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EDITORIAL

In this twenty-second Volume of the *Journal* there is a mixed bag of articles.

Readers will enjoy the gentle humour and local colour in the recollections of Dr. James Stewart, a native of Moneymore in county Londonderry, who followed a trail which led him eventually to North Carolina and an area settled by Ulstermen in the eighteenth century. Our President's paper on Harry Arthur Johnston recalls an Irish Baptist with varied gifts and broad sympathies. The other contributions have their own interest and reflect an analytical interest in trends among contemporary Irish Baptist churches. Regretfully, the tone, liveliness and professionalism of Claud McQuigg's video presentation under the artless title "Amateur Dabblings in History" cannot be captured on paper. It broke new ground for us as a Society, and presaged the shape of things to come.

The regular meetings of the Society are occasions of happy fellowship. Not all members can attend, but the growing numbers who do indicate that interest is deepening in the history of Baptist churches and individuals in Ireland.

We greet all our members through the pages of the *Journal* and welcome the feedback which each volume yields.

Covenants and Constitutions in Irish Baptist Churches.

This paper is based on material obtained from a majority of our churches, and from other sources such as trust deeds and church books. I wish to thank the church secretaries who responded helpfully to my enquiries.

A perusal of the covenants and constitutions in use by our churches soon impresses the reader with their diversity in some respects and, at the same time, with their uniformity in other, perhaps more important, respects. This paper examines attitudes to doctrine, church membership, church meetings, communion and discipline, office-bearers (pastor, elders and deacons), trustees, relations with other denominations, and other miscellaneous matters.

First of all, let me briefly explain the difference between a church 'covenant' and a church 'constitution'. The covenant expresses the commitment of church members to each other. The constitution sets out the church's doctrinal stance, conditions and obligations of church membership and rules for organisation, office and discipline. The constitution may (and often does) include bye-laws, which tend to reflect local conditions or preferences.

1. The Church Covenant

It has been the practice at the formation of Irish Baptist churches for the founding members to sign a covenant, which is usually inscribed on the first page of the Church Minute Book. Let us look at and compare typical examples.

Example 1 c1865 In vogue until 1950s

'We, the undersigned, sinners saved through grace, and immersed into the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection; do hereby unite in church fellowship; so that as a holy brotherhood we may advocate the truth of God, proclaim the riches of His sovereign mercy to the lost and perishing, and by sympathy and counsel, help one another in the Christ-like and heavenward life. *We believe it our privilege and duty* by the Spirit's aid to bear one another's burdens and in the exercise of a tender-hearted, tolerant, forgiving kindliness, to avoid everything of harsh and ungenerous criticism, recognising in each other fellow-members of that mystical body of which our risen Saviour is the Head. We seek to maintain, in primitive simplicity, purity of worship and communion, regarding it as an essential feature in the teaching of Jesus Christ, that redeemed souls should walk in newness of life and holy separation from the world; *and consider those only admissible to the Lord's Table who profess their sins forgiven* through the blood of Jesus, and whose lives are in harmony with that great truth.'

Note: A slightly amended version of Example 1 was widely used from the 1890s through the first half of twentieth century, namely,
' . . . We solemnly undertake, by the Spirit's aid, . . . to avoid anything of harsh and ungenerous criticism . . . and we invite to the Lord's table only those whose sins are forgiven through the blood of Jesus, and whose lives are in harmony with that great truth.'

Example 2 1966

'We, THE UNDERSIGNED, being saved by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus and baptised by immersion in water into the likeness of the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and being desirous of forming ourselves into a local Baptist church holding and practising the doctrines set forth in the attached Basis of Faith, DO HEREBY COVENANT TOGETHER with the help and blessing of Almighty God to establish a particular society of believers to be known as - - - - - - BAPTIST CHURCH and faithfully to believe, declare and practise the doctrines of grace and those principles commonly held among Baptists.
As members of the body of Christ we solemnly undertake, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to bear one another's burdens, and in the exercise of a generous tolerance to avoid everything of unkindly criticism of each other, and looking to God alone for strength and blessing to carry out to the extent of our spiritual and material ability the proclamation of the Gospel of God's sovereign grace and mercy to the perishing around us. We pray that the establishment of this Church may redound to the glory of God, to the edification and comfort of God's elect, to the salvation of the lost, to the overthrow of unholiness and error, so that Christ our Head may see of the travail of His Soul and be satisfied.'

