fact that during 1986 there were 152 Baptisms in churches within the Urban Area although membership rolls, as already noted, only increased by five. This suggests that in recent years Baptists have failed to emphasise their distinctive doctrine of the local church which is based on the link between conversion, baptism and church membership.

Today Baptists live within a more complex urban system - however, the spiritual need of the citizens of Belfast has not changed and, in an increasingly unchurched environment, the opportunities for witness have, perhaps, never been greater.

J.WARKE

Footnotes

1. That is the area within the Belfast Urban Area Stopline as defined in planning documents.

2. Belfast became a city under a charter granted by Queen Victoria in 1888.

3. There were around 70,000 dwellings in the city at this time.

4. David Watts, 'Baptists in Glasgow - The Twentieth Century Challenge of Urban Growth and Decline' in Baptists in the Twentieth Century, ed. K.W. Clements (Baptist Historical Society, London, 1983), p.16.

5. Belfast's boundary had been extended in 1853 and 1896 to bring in growing suburbs.

6. I have included Carryduff within this period although it was formed originally as a non-denominational church which eventually adopted Baptist views and joined the Baptist Union of Ireland in 1946.

7. These figures, and those for 1986, are only estimates.

8. Northern Ireland: Regional Physical Development Strategy 1975-95. H.M.S.O.

9. Carr, although located beyond the Stopline is included as it is listed as a Belfast church in the B.U.I. directory.

JOHN STOREY OF LETTERKENNY (1817-1916)

There are conflicting reports given as to when Baptist work in Letterkenny, Co. Donegal actually started. The years 1805, 1810 and 1820 have all been suggested as dates when the church came into existence. Part of the reason for this confusion appears to be the fact that there were several Baptists living in the town for some time before the church was founded. Apparently some believers of the Baptist persuasion came to live in the vicinity and it is possible that they established a fellowship meeting before the church was actually constituted. We can only make reasoned guesses as to much of its early history but it does seem likely to have been in existence by 1810.

Perhaps the problem lies in the fact that they had no chapel to meet in until the last decade of the century (1896) when they managed to secure a chapel to seat 150 people. By that time, too, they had a thriving Sunday school. In any case the work, started by a few faithful brethren maintained a consecutive witness until the early years of the twentieth century, despite the havoc caused by the 1845-6 famine.

There are difficulties in studying the early period of the church's history: its remoteness meant that it had little contact with the other Baptist Churches (although it did have a close link with the church in Londonderry as we shall see later); the fact that the church did not join the Irish Baptist Association until 1880 means that there is no information in the records prior to 1880, apart from passing references in the *Baptist Magazine*.

The earliest note we can find is in a statistical report in the *Baptist Magazine* for 1836. This records that there were Baptist churches in three of the four provinces and located in ten counties. There were 12 small churches with 174 members. The denomination had 8 ministers who preached at more than 60 towns and villages and had 39 scripture readers. Most of these were connected to the Baptist Irish Society, which also supported 54 schools, which undertook the education of 4,500 pupils. Although the work in Letterkenny was not supported by the BIS, the Society, on the recommendation of Dr. Carson, employed a scripture reader to work in Letterkenny and its vicinity in 1840. The years previous to the Famine seem to have been years of reaping for the cause of Christ. Many new churches were founded and many others strengthened.

The county of Donegal was severely hit by famine conditions, but the Letterkenny church survived the storm, although during the first fifty years of its existence the work had not grown numerically. It had no Sunday school and yet the work appears to have been quite strong. In September 1861 the *Baptist Magazine* noted that 'the (Letterkenny) cause had been maintained for many years by respected brethren resident in the town'. When John Storey first joined the church is unknown but in 1859 he became its able leader and pastor whose

impact on its witness cannot be underrated. As well as pastoring the church he did an ordinary job of work and, indeed it is from studying his life that we learn how the cause progressed in that town.

In 1880 he led the church into the Irish Baptist Association and, though later he violently disagreed with the clerical attitude of many Baptists, he was well respected, as can be seen from a comment in the *Irish Baptist Magazine* of that year.

> 'Letterkenny is a town of considerable importance in the county Donegal. There has been a Baptist church since the year 1820 and by 1880 it had a membership of 26. It has borne testimony for many years to the truth of the Gospel amidst Popish superstition and Protestant formalism. Mr Storey's connection with us is an addition of intelligence and influence.'

The writer of this note, Rev. Archie McKinley (editor of the *Irish Baptist Magazine*), had a strong connection with the church, having visited it annually and had a high opinion of Storey's sterling character and ability.

The Letterkenny Church

However, before going on to study John Storey in detail one or two other interesting details about the Letterkenny church may be noted. Its link with the church in Londonderry may have been made during the period Storey lived in that city and probably was connected with that fellowship. The Londonderry church building was not erected until 1894, but a group of Particular Baptists had met previous to this in the Masonic hall. In the year John Storey became pastor of the Letterkenny church the *Baptist Magazine* reported that Mr. Elliott,[1] pastor of the Derry church, baptized four people in the river Swilly outside Letterkenny. It seems likely that these were local believers. Again in June 1860 Mr Elliott baptized four more believers in the same river. So it appears that these two churches had close connections with one another. A note in the *Baptist Messenger* for 1861 states that the cause at Letterkenny was making slow but steady progress.

However through the 70's and 80's there appears to have been few believers added to the fellowship. In June 1886 the church was described as 'self-supporting' which is quite some feat as it only had a membership of 13 and there were only 7 self-supporting churches out of 20 in the country. By 1888 the membership stood at 12 and the next year there was a Sunday school with one teacher and ten scholars. There were also two preaching stations near the town and one local preacher. The church seems to have abandoned its outstations after this, but the Sunday school continued to increase and in 1892 had 110 students with 6 teachers. There were no additions to the church during this period. However a breakthrough came in 1896. In that year there were 12 baptisms and no less than 30 members. This is by far the largest membership ever recorded for the church.

The really interesting thing is that within a decade the church ceases to be mentioned. As yet it has not come to light what happened to it. It seems strange that after such a period of increase it should just fade and die. Also we know that John Storey lived in Letterkenny until his death on 22 March 1916 when he

was in his hundredth year, yet there is no mention of the church after 1910. There is just the possibility that the church embraced 'Brethren' views. Storey himself was very anti-clerical and supported a plurality of elders (pastors), as we shall see later. However again, this has not been proven.[2]

John Storey

John Storey himself is a fascinating figure and deserves closer consideration. Regarding the man himself we have no better record than his obituary, written by his good friend Henry A. Gribbon of Coleraine.

'March 22, 1916 at his residence, Townsend Cottage, Letterkenny, John Storey aged 99 years. My old friend John Storey has been taken by the Lord to be with Himself, and it seems incumbent on me to inform those to whom he was only a name as to his personality. I first met him when I was a boy in 1856 or so. He impressed us all as a man of God, and as an influence for good wherever he lived. He was anti-clerical, his preaching was expository, unfolding the scriptures, dealing faithfully with the eternal verities. He was an enemy of Rome and her priests. He became in Letterkenny where he resided during the concluding years of his testimony the leader or pastor of the few Baptists there until old age and infirmities closed his public efforts. To some he was harsh and hard and a master of sarcasm, but I never felt him so. He visited Coleraine at intervals during his latter years, coming to Portrush for a change of a week or two in charge of a niece or a grand niece, at a period when he was afflicted with deafness. I sometimes went to Letterkenny to commune with him and comfort but he never complained. 'It is' he would say, 'the will of God'. Any seeming hardness, as age increased, he cast off and despite his infirmities was a charming companion and a most lovable man.

A tribute also appeared in the Derry *Sentinel*:

'The announcement of the death of Mr John Storey of Townsend Cottage, Letterkenny, which appears in our obituary column today will be read with sincere regret by his many friends and admirers both in Londonderry and Donegal where he spent the whole of his long and useful life of nearly 100 years. He passed away peacefully at his late residence yesterday morning after a brief illness. Though suffering from bodily weakness, his mind remained unimpaired to the end. The late Mr Storey was born in Letterkenny on 17th June 1817, just two years after the Battle of Waterloo. Early in life Mr Storey displayed a remarkable keenness for study. The late Rev. Dr. Kingsmill was at that time rector of Letterkenny. He was a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin and Mr Storey often spoke of the help and encouragement which he received as a youth from this distinguished scholar. On leaving Letterkenny Mr Storey settled in Londonderry, then a comparatively small city and in its neighbourhood he filled positions of trust and responsibility. For some time he was an officer of customs; he was also teacher of English and Mathematics in the old Templemoyle Seminary at Eglinton, and later he joined the staff of the *Sentinel* which was owned by the late Mrs Whallen, whose confidence he enjoyed to the fullest extent. It was most interesting to hear him describing the difficulties of journalism in those early days when there were no railways, no telegraphs and no telephones, and when the editor of a newspaper had to depend upon sailing ships, stage coaches and even the bridled horse for the conveyance of news. Mr Storey subsequently returned to his native district and for about half a century he there held positions of the highest trust and responsibility. He was Clerk of Letterkenny Union, secretary to the Gas Company, and agent for several extensive estates in Co. Donegal. To the agency of one of these he succeeded at a time of grave agrarian trouble, but his management of the property was so successful that he earned the goodwill of the tenants and the confidence of the owner. He was also secretary of the original Letterkenny Railway Company, and attended before the committee of the House of Lords when the construction of the line was under consideration. He gave its promoters very valuable assistance on

> that occasion, and the Company paid him the compliment of allowing him a free pass for life over their system, a privilege which he greatly appreciated. Mr Storey lived in the reigns of six English Sovereigns and looking back upon his long life, it may be said that it ran along the line of practically all the great scientific achievements of the past century. The passing away of the post chaise and the stage coach, the adoption of penny postage, the first application of steam power to the propulsion of locomotives on smooth rails and the introduction of steam navigation were amongst the subjects upon which he could speak intelligently from his own personal knowledge. He was a man of extensive literary attainments delighting especially in the study of mathematics, astronomy and theology. Though he never failed to express his strong views on religious and political subjects, he retained until the end of his days the esteem and respect of his fellow townsmen of every class and denomination. The death of Mr Storey removes from Letterkenny a Christian gentleman of untarnished reputation.