Example 3 1970

'We, the undersigned men and women, who have individually experienced the new or spiritual birth by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, thereby becoming children of God, do here and now dedicate ourselves anew to Him. Baptised by immersion into the likeness of Christ's death and resurrection, we affirm our acceptance of the Constitution and Basis of Doctrine attached hereto, and now declare ourselves to be a Church of Jesus Christ after the New Testament order, an habitation of God through His Spirit, united to walk worthy of our profession, for the preaching of His Word, the observances of His ordinances and for such other labours for the salvation of the lost, the edifying of believers and the well-being of our fellow-men, as God by His grace may lead and enable us to undertake.'

From these examples, it is clear that each covenant has the same emphasis on a regenerate membership, on believer's baptism by immersion, mutual support, and holiness of life; and is intended to commit the members to each other within the fellowship, ministry and witness of the local church.

It is doubtful, however, whether the covenant has any real influence or significance when matters go wrong. It would be interesting to learn what use, if any, is made of the covenant after the founding of a church, apart from embodying it in the Church Constitution for the acceptance of incoming members. Perhaps an annual Covenant Service, at which members would renew their vows publicly, would sustain or revive their sense of responsibility.

2. The Church Constitution

Some leaders in our churches seem unaware of the fact that the Trust Deed which governs the use, occupation and enjoyment of the church premises often embodies a doctrinal statement along with rules and regulations stipulating the summoning and conduct

of church meetings, and the calling and dismissal of a pastor.

In some instances churches have adopted rules which varied the provisions of the Trust Deed and left themselves open to the charge of being in breach of trust. Other churches have passed bye-laws which limited the action of the church beyond that which the Trust Deed imposed, without realising that such bye-laws have no force if the provisions of the Trust Deed are invoked. In this connection each established church and newly formed churches should ensure that the Church Constitution is consistent with the Deed of Trust.

3. Doctrinal Stance.

Prior to 1895, when the present Basis of Doctrine of the Baptist Union of Ireland was adopted and became the accepted guide for emerging churches, there was no 'model' doctrinal basis. For instance, the Trust Deed of the Ballykeel Church, formed thirty years earlier, simply stated that the church would observe

'... the public worship of God according to the principles and usages of the Protestant Dissenters of the Baptist Denomination commonly called Baptists ...' while Clause 4 stipulated that the Pastor must be a Baptist 'who shall hold teach preach and maintain the doctrines of the Baptist Church ...'

When the Irish Baptist Association was revived in 1862, one of its objects was the co-operation of the churches in 'the advancement of Evangelical Truth in Ireland.' This remained until 1876 when the words 'Evangelical Truth' were replaced by 'our Distinctive Principles'.

The first attempt by Hugh D. Brown in 1889 to persuade the Union of Churches to adopt a detailed doctrinal basis was rebuffed. His proposal triggered a heated debate, some members rejecting the formulation and imposition of any creed as contrary to Baptist principles. Brown's motion was not put to the vote; instead a sub-committee was set up which 'calmly and prayerfully considered the whole matter'. This sub-committee produced a statement which was adopted:

'That we the members of the Irish Baptist Association having regard to statements that the following doctrines were denied among Baptists -
The inspiration and all-sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures - The Trinity in Unity of the Godhead - The Deity of our Lord and Saviour - The Personality of the Holy Spirit - The depraved and fallen state of man - The substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ - and the eternal punishment of those who die impenitent,
we as an Association do hereby record collectively and individually our thorough repudiation of the errors imputed to us, and with gratitude to our Almighty Father we rejoice that such unscriptural and dangerous teaching has no place among us or sympathy from us and we take this opportunity of again affirming our undivided loyalty to every utterance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

This statement, in its occasion and purpose, stood in the long tradition of Baptist Confessions. It was not meant as a binding doctrinal standard or an internal test of orthodoxy, but simply to refute charges that Baptists denied these doctrines of the Christian faith. There the matter rested until 1894 when a radical revision of the IBA Constitution

was undertaken in preparation for the change of name to 'The Baptist Union of Ireland' and Brown's doctrinal basis was included and passed in 1895.