Such a testimonial can only fill us with respect and interest. The greatness of the man can be seen in so many aspects of his life. His attainments and character are before us. Yet we are interested especially in one sentence of the tribute. That is the reference to the fact that he held strong views regarding politics and theology. An article published in the April 1893 issue of the *Irish Baptist Magazine* on the attitude of Irish Baptists to the Home Rule Movement makes interesting reading and included the opinions of various pastors, among them John Storey:

> 'From far Donegal our aged and honoured brother Pastor John Storey writes, "From the first introduction of that insane proposition of Home Rule otherwise Rome Rule, I have been decidedly opposed to the rumoured measure. The more the project has been ventilated the deeper have my convictions become. The shadow of the Bill has paralysed trade and commerce, and forbodes financial disaster. The discredited character of the men who would be our rulers, and the vast majority of whom are and would be the mere nominees of the Popish Hierarchy, clearly indicates the position which Protestants would occupy. Is it not marvellous that any statesman would propose to hand over one million and a half loyal, peaceful and industrious subjects who earnestly desire to remain an integral part of the British Constitution, to be governed by rebels who hate England and who are enemies of education, civil and religious freedom? Not only those who unite with us in worship are of the same opinion as myself, but also all the Protestants of the place. We are surprised and astonished that our brethren in Great Britain should desert us in this hour of peril, not only to us but to themselves."'

Thus we find recorded the political opinions of both pastor and flock. However, let not John Storey be misunderstood. He never allowed his political opinions to blind or prejudice him against individual Catholics. As his obituary stated he was highly regarded by Catholic and Protestant alike. It was also his desire to see the Roman Catholic acquainted with the glorious liberating truth of the Gospel, and not only did he undertake this in his own vicinity but he was a regular subscriber to the Irish Baptist Home Mission. In virtually every financial statement we find a donation from John Storey.

Theologically, he was a Calvinist. The Bible was his rule of faith and it was always his intention to 'search the scriptures'in order to discover the divine pattern. This brought him into conflict with some of his fellow Baptists, especially over the matter of church government. He had no loyalty to any man-made system of church order firmly believing it to be contrary to scriptural teaching to have only one Pastor ruling a local church. His belief was that in the

New Testament churches there was always a plurality of elders. This can be ascertained from a series of letters he wrote to the *Baptist Magazine* in the early 1860's. In one dated 12 November 1861 he spends time dealing with the use of the term 'angel' or 'messenger' as found in the opening chapters of the book of Revelation and had some knowledge of NT Greek.

Earlier that year he had taken part in a running debate in the correspondence columns of the *Baptist Magazine* regarding the number of elders in the local church. Storey wrote:

> 'As there is no example in the Holy Scriptures of one elder or bishop ruling over many churches, is there an example of one elder for one church? It cannot be doubted that the terms 'bishop', 'elder', 'pastor', 'overseer', 'shepherd' are used by the inspired penman to denote the same office, or in relation to the one work in which the brethren so designated participated... Now does not the term 'elder' mean seniority? And is not age or experience in the Divine life the requisite to the work of a Christian overseer and shepherd? Are not the qualifications so plainly and minutely laid down by the Holy Spirit in 1 Timothy 3: 2-7 and Titus 1: 5-9 of such a character as to be within the reach of *every* Christian senior? And do not these qualifications wholly set aside the idea of a youth or novice entering on the work of an elder or bishop? How can it be proved that the church has the calling, electing or choosing of a bishop or overseer? When the above qualifications are apparent in any members of a church does not the Holy Spirit thereby intimate that he has fitted such for office, and should not the church, on their desiring the same, thankfully acknowledge them as given by the ascended Jesus who gave some pastors and teachers? Moreover in large churches must there not have been a large number of pastors? Now as it was the apostolic rule to ordain elders in every church and as these elders were required to have the same qualifications and were addressed as equally engaged in the same work, perhaps some of the brethren will inform me how the practice of one pastor and a plurality of elders, as in many churches, is derived and maintained? I believe the Word of God to be a perfect rule for both the faith and practice of the Church of Christ to the end of time, and I believe man is no more capable of improving the order laid down for the churches in the Holy Word than he is of remodelling the laws that regulate the systems of the universe. I do not ignore the pastoral office, on the contrary I praise it highly. I believe it is clearly taught in the Word of God and in accordance with that word do I earnestly desire to see it maintained and practised in Letterkenny, Ireland.'

So we see the character and attitude of the man and also his grasp of scripture. It appears that he clearly supported the old Scotch Baptist practice of a plurality of pastors. Again, we wonder if we can trace the influence to those two great pioneers of the Scots Baptist cause, Robert and James Haldane.

There were several replies to Storey's queries, not of least importance one from John Brown, Baptist minister at Conlig, Newtownards, who sought to point out one or two weaknesses in Storey's arguments. Brown reasoned that if there is only one believer with the scriptural qualifications for the office of pastor surely to have one elder was better than not having any.

Storey vehemently replied that one elder, even he possessed all the scriptural qualifications should not have the government of the church, but that each church in the New Testament had a presbytery.

Of interest is Storey's view that the church has not the right to elect the elders. He falls back on Acts 6 as an argument to support this and states that it

deals with deacons! Again he reiterates that it is the ascended Jesus who gives pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). He finished his letter by challenging those churches with one pastor and a plurality of elders to reform their practice.

Two points must be made about Storey's arguments. He nowhere states how church members became pastors. While he suggests that becoming an elder is within the reach of every mature Christian brother he contradicts this when he acknowledges that pastors are gifts given to the church by the ascended Jesus.

One other point of interest is that in his letter of 11 November Storey quotes Dr. Alexander Carson in support of his argument. This indicated that he was conversant with Carson's works, a further evidence of the influence and link there was between the two.

Something might be said of a contemporary Baptist Church at Dunfanaghy under the leadership of Archibald Livingstone, later pastor of Conlig, who died in 1872. Also mention might be made of a native of Ballyshannon, Denis Mulhern, who was converted through the means of the BIS and served first as a Scripture Reader, then after training at Ballina, pastor at Easkey (Co. Sligo) and Conlig. Mulhern died at Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1897 aged 86.

In recent years there has been renewed Baptist interest in Donegal. The IBHM placed Mr Joshua Graham at Milford to work that area as a colporteur. At the time of writing there are three American Baptist missionaries seeking to pioneer a work at Dunfanaghy. The formation of a church in Letterkenny in 1978 marked a fresh beginning in Storey's territory. That church had 31 members in 1987 with 4 teachers and 19 pupils in the Sunday school and 80 in the young people's activity.

D. Clive Johnston.

Footnotes.

1. Elliott was never pastor of the Londonderry church, but was a leader at Letterkenny possibly its pastor or one of its elders (Editor).
2. In 1896 a majority of church members objected to the name 'Baptist' and the following year Storey indicated that this majority now wished to be known as 'Brethren'. The Letterkenny church ceased to exist as such in 1897. (Editor).

THE COMMUNION CONTROVERSY AND IRISH BAPTISTS

After a burial service on a very wet afternoon I gave a Presbyterian and a Salvationist a lift into town. The Presbyterian confessed he would have become a Baptist if only we did not make so much of Baptism. I reminded him that the Westminister Confession endowed Baptism with more virtue than any Baptist would allow:

> 'Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptised... (and) by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will...[1]

The Salvationist tried to pour oil on troubled waters by suggesting that the most important thing in life was to be born again. I reminded him that, since the Salvation Army ignored both Baptism and the Lord's Supper, my problem, in his case, was not with conversion but obedience.

In this paper I want to explain and discuss Baptist attitudes to the Lord's Supper and to show briefly the position Irish Baptists have taken and now take in the debate about the relation between Baptism, the Lord's Table, the local church and the individual believer.

It will transpire, I think, that the relationship between Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the local church and the individual believer, like so many others in this life, is more complex than it appears at first sight.

Let me begin by defining the four attitudes to the Lord's Supper among Baptists at large.

1. Various Types of Baptist Church

1. Those which admit to the Lord's Table only their own members, all of whom must have been baptized as believers.

For these churches, Baptism is a prerequisite for church membership and church membership is a prerequisite for admission to the Lord's Supper.

2. Those which admit to the Lord's Table Christians who have been baptized as believers, whether their own members or others.

For these churches, Baptism, not church membership, is a prerequisite for admission to the Lord's Table.

3. Those which give 'an open invitation' to all Christians to sit down with them at the Lord's Table, though admitting to membership only those who have been baptized as believers.

For these churches, Baptism is not a prerequisite for admission to the Lord's Supper but is still a condition of church membership.

4. Those which not only give 'an open invitation' but have 'open membership' that is, open to all who profess faith in Christ whether or not they have been baptized as believers by immersion. Only believers' baptism by immersion is practised, but it is not insisted on as a condition of church membership.

For these churches there is no inherent connection between Baptism, church membership and the Lord's Supper.

Obviously, such variations raise the crucial question, Are the ordinances 'church related' or do they 'stand alone'? I leave you to answer that question after I have put the arguments on both sides as objectively as possible.

2. The Strict Communionist Argument.

This may be stated concisely as follows:

1. That the divine order is, discipleship before baptism, baptism before the Lord's Supper. This is clearly the case in the Great Commission and in apostolic practice: discipling- baptising- teaching to observe all things which Christ commanded, that is, observing, among other things, the command 'Do this in remembrance of Me'.

2. That the New Testament has no instance of the admission of an unbaptized believer to the Lord's Table and in the absence of precept or example communion must be restricted to the baptized.

3. The the Lord's Supper is a 'church ordinance' to be observed by local churches only. The local church must act in its organic character in the use of the ordinance and individuals must be within the local church, legitimately to enjoy it.

It, therefore, cannot be administered, or received by those *outside* the local church nor can members, in their *individual* capacity, administer or receive it, nor can the local church authorize individuals to administer, or receive it *out of* the local church context.

4. That only those may, or ought to, be invited to the Supper who are converted, baptized and walking orderly (as they put it) according to 'gospel rule'.

It follows that the local church is bound to judge of the fitness of those admitted to its ordinances as well as those admitted to its membership.

5. That to invite or permit persons to receive the Communion *without conditions* is to risk 'the vile and the profane, the carnal and the impure mingling with God's spiritual people, and eating and drinking unworthily. In fact it was the practice of 'promiscuous communion' that led Alexander Carson to separate from the Presbyterian Synod of Ulster, and the Haldane brothers to leave the Church of Scotland.

6. That to keep the churches pure, the ordinances must be kept pure and unperverted, both in substance and form, therefore it is necessary *to restrict* the

Communion to regenerate persons, baptized on a profession of faith, and living orderly Christian lives in Church fellowship.

7. That paedobaptists ought not to be invited to commune because they are only sprinkled, not baptized. That invitations to commune with paedobaptists are to be refused for the same reason, also because their churches uphold a perversion of the ordinances. Even immersed members of paedobaptist churches are not to be invited because they sanction error as to the mode and subjects of baptism.[2]

8. That the admission of unbaptized persons to the Lord's Supper is bound through time to weaken the demand for baptism as a prerequisite for membership, and lead eventually to them being admitted into full membership of the church,[3] and the downgrading of the ordinance of baptism itself.

3. The Open Communionist Argument.

This may be put in the following way:

1. That the dominical command to partake of the Lord's Supper is binding upon every disciple.

2. That the Lord Jesus Christ wills that every believer should, in remembrance of Him, 'eat this bread and drink this cup' which He appointed as memorials of His broken body and shed blood.

3. That no disciple should be refused the privilege of sitting at the Lord's Table.

While every disciple should be baptized, the neglect of one duty (being baptized) does not justify the denial of the opportunity to perform another duty (the partaking of the Lord's Supper).

4. That the condition of communion is, not baptism, but discipleship

The faith which entitles to baptism no less entitles to a seat at the Lord's Table. Consequently, *just as* all who credibly profess discipleship are to be baptized, *so* all disciples who desire to remember the Lord in the appointed way are to be welcomed to the Lord's Table.

5. That all who have come to the Saviour and abide in Him ought to be welcomed to the Lord's Supper because the Lord says to every disciple, 'This do in remembrance of Me'.

6. That communion at the Lord's Table is 'the communion of the body of Christ' of which unbaptized believers are as truly members as baptized believers.

I don't know which argument of the two you find more convincing, but in contemporary Irish Baptist circles the consensus of practice places us firmly among the third group holding open communion and close membership. It is well to realise, nevertheless, that there is common ground on which all Baptists stand.

4. Common Ground

All Baptists agree that the Lord's Supper, like baptism, is for believers only, for none but disciples of the Lord Jesus. Some observe the Lord's Supper weekly, and come together on the first day of the week 'to break bread', while others meet for communion on the first Sunday in every month. But 'as often as they eat the bread and drink the cup', whether it be weekly or monthly, they 'shew the Lord's death till He come'.

5. The Communion Controversy in Britain

It is a fact that opinion among Baptists was divided almost from their seventeenth century beginnings. It is well to remember that there were two 'streams' of Baptists: the 'General Baptists' so-called because they believed in a 'general' atonement, that is that Christ died for all; and the 'Particular Baptists' who believed that Christ died only for 'the elect'.

1. In the seventeenth century

About 1672 the question of 'mixed communion' was discussed among Particular Baptists because numbers of them belonged to independent churches like Henry Jessey's made up of Baptists and Congregationalists, which left the question of baptism to the conscience of the individual.

Bunyan was baptized by Gifford, but in his pamphlet *Differences in judgment about water baptism no bar to communion (1673)* he took the ground that 'the church of Christ hath no warrant to keep out of the communion the Christian that is discovered to be a visible saint of the work, the Christian that walketh according to his own light with God' and refused to make baptism a condition of communion.[4]

However, other Particular Baptists like Kiffin and Danvers confined membership to those baptized as believers.

The Particular Baptist Confession of 1677, issued during the persecution which followed the Great Ejectment to affirm their solidarity with other Protestant Dissenters, declared that 'those only who are qualified and thereunto called according to the commission of Christ' were eligible to administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It defined church members, not as baptized believers, but as those who give themselves 'to the Lord and to one another by the will of God in professed subjection to the ordinances of the Gospel'.[5]

An appendix to the Confession of 1677[6] says that, for the sake of peace and unity during persecution, it deliberately omitted mentioning the difference of opinion between those who 'cannot hold church-communion with any other than baptized believers and churches constituted of such' and others who 'have a greater liberty and freedom'.

At the First Particular Baptist Assembly called by Kiffin, Knollys and Keach and four other ministers in September 1689, when Dissenters could meet without fear, representatives of more than 100 churches in England and Wales adopted the Confession of 1677 (afterwards called the Confession of 1689) and

agreed to accept into membership those churches which practised open communion with close membership but not those which, like Bunyan's, had open membership.[7]

Clearly, opinions were divided.

2. In the eighteenth century.

The open-communion position was given a fillip and gained an accession of strength when the New Connexion of General Baptists was formed in 1770 - a fruit of the Wesleyan revival. They were open-communionists.

3. In the nineteenth century.

Robert Hall (1764-1831) reopened the debate on open versus closed communion in 1820's. Hall argued that 'no man, or set of men, are entitled to prescribe as an indispensable condition of communion, what the New Testament has not enjoined as a condition of salvation'. Hall invites us to -

> 'Reflect on the enormous impropriety of demanding a greater uniformity amongst the candidates for admission into the Church militant than is requisite for union with the Church triumphant - of claiming from the faithful, while encompassed with darkness and imperfection, more harmony and correctness of sentiment than is necessary to qualify them to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God - of pretending to render a Christian society an enclosure more sacred and more difficult of access than the abode of the Divine Majesty - and of investing every little Baptist teacher with the prerogative of repelling from his communion a Howe, a Leighton, or a Brainerd, whom the Lord of glory will welcome to His presence. Transubstantiation presents nothing more revolting to the dictates of common-sense'.[8]

Hall was opposed by Joseph Kinghorn (1766-1832) of Norwich in *Baptism a Term of Communion at the Lord's Supper.* Kinghorn argued (a) That 'it is not according to the law of Christ that persons not baptized should come to the Lord's table', and (b) that the open communion/closed membership position was illogical.