During the years of growth in the next twenty years ,which saw Brown at his most influential, new churches tended to adopt detailed statements of doctrine modelled on that of the BUI. There were exceptions, for example, the Bloomfield Church formed in 1903 (through the efforts of Burt Sharp) was defined in its Trust Deed simply as '. . . a Church of Protestant Christians holding the sole authority of the Holy Scriptures and that interpretation of them usually called evangelical in contradistinction to Unitarianism and Romanism . . .' Churches and pastors joining the Union, however, were required to give unreserved and unqualified assent to the Union's Basis of Doctrine, which, through this practice, has become something of a sacred cow, although one must say in its favour that its clauses are so worded as to allow for differences of interpretation in areas where genuine differences existed.

However, in the Constitutions of churches formed since the mid-1970s doctrinal statements, where that of the BUI is not followed, tend to reflect either a Reformed stance, or a particular view of eschatology. This trend points to a growing polarisation in the churches, perhaps chiefly among the pastors, on these issues.

While Irish Baptist churches were of Particular Baptist provenance in their origins, they always have had a leavening of those with General Baptist views. They later developed a characteristic stress on evangelism through the Baptist Irish Society and later the Irish Baptist Home Mission which showed that they had no hang-ups about making a free offer of salvation. This was true of pastors like Hugh D. Brown, John D. Gilmore, and F.W. Gracey, each an avowed 'calvinist'. It was also true of the most notable of 'calvinistic' pastors of a later generation, Minnis Mills and George Blayney.

The prevalence of premillenialism and dispensationalism among pastors like David Burrows, David Henderson, James Shields, Alexander Jardine and of the next generation William Wilson, H.H. Orr, T.J. McNabb, W.Mullan, and of the current generation like S.T. Carson, with its focus on an "any moment return" certainly sharpened their concern for the salvation of sinners. The evangelistic thrust among the churches through the Home Mission in the post World War II period was an expression of that concern.

The resurgence of reformed theology in the 'Sixties was expressed among Irish Baptists chiefly through D.P. Kingdon, then principal of the Irish Baptist College and H. M. Carson who had resigned the Anglican ministry and became pastor of our Hamilton Road Church, Bangor. A number of graduates of the College have zealously espoused calvinism, and some seem to have found difficulty in making a free offer of salvation in their Gospel preaching.

The desire to incorporate detailed calvinistic doctrine or dispensationalism in church constitutions also points to a sad loss of that tolerance and genuine Christian fellowship which was the genius of the associated churches in past generations, when differing interpretations were admitted between brethren. One has pleasant memories of Minnis Mills and T.J. McNabb debating their doctrinal differences with vigour, yet enjoying a fellowship and friendship in the Lord which lasted a lifetime.

One has the feeling that liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment in the understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures must be soon reasserted and conceded among us, if we are to salvage the practice of co-operation between the churches. We

must recapture the spirit which prompted one of our most strongly calvinistic churches to declare 'We do not desire to function in aloofness from our sister Churches in the general work of God and shall not espouse or support any tendency that would bring about such a thing.'

4. Church Membership.

The practice among our churches is uniform regarding those who are admitted to church membership. There are no 'open' membership churches in Ireland, in sharp contrast to the English scene where 'close' membership churches are a minority. Among the Irish churches, evidence of a genuine conversion and baptism by immersion as believers are mandatory. Applicants are interviewed sometimes by two church members, or a deacon and a member, or an elder and deacon, or two elders. A report is then presented to a church meeting and applicants are received or refused on a vote of the church members.

Recently, a few churches have dropped or modified the long-standing practice of receiving members of other Baptist churches on transfer. This can only be attributed to a decay in confidence between sister churches, and to the belief that discipline within and between churches is not what it should be. The local church cannot be blamed for trying to safeguard the integrity of its membership in this way, but it is not a happy solution to a serious problem.