Kinghorn was in good company. For instance Joseph Ivimey (1773-1834), pastor of Eagle Street Church, London and first secretary of the Baptist Irish Society, was a strict communionist. He argued that the Scriptures impose baptism as a condition of communion and that open-communion Baptists have no sufficient reason for separation from the Congregationalists.[9] Christopher Anderson (1782-1852), who pastored the English Particular Baptist church in Edinburgh and was with Ivimey and John Saffery a moving spirit in the Baptist Irish Society, was also a close communionist.[10]

Other Particular Baptists who rejected Fullerism, which stood for a free offer of salvation, as well as Antinomianism, and who were zealous evangelists while still retaining their high-Calvinism, opposed Hall's open-communion principles. The best-known of them was William Gadsby (1773-1844) a ribbon-weaver, and the son of a road-mender, whose preaching touched the hearts of the factory workers of Manchester. Gadsby and his followers were strict communionists.

The Suffolk and Norfolk New Association was formed in 1829 as a witness against both Fullerism ('the doctrine which asserts that saving faith is the duty of all men') and open communion. This Association held 'the necessity of baptism on a confession of faith and as a prerequisite to the Lord's Supper'.[11]

The position in Scotland was also mixed. Scotch Baptists, who spread to the north of England, were strict communionists while the Haldane churches in Scotland were open communionists. Both groups influenced the early Baptist churches in Ulster.

However, in general, the future lay with Hall.

The growth of open communionism among both Particular Baptist and General Baptists matched the decline of High Calvinism. Sometimes the transition to open communion was smooth; sometimes it was contentious, splitting some churches and notably the Suffok-Norfolk Association.

Many Particular Baptist Churches had followed Hall and later a number of eminent Baptists shared his views. For instance, Spurgeon was an open-communionist. A clause in the Trust Deed of the Metropolitan Tabernacle (1861) reads:

> 'It shall be lawful for the members of the church... to admit to the communion of the Lord's Supper (but not to church-membership) any persons professing repentance towards God, and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ, although such person may not have been baptized by immersion.[12]

In practice unbaptized individuals who attended the Lord's Supper at the Metropolitan Tabernacle for several successive weeks were approached as to their intentions about baptism and church membership.

This trend to open-communion did not go unopposed. In 1841 some London Baptists formed the Strict Communion Society, later called the Baptist Evangelical Society), to promote 'the essential and fundamental principles of the Gospel of Christ, which the apostles proclaimed under the immediate inspection of the Spirit'. It published *The Primitive Church Magazine* and tracts; sent missionaries to Germany and Denmark; trained men for the ministry by the old method. In the event this Society found little support in London and drew its major support in the North where many churches in the Lancashire and Cheshire Association were staunchly close-communionist as were the Yorkshire Baptists. The supporters in the North founded a college (which later became Manchester Baptist College), whose trust deed provided that

> 'The President and Professors shall hold substantially such doctrinal views as are enunciated in the Baptist Confession of Faith, adopted by the Ministers and Messengers of the General Assembly which met in London in 1689; and shall also maintain that Baptism on a profession of Faith is necessary to Church Fellowship and Communion at the Lord's Table.'[13]

A North-West Association was formed in 1860 as a breakaway from the Lancashire and Cheshire Association in an effort to retain Calvinism and closed communion but it was disbanded in 1875, when both parties agreed to accept variety in practice as to communion.

The issue of changing from close to open communion was tested in a famous law suit in 1860 over St. Mary's church, Norwich. It was heard by the Master of the Rolls who adjudged that:

> '...in all matters, at least in all matters not being fundamental, it was part of the constitution and essence of each Church or Congregation of Particular Baptists that they might regulate their practice as they thought fit. The inference is irresistible, that as the principle of Free or Mixed Communion was not a fundamental point of faith, the practice must be subject to the regulation of each Church or Congregation....I am of opinion, therefore, that this Congregation is at full liberty to alter its practice in respect of Communion, if such should be the opinion of the majority of its full members.[14]

As we have seen, close-communionists argued that the admission of unbaptized persons to the Lord's Supper was bound through time to lead to their being admitted into full membership of the church, the risk Spurgeon guarded against later.

This trend was already evident in parts of England - Maclaren's church in Manchester was open-membership from its formation in 1842, as was Blenheim Chapel, Leeds, founded in 1848, and Regent's Park Chapel, London, founded in 1855. The London Baptist Association, formed in 1865 was willing to accept open-membership churches into fellowship.[15]

However, these open-membership churches consisted, in the main, of baptized believers, accepted immersion of believers as the only Christian baptism, and still required their ministers to be Baptists.

The conversion to open-membership was not as rapid as some feared, for in 1879, Charles Williams an advocate of open-membership admitted that 'the overwhelming majority' of Baptist churches still made baptism a condition of membership. It was not until the twentieth century that open-membership really 'took off'.

6. The Irish Baptist tradition

It may be said that, as in other matters, Irish Baptists have not had a uniform tradition on the issue of communion.

For example:

On 14th January 1652/3 the Waterford church sent a letter to Baptists were in fellowship with John Rogers' paedobaptist church which the Waterford Baptists deemed to be an irregular position, and were urged to separate and form a church of baptized believers.

In the eighteenth century the churches continued to practise close communion and, following the guidance given in the Confession of 1689, only ordained pastors were eligible to administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It was the custom for the Irish Association to arrange for ordained pastors to visit vacant churches to preach and administer the ordinances.

Diversity of practice began to occur early in the nineteenth century. The churches which survived into the new century (Dublin, Waterford, Cork,

Cloughjordan and Rahue) continued to be 'close' in both membership and communion. Also, the churches arising from BIS activity, especially those pastored by English Particular Baptists like John Bates, tended to be close communionists.

Under Alexander Carson, however, the Tobermore church (and possibly its satellites at Carndaisy and Ballymoney) was both 'open' as to membership and communion. The Coleraine church under the ministry of W.S. Eccles was also open-communion.

This diversity is cogently illustrated by two contemporary pamphlets - John Bates, *Baptism a term of Communion* and William Sloan Eccles, *Baptism not a term of Communion.*

Alexander Carson produced his own idiosyncratic variation when he wrote his *Reply to Brown's Vindication of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government:*

> '...baptism does not constitute church membership. It is the privilege of individuals, as believers, not as church members. There is no church authority involved in the question. When an individual goes out to preach the gospel, there is certainly no reason that he should consult a church before he administers the ordinance of baptism to believers, for that ordinance does not exclusively belong to a church, as such, nor does the admission to baptism give a formal right to membership. It is enough that the church be consulted, when the individuals apply for admission. Then indeed their right to be satisfied is indispensable. Paul was baptized at Damascus, yet he was not without difficulty admitted afterwards to membership in the church at Jerusalem. The Ethiopian eunuch was not a church member, even after he was baptized, though he certainly had a right to be such, had there been a church in the place to which he was going'.[16]

A Belfast businessman called McClenaghan, anxious to have a church formed in his city, wrote to the BIS committee in 1838 assuring them that '...if a church were formed here on the principle of Mr Carson's, ie. to admit *all Christians* to its fellowship, it would soon be a large one'. Depending on what McClenaghan meant by 'fellowship' whether communion or membership, his comment suggests that Tobermore certainly practised 'open' communion and may indeed have been 'open' membership.

Robert Haldane Carson, Alexander's son who succeeded his father as pastor at Tobermore, modified the church's stance somewhat. In a book well-known to past generations of Irish Baptists, *The Church of the New Testament* (Belfast 1890) he wrote:

> '(The) church (of the New Testament) was not simply an assembly of believers, - it was an assembly of *baptized* believers... in those days ... there were no churches that were not...*churches* of *baptized* believers.[17]

In this Carson, Jnr. for once differed from his revered father and clearly held the close-membership position. He was ambivalent as to communion. On the one hand he sees the 'union of the church's membership in 'the one bread' of the ordinance', while on the other, he gives the Lord's Supper chief place in worship at which '*believers* and believers *only* should be admitted to partake...' He thought the Lord's Supper should be celebrated 'with the utmost publicity'

arguing that 'though not permitted to partake, may not the unsaved, *as witnesses,* derive benefit?[18]

Evidence that the communion controversy affected the Irish churches in the 1840's is found in the Strict Communion Society's publication, *The Primitive Church Magazine.* This paper circulated in Ireland and carried a series of articles by John Bates then at Ballina, on 'Strict Communion in harmony with divine truth' in December 1839; 'Thoughts on Weekly Communion' (which he supported) in January 1842 and 'The Duty of the Churches to act on their own not on a candidate's judgment' (February 1842). In 1844 it reported that Bates had spoken in support of close communion at the Strict Baptist fourth annual meeting in his home church, Eagle Street, London. In Nov 1846 it published a list of the Irish Baptist churches indicating whether they practised open or close communion. The next year a proposal that the Lower Abbey Street church, Dublin, should change to open communion caused dissension and *The Primitive Church Magazine* carried lengthy correspondence on the issue from Baptists in Dublin.

It seems that the 'free-communionists' among Irish Baptists carried the day, for the church formed in Belfast at this time, though not on the lines advocated by McClenaghan, was open-communion and had as its first Pastor William Sloan Eccles who moved from Coleraine to Belfast in 1847.

Later in 1887 when the Harcourt Street church was formed it was close membership and open communionist:

> 'we invite only to the Lord's Table those whose sins are forgiven through the Blood of Jesus, and whose lives are in harmony with that great truth . . . we cannot admit to church membership any unbaptized believers, (or any one holding that sinless perfection is attainable in the flesh)'.

This seems to have set the pattern for churches formed after 1888. Unlike the English churches which progressed to open-membership, a trend which has accelerated across the water in the post-war years to the extent that a close-membership church is more the exception that the rule nowadays, the Irish churches have remained solidly close-membership. True some of the older churches continued as close-communion but the practice gradually declined. The last close-communion church to change to open-communion was Carrickfergus in March 1943, eight years after the death of that staunch close communionist, John Weatherup.

7. Conclusion

The Irish churches, whatever their origins, have always been Calvinist in tone, but their Calvinism has always been tempered by an internal moderation forced on them by a combination of small numbers and the hostile paedobaptist environment in which they had to live and witness. This in a considerable measure accounts for the fact that the close-communion churches among them were able to make the switch to open-communion almost painlessly.

The influences which governed their growth and development through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have made them conservative in theology, evangelistic in method and independent in spirit. Nevertheless, they

have never betrayed any great desire to enforce uniformity of doctrine and practice, and within the parameters of orthodoxy have shown remarkable tolerance to each others' views. The same is true of the Communion issue. Whether a church was 'close' or 'open' was never a test of fellowship between churches or for membership of the Union.

Let us hope that the same spirit will continue to animate our fellowship in the years ahead. JOSHUA THOMPSON

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Westminster Confession of Faith
Edward T. Hiscox, The New Directory for Baptist Churches, (Philadelphia, 1894)
Joseph Ivimey, A History of the English Baptists, (London, 1811-1830) 4 vols.
A.C. Underwood, A History of the English Baptists, (London, 1947)
E.A. Payne, The Baptist Union, (London, 1958)
W.M.S. West, Baptist Principles, (London, 1967) rev.ed.

FOOTNOTES

1 chap. XXVIII Of Baptism sect.iv, vi.
2 Hiscox, pp.451-453 pars 3-7.
3 Underwood, p.207.
4 Underwood, p.103.
5 Underwood, p.105.
6 Ivimey, vol. i, pp.426-429.
7 Ivimey, vol. i, pp.490, 523; Underwood, p.129.
8 Underwood, pp.170ff.
9 Underwood, p.182.
10 Underwood, p.190.
11 Underwood, p.185.
12 Cited by Underwood, p.205.
13 Cited by Underwood, p.209.
14 Underwood, pp.206-7.
15 Payne, p.77.
16 p.84.
17 pp.23, 30.
18 See pp. 123, 128, 131, 133, 134.

WHAT 'THE IRISH BAPTIST MAGAZINE' OFFERED ITS READERS IN THE 1880s

Browsing through 'Irish Baptists' of a century ago is an interesting and indeed entertaining exercise. It is interesting to see how styles of writing have changed, and to reflect on our predecessors' attitudes to issues and events which we can study with hindsight. We notice that they had often the same kinds of concerns as ourselves, but their context was very different and their perspective on many matters would seem strange to us.

This paper will not present a comprehensive survey of all the items covered by *The Irish Baptist Magazine* of the 1880s. I shall simply present a few examples of articles which (to my mind) illustrate well the historical context and the concerns of our denomination a century ago. There is much sermonic and devotional material which could be read to great profit, and which would provide the basis for a study of the kinds of material which people used to enjoy reading and hearing. Many still enjoy it, but changing tastes are reflected in the different types of writing of *The Irish Baptist* of today as compared with a century ago. In our typographically lazy days readers might well feel that there were far too many words in the magazines of a century ago, and that the words were not always easily digestible! Of course, the English language itself has changed; we no longer commonly use words like 'indefeasible', 'remonstrance', 'assemblage', 'viands', 'querist', 'aforetime' and 'ballon'. In today's *Irish Baptist* items of news from the churches are not set out in a colomn entitled 'denominational intelligence'. Nor is the children's page entitled 'For our little folk'. But although most of the vocabulary of those days is ours too, the manner of writing sentences and expressing thoughts might strike many readers of today's magazines as somewhat ponderous. In addition, readers of a century ago were expected to be familiar with a few Latin words and phrases; would readers today be attracted to a printed sermon entitled, 'The Quest for the Summum Bonum'?

Baptist Principles

Turning now to topics regularly discussed in *The Irish Baptist Magazine* of the 1880s, I was struck by the amount of space given to explaining and defending Baptist principles. One of course expects a Baptist magazine to uphold and explain denominational principles, but the denomination of the 1880s seems to have had, if not a 'siege mentality', then at least a consciousness of having to fight a constant battle to justify its existence in the face of much condescension on the part of other denominations. In 1890 there were only 29 Baptist churches in Ireland, with a total membership of under 2000, and members of our churches then were very conscious of being seen as a small, insignificant and upstart sect in the eyes of Roman Catholics and of Protestant paedobaptist churches.

A list of articles dealing with this area would be very long. Many of them argue the expected points that 1) baptism of infants was unknown in the apostolic era; 2) baptism of believers by immersion is the only correct form of

baptism according to the New Testament; and 3) to be baptised is an obligation placed upon every Christian. A number of articles deal with the New Testament picture of the Church and its constitution, and they relate baptism to these areas. Some articles and comments have a strongly polemical tone, reflecting the clashes of opinions which occurred from time to time in sermons and publications generally. Other articles are more conciliatory in tone and represent a plea that Baptists be taken seriously, that they have a long history of service to the Gospel in Ireland, and that they have no wish to constitute an elitist sect.

Here are a few examples of how the subject of Baptist principles was treated. In May, 1888, the magazine had occasion to comment on a paper on infant baptism given to the Cavan Y.M.C.A. by the Rev. A. Barton, and published as a pamphlet. Here is part of the comment:

THE AGE OF THE BAPTISTS

By a few meagre and unsatisfactory quotations from the fathers, backed up by his own strength of assertion, Dr. Barton endeavours to prove that infant baptism "has been the practice of the Church of Christ, even since the days of the Apostles." While with boundless audacity he declares that, "for 1,100 years after Christ no Society of Christians existed in the world who forbade little ones being brought to baptism; and here we are to-day, at the close of the nineteenth century, and there exists but one sect of Christians - the Baptists, with possibly the Plymouth Brethren - who hold this 'strange teaching.'" Must we charitably suppose that the doctor has not read Church history? Certainly he must have read it with strange prejudice not to have found that, ever since the introduction of infant baptism, there have generally been those who have protested against the practice, while there is no sure record of any infant being baptised until the middle of the third century.

Another example of the polemical spirit of the age is the following item from January 1890:

A WONDERFUL PENNYWORTH!

An amazing pamphlet has reached us with the following modest title: "The Great Baptist Absurdity. Believers' baptism annihilated, and the baptism of Christian infants demonstrated upon the grounds of scripture and reason; being an unanswerable reply to a sermon by Rev. Hugh D. Brown, M.A., of Dublin, entitled 'Believers' Immersion the only Scriptural Baptism.' By John Ennis, Knocktopher, Co. Kilkenny." We are truly glad to find that our old acquaintance, Mr. Ennis, is still at large: the species of *hydro-phobia* from which he has long suffered is evidently of a very harmless type. Some years ago he entered the lists against Waterford Baptists, but we managed to withstand the assault. Now, however, he has actually "annihilated" believers' baptism, a thing that even the Papacy tried in vain to accomplish, so there seems nothing left for us as a denomination but to sing the *Nunc dimittis*, and quietly fade away "like streaks of morning cloud, into the infinite azure of the past." Who can survive these heavy tidings?

The Irish Baptist Magazine also entered the discussion provoked by the publication in 1885 of John Brown's famous biography of John Bunyan. Brown in his biography argued that, on the question of baptism, Bunyan 'had no very strong feeling any way'(p.239). Brown felt that Bunyan leaned towards Baptist principles but was not consistent since, Brown alleged, he had two of his children baptized as infants. A few years after the publication of Brown's biography, The *Irish Baptist Magazine* had a number of comments to make, among which the following from March 1889:

THE BUNYAN CONTROVERSY

Baptists ground their distinctive doctrines not on human authority, or human precedent, but solely on the teaching of Christ and His apostles. It is therefore of little consequence to us whether or not we can claim such distinguished men as Milton or Bunyan, or other heroes of the past. But it is a matter of vital consequence that the facts of history should be carefully guarded, and that ancient documents should be allowed to speak, not what may be convenient for enquirers, but what fidelity to truth imperatively demands. Until Dr. Brown, of Bedford, published his *Life of Bunyan*, no writer of note hesitated to admit that Bunyan was a Baptist; nor does Dr. Brown deny that Bunyan held Baptist principles, but he says there is a difficulty in reconciling his profession with his practice. The difficulty arises from the fact that apparently two of Bunyan's children were christened in the Established Church after their father had become a Baptist. And, on this unproved and improbable assumption, it is argued that Bunyan was an inconsistent Baptist, or, as the Rev. W. Urwick has recently affirmed, that he was not a Baptist at all.

* * *

THE FACTS AS TO BUNYAN'S CHILDREN.

In the parish registry of Elstow, the following entry occurs: "Elizabeth, the daughter of John Bonyon, was borne 14th day of April, 1654." This says "borne" not "christened", but in the archives of the Archdeaconry of Bedford this birth is found registered under the head of "christenings". The copy in the archdeaconry was probably not made till after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. Nothing would be more natural than for the parochial clerk to fill in all the births as "christenings": but such inaccuracy by no means proves that the infant Elizabeth was baptized. The second great fact relied on in this contention is an entry in the parish registry of St. Cuthbert's, Bedford, as follows: "1672. Baptized Joseph Bunyan, ye son of John Bunyan, November 16." But what "John Bunyan" was this? Assuredly not the glorious dreamer, who had suffered so much for conscience' sake, and who declared: "I am determined, the Almighty God being my Helper, yet to suffer rather than violate my faith and principles." It is impossible to believe that this unflinching Baptist Puritan would sanction a practice which he regarded as sinful, or would pay such deference to the persecuting clergy of the Established Church, as to bring his babe to them for baptism. But the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress* had a son also called John Bunyan (whose will is still extant); and from a tombstone at the Bunyan Meeting, Bedford, we learn that this John Bunyan, jun., had a *grand-daughter*, Hannah Bunyan, born in 1694. He must therefore have been a father about the year 1672, the date when Joseph Bunyan, as above mentioned, was baptized. Consequently there can be no reasonable doubt that Joseph Bunyan was not the son, but the grandson of the illustrious allegorist; and as John Bunyan, jun., did not avow attachment to Nonconformity till some years later, there was nothing inconsistent in his having his child Joseph christened at church. Thus the supposed "difficulty" vanishes away, and Bunyan stands before the world as a sturdy Nonconformist and consistent Baptist.

A lengthy article in the magazine of 1880 illustrates well the Baptist sense of distinctiveness and an acute awareness of the difficulties under which Baptists in Ireland must labour. I would like to reproduce a fairly lengthy extract from this article, which was originally a paper read to a meeting of the Irish Baptist Association in Belfast:

OUR DIFFICULTIES AND DUTIES

We have no wish to isolate ourselves from the larger sections of the Christian church, who are labouring for the same object under different names in this land. We call all *them* brethren who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; but we have distinctive principles, which we hold *dear*, and in their spread for the advancement

of the Kingdom of our Lord we find difficulties peculiar to ourselves. In common with all the branches of the Protestant Church, we share the opposition brought to bear against us in the fact that there are *four* Roman Catholics to *one* Protestant. This might be courageously borne if that one Protestant was in the majority of cases as true to his colours as the Roman Catholic may be said to be to his; but we may say this is not so, and we mourn over the fact that thousands who contend for the Bible in the land care but little for its influence in the heart and life.

As it regards our denomination, we are but one small portion of the professing church, who, because of our distinctive features of Scriptural baptism, are ignored by our brethren, who hesitate not to affirm that the baptism for which we contend, both as it regards mode and subject, is but of little moment. Yet from every pulpit, save our scattered few, there has gone forth, and is still being taught, that which, intended or not, leads parents to believe, or act most carefully as though they did believe, in a regenerating influence of baby-sprinkling. And in proportion to the seed sown are the results seen which set aside the simple teachings of our Lord -"He that *believeth* and is baptised shall be saved."

...This is the stem difficulty with which we have to contend, from which there are many branches. Our *peculiarity* is not attractive to the crowd, and is rendered unseemly by the many. Hence we are designated by those who call infant sprinkling baptism, "Anabaptists," though we require but one baptism, and as making "much ado about nothing," though we only contend for the keeping of the King's commandment, not as a new sect, but as a body of believers dating our origin to the baptism of the Reformation, or the baptism of Christ. We regard its observance as Father Rutherford says - "As an open declaration of a fixed faith in Christ Jesus, and an entire devotion of the subject to the service of God" - not by proxy, but by a personal surrender of ourselves to Him. Taking this ground, we find ourselves separated from and acting contrary to, the practice of the sister churches around us... Yet do we rejoice that our creed is not "We have been baptised," but "We have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul," that he is our Redeemer, whom we profess to declare to the world, by being "buried with Him by baptism into death," also raised "with Him through the faith of the operation of God."

I will only briefly notice two other features as hindrances to our more rapid progress in Ireland. They are *our smallness as a people* and *our lack of adhesive power*...How many there are who still "despise the day of small things," on no other ground than its *diminutiveness*. It is not so much *truth*, or even *creed*, but *position* that is too often the magnet of attraction. The question among the religionists now, as in the days of New Testament history, is, "Have the rulers believed?" - Whither goes the multitude? - Where is patronage to be found?...In Ireland we have but few of the more *opulent* and *learned* among our congregations, though to this rule there are *honourable* exceptions - those who, setting aside all favours belonging to the many or withheld from the few, have, from love to *truth* and *principle*, cast their lot in with the poor, to whom the gospel is preached, and with the common people hear it gladly. Still, it must be borne in mind that this is one of the difficulties, and not a small one, with which our cause has yet to struggle; requiring no small amount of courage to choose, and perseverance and love to continue in the path which popular feeling has set at naught.

In our churches we cannot offer the society the world asks, or the assistance it seeks, or even the companionship desired in the very constitution of such society. If we look at numerical strength and influence, comparatively what have we? In round numbers the Roman Catholic Church has four millions of adherents; the Episcopal Church, seven hundred thousand; the Presbyterian Church, five hundred thousand; the Methodist Church, about forty thousand; while our own Church scarcely numbers five thousand. Yet for this we are thankful.

> But for our second thought - We lack *adhesive power*...Our single-handed enterprise, our scattered few, our distance from each other, render intercourse impracticable, and co-operation almost impossible.
>
> This position is mainly attibutable to two causes- *A deficiency of strength and organization*. The first has already been referred to. It is only necessary that we should point to the latter, as demanding the attention of the Baptist denomination throughout the world. Taking a glance at this Christian community and its advance in the field of spiritual warfare, we are convinced of the evil of a self-imposed difficulty, and indifference to the existence of that difficulty, which may, in an important sense, be regarded as the seed difficulty, which has borne, and is still bearing the fruit called *liberty, freedom, independency* of thought and action, which more than all beside has kept us the struggling *few*, compared with the mighty power which, by the blessing of God, we might have been. And if this applies to the aggregate Baptist Church, does it not still more so to the little branch of that Church in this country? If our thousands, though but few, with their several leaders, were *more* and *better* ORGANISED under one banner, regulated *more* by one *system*, all aiming at the extension of one common cause, to which the whole had voluntarily espoused themselves, should we not be *more* of one mind and love *more* as members of one family, and in proportion helpful to each other?
>
> We cannot be ignorant of the power of Wesleyanism, or of Presbyterianism. And we ask what has kept these Christian bodies together? and what has given to them the support and progress beyond ourselves, as BAPTIST CONGREGATIONALISTS if not their *organization*? We may not like the *one* or the *other* as a whole - we may not be willing to adopt either of these systems as our own - but are there not in both some excellent features which we might profitably follow, and with such modifications as our independancy requires?'

Similar points are made in a much longer article in the magazine of 1882. This article, originally a presidential address given by Rev. Dr. Eccles at the Irish Baptist Association meetings of 1882, is entitled, 'We are few'. In it he makes the point that, 'We are few because of our scrupulousness in preserving the rites and regulations of the Church in New Testament times' (p.99). He emphasises that, 'though Irish Baptists are few, they have a history' (p.100). He traces this history and draws the following lessons from it: firstly, 'Baptist principles cannot be supported by the arm of the flesh' (p.100); secondly, 'aggression is essential to the permanency of our churches...Removals by death, emigration and other causes are constantly thinning our ranks. Recruiting can only be done from the outside. Let us ever be busy' (p.101); thirdly, 'Baptist churches are not of the nature of hereditary institutions...We Baptists are exclusively dependent for our existence upon the conversion of our fellows, and also upon their possession of a spirituality which will dispose them to run in the way of the Lord's commandments' (p.101). Eccles urges Baptists not to be dismayed by their fewness, but rather to apply themselves to the tasks of proclaiming the Word and of exerting a Christian influence in society at a time when 'Our miserable country has become the chief arena on which the jangling elements of this perturbed period have settled into a confused and cruel tussle...The fundamental principles of society are being boldly canvassed'(ie. 'attacked')...The very penetralia of the British legislature is desecrated by a vulgar garrulity and brutal invective never before heard there' (p.105). Eccles issues an interesting challenge to Christians to be politically involved:

> I bitterly feel that in these days of prevailing infidelity and immorality, Christians, particularly in Ireland are much to blame. Through a mistaken religious

> asceticism they are not using all their influence to combat the evils around. The hustings and the polling booths are to a large extent deserted by our best men. Yet could there be conceived nobler fields in which to work for the Saviour? Let us stir up our people to the duty, which rests upon them as Christians and members of this great and free country. Even yet much may be done towards turning back the battle of the Evil One from the citadel of chiefest power in our land. No time is to be lost. The coarse and jesting tones of infidelity are heard on the very threshold of Houses of Parliament. Within them Parnell, Dillon & Company advocate principles painfully associated with robbery and bloodshed. How faint the opposing and articulate testimony of Christians. Let us urge their political duties upon our people till each member of our Churches shall, in the love of the Kingdom of God, when occasion requires it, present himself either at the booth to cast in his mite contributory to the advancement of Scriptural morality, or on the hustings as a good soldier of Jesus Christ prepared to sustain the principles enunciated by our Saviour and His Apostles at the very fountainhead of our laws and liberties. When the Christian intelligence of the land of Bibles shall express itself distinctly and authoritatively through the channels of Government, what Augean stables shall be cleansed, and how many abuses shall receive their death-blow? Unjust wars, unequal privileges, undue taxation, tyranny, oppression, the desecration of sacred things, traffics such as those of opium and spirits, shall soon cease to exist (p.106f).

In connection with the regular defence of Baptist principles, I was interested to see a series of articles in the 1880 magazine which were attacking 'Brethrenism'. The series actually began with two articles in 1879, but in 1880 there were several more - all fairly lengthy and all by R.H. Carson (then of 'Tubbermore'). Some of these articles bear the bold titles: 'The Brethren: their worship and the Word of God at open variance'; under this heading we are told, for example: 'Brethrenism, in its services, is the substitution of a present and personal inspiration for the inspiration of the Bible' (1880, p.42). Other articles are entitled: 'The Brethren: their pretensions and their practice not always in harmony', and we are told, 'They denounce party, and are themselves a sect'; 'They condemn party names, and yet bear one'. That same year there was a lengthy article by R.K. Eccles entitled, 'Baptist or Brother - Which?'. The article takes the form of an open letter to some unspecified person halting between two opinions, and it begins:

> 'Dear friend, - I rejoice in your conversion and baptism. As loving the Saviour you wish to unite with His people. Your mind, however, wavers between the Brethren and the Baptists. The former, I am told, are zealously plying you with every conceivable argument. Let us examine a few of their most common statements...'

The article proceeds to analyse and refute Brethren criticisms of Baptist principles and practices, and it urges the reader not to be ashamed to take to himself the name of 'Baptist' -

> 'a name which everyone at once understands to mean "one who deprecates human authority in things divine, who pleads for baptized church-membership, who holds the unpopular but scriptural doctrine of believer's baptism"' (p.168)

These articles illustrate the fact that Baptists, while wishing to make their voice heard and their presence felt in a context dominated by the Church of Rome, the Church of Ireland, Presbyterianism, and Methodism, were very aware of the need to protect their flank from the threat of 'Brethrenism'.

Altogether, then, *The Irish Baptist Magazine* of the 1880s was anxious to make the point, as often as possible, that Baptist principles were more Scriptural than those of any other group claiming the name 'Christian'. Baptists, we are

told, had a valuable contribution to make to the work of the Gospel in Ireland, and they were a 'going concern'. The magazine of 1889 proudly announced that Baptists in Ireland had doubled since 1848, and there was obviously confidence that this growth would continue, as indeed it has.

Home Rule

I was curious to see what the magazine of the 1880s had to say on the most burning issue of the day as far as Irish politics were concerned. The answer was quite simple: the magazine was fiercely opposed to Home Rule. Let us look at some of the comments on the subject.

In June 1882, Dr. Eccles commented at length on the Phoenix Park murders of May 6th of that year. It is obvious to him that this kind of atrocity is the inevitable result of Romanism, and he continues his remarks on the Phoenix Park murders with some comments on the Ritualistic controversy which had been troubling the Church of England for some time:

> The localities in which Romanism has been for the longest time, and in which its influence is at present most powerful, are the localities in which disquietude, dishonesty, disloyalty and disregard to human life are most prevalent. There is thus presented to us a melancholy proof of the practical effects of error. This condition of things among us can only be remedied by the spread of the truth. Let us who know the truth be aroused to its dissemination. We are told that "an open door" has been granted to such efforts. Let us see if it is so. When men come to believe the truth that God loves sinners and gave His Son to die for them, they will love God because of his loving kindness. Those who love God will strive to love one another, for love is of God. They will learn that it is their duty to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. Thus they will cease from vituperation, boycotting and all courses injurious to their fellow men, or opposed to the powers that be. Our present stigma will pass away, and the operation of those principles and dispositions which exalt a people will elevate Ireland in the scale of nations.
>
> It seems to the writer that all the unrest, violence and bloodshed which have culminated in the Park Tragedy have been permitted by Divine Providence just now for this among other important purposes. England, through Ritualism, is rapidly hastening to Romanism. But in her sister island she is permitted to see the legitimate fruits of that system towards which her eyes are cast. If she continues enamoured of it, notwithstanding such a discovery of its consummation, writ as it is in letters of blood, and voiced in the cries of violence which fright the midnight air, she will proceed with increased swiftness in her course of delusion and apostasy, and the time will come, if the world continue as it is for so long, when she shall reap, but on a larger and bitterer scale, the awful harvest which now afflicts poor Ireland. In that day England will have no neighbouring power to lend to her vitiated and tottering condition the assistance which she now so kindly grants to Erin. Having surrendered the bequests of a pious and brave ancestory, having proved false to the principles which Reformers preached and martyrs sealed with their blood, shaken by dissensions within and by wars and fighting without, she shall decline from her pre-eminence among the nations amid the regrets of the good, the pity of friends, and the rejoicing of enemies. During the last two years she has received a lesson of solemn admonition. A voice has cried in the wildernesses of Connaught and Munster. The curtain has been lifted in Ireland, and England sees, nigh at hand, the ultimate issue of Romanism to be disintegration, villainy and famine. The groans of her butchered children summon her attention. If, after all, she persists in her national adoption of the very errors whose baneful effects have been thus brought under her attention, within her own fair land there will at length be repeated, but in a degree as much more terrible as England is greater than

Ireland, all the disasters which Ireland mourns. Amid the terrors of that bitter doom, England's chiefest sorrow shall be the recollection that not unwarned she entered on the path which shall then have led her people into the very valley of the shadow of death. Oh, that Britain, object of our admiration, love and prayers, might "buy the truth and sell it not," and so avert such an evil catastrophe. (p.88f)

The magazine of April 1884 has an editorial comment entitled 'God save Ireland', which begins as follows:

'GOD SAVE IRELAND.'

This phrase, so frequently on the lips of a section of our countrymen, claims our consideration. It is, we think, a petition worthy of a place in the liturgy of all Irishmen. But, as a prayer for deliverance from British rule, it elicits no Amen from us. We rather instinctively ejaculate -Hear it not, we beseech Thee, Good Lord.

No doubt we have had great reason to complain of grievances in the past, but from these, thank God, we are being gradually delivered. And it is our duty to labour, in a constitutional way, for the removal of every remaining vestige of misrule. But "God Save Ireland" from "Home Rule". We should regard that as the deepest depth into which we could be permitted to plunge as a judgment for our sins (p.61).

The magazine of August 1886 contained the following book review:

Reasons why Nonconformists should oppose Home Rule. By A. M'Caig, Pastor of the Baptist Church, Brannoxtown, Kildare. Dublin: Hodgkiss, Figgis & Co. This cogent *brochure* is written with ability and moderation, and ought to be circulated widely amongst British Nonconformists. Those who are amenable to reason, and have no party ends to serve, will find here much that will help them to a true decision. (p.127)

The idea that 'Home Rule means Rome Rule' is expressed clearly in the following extract from an article, published in December 1887, by H. Grattan Guiness criticizing Cardinal Manning for teaching that the Pope has the right to 'depose' any heretical ruler; he continues:

The chances of his ever bringing England back under his sway are very remote; but if "Home Rule" could be obtained for Ireland, it becomes at once a Papal kingdom, and a perpetual menace to England. This, therefore, is an object to be attained by any and every means. The chief result of Home Rule is *to be the extirpation of Protestantism in Ireland.* "The woes of Ireland are due to one single cause - the existence of Protestantism in Ireland. The remedy can only be found in the removal of that which causes the evil. . . . Would that every Protestant meeting-house were swept from the land! Then would Ireland recover herself and outrages be unknown." - *Catholic Progress.*

That this attempt would be made, is not to be questioned. Cardinal Manning says that it is a sin, and even an "insanity", to hold that men have an inalienable right to liberty of conscience and of worship, or to deny that Rome has the right to repress by force all religious observances save her own, or to teach that Protestants in a Catholic country should be allowed the exercise of their religion.

"Catholicism," says a Romish magazine, "is the most intolerant of creeds; it is intolerance itself, because it is truth itself. The impiety of religious liberty is only equalled by its absurdity."

Conceive what Home Rule in Ireland would be in the light of these statements!

A most important point to be borne in mind in the consideration of this question is, that Romanism is not a religion merely, but *a political system.* We are, of course, bound to allow Roman Catholics the liberty of conscience we claim for ourselves; but we are not bound by any law, human or divine, to allow them the right of conspiring for the overthrow of our liberties, government and empire. Adam Smith well says: "The constitution of the Church of Rome may be considered *the*

most formidable combination that was ever formed against the authority and security of civil government, as well as against the liberty, reason and happiness of mankind." - *Wealth of Nations*, p.337.

Peace and prosperity are impossible under Papal and priestly rule, as all history attests. "The Papacy," says Prince Bismarck, "has ever been a *political power* which, with the greatest audacity and with the most momentous consequences, has interfered in the affairs of this world." The question before our country now is, whether we are willing to make a further and most decisive advance on the road in which we have already travelled too far, and to grant to an alien and antagonistic political power a most real, practical supremacy over five millions of the Queen's subjects in Ireland, including a million of loyal Protestants in that land. - *Romanism and the Reformation*. (p.195)

Later in the same year the following comment was made:

DENOMINATIONAL HOME RULE

It has been asked, "How can you consistently advocate denominational Home Rule, while opposing the measures brought forward by the late Government?" To this we may reply in brief: (1) There is no parallel between the British Parliament and the Council of the Baptist Union; for in the former, Ireland has had more that her due proportion of members, but in the latter she has never had a solitary representative. (2) There is no parallel between the delegation of power to the trusted and honoured representatives of the Irish Baptist Churches and to men who, "steeped to the lips in treason," have ever been chargeable with "marching through rapine to the dismemberment of the empire." (3) Irish Baptists are united in reference to the denominational changes proposed; Irish citizens are divided in reference to the proposed political changes, and against these changes there is arrayed a vast proportion of the wealth, the intelligence, the industry, and the moral strength of the country. (4) Irish Baptists desire as their chief aim to extend the kingdom of Christ throughout Ireland, and in this object they are essentially and heartily at one with their brethren in England; Irish Nationalists, led by Roman ecclesiastics, desire to establish the authority of the Vatican in matters civil and religious, and their priests are grasping at power that they may use it in destroying that liberty for which our Protestant forefathers bled and died. (1887, p.201)

The fall of Parnell elicited a kind of 'We told you so' from the magazine of December 1890.

A MORAL CRISIS IN POLITICS

The downfall of a prominent statesman has been the absorbing topic of the past few weeks. It is not our business to discuss the political issues involved in this catastrophe, nor the heartburnings that it has caused to many Christians; we think, however, much of the latter might have been spared if due attention had been given to the prophet's question. "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?" We rejoice to note that in the present crisis our denominational leaders have spoken out bravely and promptly in the interests of morality, irrespective of party considerations. The response of England has been most gratifying, and proves that the Puritan element is still a power in the land. Between England and Ireland, there is in this respect a painful contrast: and our hireling priests, like dumb dogs, have looked on and held their peace, waiting to see which was likely to be the winning side. (p.237f)

Relevant to this topic are the comments made in the magazine of June 1888 on the two great anniversaries of that year (and this). The defeat of the Spanish Armada and the Glorious Revolution were seen as divine deliverances from Roman tyranny. On the former the magazine comments: 'The destruction of the Armada prevented the intended re-establishment of papal tyranny in England,

and secured many blessings to the country, of which we are reaping the fruit today'.(p.100)

A comment on 1688 is:

'Surely in view of the tremendous efforts now being made to Romanize the people of Great Britain, it becomes every Christian patriot to celebrate the Revolution with hearty enthusiasm and thankfulness'. (p.101)

Other Issues

Temperance

Temperance was a matter of great concern a century ago, and this is reflected in the coverage given in the magazine of the 1880s. Articles and comments regularly draw attention to the disastrous effect of alcohol in the lives of individuals and families, and in society as a whole. The magazine was not dogmatic about whether all Christians should be total abstainers, but total abstinence is certainly recommended for those who have been 'enslaved to drunkenness'. A comment on 'boycotting' in the issue of April 1881 speaks of this campaign as 'unmixed evil', but it urges readers to boycott strong drink, along with 'pernitious literature' and smoking. There are some harsh words about the size of the drink trade in the magazine of 1886.

The Arms Race

I gleaned the following item from the magazine of 1887:

MILITARISM IN EUROPE

A pamphlet has just been published by the British and Foreign Arbitration Association on the military and financial condition of Europe, showing the numerical strength of the armies and navies, with the annual cost, together with the interest and amount of the National Debt of each European nation. From it we learn the appalling fact that over four millions of men are under arms in Europe, and that when the entire European forces are mobilised, nearly seventeen millions of men, trained and disciplined for fighting, would be called to arms. It is needless to speak of the terrible risks which the maintenance of the armaments involves, or of the crushing burden which the support of these millions of unproductive labourers imposes on society, and especially on the poor. Longfellow has justly observed:-

"Were half the power that fills the world with terror -
Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need for arsenals and forts."

This is most true; and it is also true that the whole system of militarism is utterly contrary to the spirit of Jesus Christ. He has taught us to love our enemies, and to do good to all men. War, at best, is a brutal and Satanic thing, and generally productive of terrible demoralisation and misery to all concerned. Let Christian Churches unite in their protest against appeals to arms, and, as surely as bull-baiting and gladiatorial sports have been put down, so militarism will be discredited, and the reign of Christ on earth will be proportionately advanced.

It would be interesting, too, to look at articles dealing with sensational preaching and novel ways of worship, religion and science, biblical criticism, entertainment, unemployment, socialism, Sunday, and many other topics, but we will have to end this brief review of one decade's magazines. Since there was

then a taste for what we would now call 'twee' poems, I thought I would conclude with this homely piece of advice from 1886:

WHAT'S THE USE OF GRUMBLING?

Suppose, my little baby,
Your doll should break her head;
Could you make it whole by crying
Till your eyes and nose were red?
And wouldn't it be pleasanter
To treat it as a joke,
And say you're glad "twas Dolly's,
And not your head that broke"?

Suppose you're dressed for walking,
And the rain comes pouring down,
Will it clear off any sooner
Because you scold and frown?
And wouldn't it be nicer
For you to smile than pout,
And so make sunshine in the house
When there is none without?

Suppose your task, my little man,
Is very hard to get,
Will it make it easier
For you to sit and fret?
And wouldn't it be wiser,
Than waiting like a dunce,
To go to work in earnest,
And learn the thing at once?

Suppose that some boys have a horse,
And some a coach and pair,
Will it tire you less while walking
To say, "It isn't fair"?
And wouldn't it be nobler
To keep your temper sweet,
And in your heart be thankful
You can walk upon your feet?

And suppose the world don't please you,
Nor the way some people do,
Do you think the whole creation
Will be altered just for you?
And isn't it, my boy or girl,
The wisest, bravest plan
Whatever comes or doesn't come,
To do the best you can?

MAURICE DOWLING

ANNUAL REPORT 1987/88

The Society held five meetings during the past session.The attendances again showed an increase over the previous year, a sure sign of the growing interest among Irish Baptists in their 'past'. One highlight was Robert Dunlop's account of the life and ministry of a nineteenth century Irish Baptist, which introduced us to Rev. Thomas Berry, whose initial service as an Irish-speaking Scripture Reader with the Baptist Irish Society led to training for the ministry at Ballina, and a long life of fruitful service. Of quite a different flavour was town-planner John Warke's analysis of the spread of Baptists in Belfast from the mid-nineteenth century to the present time. His talk was enhanced by skilfully prepared and presented maps and statistics. Dr.Gribbon's paper at the annual meeting, 'Looking Back, Looking Forward', put some of the customs and usages of Irish Baptists under the microscope and produced a lively discussion. A paper prepared by Clive Johnston introduced John Storey of Letterkenny, whose leadership was crucial to the life and witness of the original Letterkenny church in the late nineteenth century. A man of diverse interests Storey was quite influential in that part of Donegal. The best attended meeting was to hear the paper by the honorary secretary on 'The Communion Controversy and Irish Baptists.' As expected, the issues it raised were debated with zest. We thank those who supported the meetings and those who contributed papers, which are published in the *Journal.*

One important function of the Society is to collect, catalogue and preserve historical material. This task has been made easier since space has been allocated to the Society in the strongroom of the new offices. During the year a number of useful items have been entrusted to the Society for safe-keeping and some work has been done to organise existing material. We encourage all the churches seriously to consider making use of these facilities. Old Minute Books, membership records, correspondence, photographs and any items of historical interest may be stored safely and be available for consultation by the church concerned at any time.

The honorary secretary visited several men's meetings and a couple of BWF meetings during the year. Help and advice were given to one church in planning the publication of its history. Practical assistance has again been given in response to genealogical enquiries.

Another interesting series of meetings has been planned for 1988.