All of our churches with variations make church membership conditional on regular attendance at the Lord's Supper. Absence from the Communion for a period as short as three months or as long as a year without reasonable cause triggers an approach by representatives of the church, usually the pastor or elders, to seek a resumption of fellowship. Persistent absence thereafter without reasonable cause results in the termination of membership.

Some of the Constitutions require the church to revise its membership roll annually or 'from time to time'.

There is an interesting change taking place in the practice of our churches in relation to the voting rights of young church members. In a number of churches bye-laws have been introduced. The following are examples:

(1980) 'Voting rights shall be restricted to members who have reached the age of 18.'

(1976) 'No applicant under the age of 18 years shall be eligible for full membership. A List of Junior Members shall be kept, and upon their obtaining [*sic*] the age of 18 years, they shall automatically become full members.'

(1987) ' Children and Church membership. We believe that children have a right to become church members, however, they cannot attend church members' meetings until the age 16 and cannot vote until they are 18 years of age.'

Another, 'Voting rights shall be restricted to members who have reached the age of maturity.'

(1976) 'Membership without voting rights may be extended to those between 16 and 18 years of age who fulfil the stated requirements [for church membership]. On the recommendation of the Elders they may be
excluded from such business meetings where matters of exceptional importance shall be considered.'

(1962), 'Membership is restricted to those who have passed their fifteenth birthday.'

The only instance of this sort that I have found in earlier documents is in the Trust Deed of the Coleraine Church, which has a clause 'those persons alone shall be entitled to vote who are members of the church and who whether male or female have attained the age of twenty one years and have been members of the said Church during at least three calendar months next preceding the [Church] Meeting.'

If this discrimination can be defended, it would be interesting to discover if it is defended on biblical or pragmatic grounds. To become a church member a juvenile has made a credible profession of faith in Christ, has been baptised as a believer, and has been accepted by the church meeting. Why are they not granted all the privileges of church membership?

The bye-laws just cited make age the criterion, whether it is fifteen years or 'the age of maturity'. One church will not receive to membership anyone under age fifteen. Yet another variation restricts membership to those aged sixteen or older, and denies voting rights to members under eighteen years of age. Another segregates itself into 'full' members and 'junior' members. Yet another admits the right of children to church membership, but excludes them from church meetings until sixteen years of age. Is age in itself sufficient cause to deny juveniles voting rights? These churches have decided that persons under 21, or 18, or 16 or 15 are in some sense unsuitable for church membership, and (in one case) are incapable of participating in business of 'exceptional importance'.

Where no such bye-laws exist one assumes that any church member, irrespective of age, is entitled to voice and vote at church meetings.

5. Church Meetings.

All the churches accept the congregational principle, namely, that the seat of authority is not the elders, nor the elders and deacons, but the church members in church meeting. The church meeting has the sole right to accept, transfer or exclude members, to call or dismiss a pastor, to appoint elders and deacons to office or to remove them from office. The church meeting may delegate responsibility to the office-bearers it appoints, but they are answerable to the church meeting for their actions. Special church meetings are usual when calling or dismissing a pastor, appointing or removing elders and deacons, and only the announced business can be discussed and decided at a Special Meeting.

Within this basic framework, practice varies a great deal. For instance, there are several permutations on how votes are calculated. Some churches have a quorum for special church meetings; this may be one-quarter or one-third of the membership. Other churches have no quorum. In the majority of churches a two-thirds majority vote is required to pass a motion. Within this requirement the rules may stipulate either two-thirds of the *membership* , or two-thirds of the *members present* , or two-thirds of the *members present and entitled to vote* , or two-thirds of the members *present and voting* .

The last option is more workable than the other three, and is becoming the standard practice, though not in every case. For example, the Constitution of one of our newest churches [Carrigaline] requires an 80% majority vote to appoint or remove an elder adding 'but unanimity is regarded as the ideal'. This 80% turns out, under another rule, to be '80% of at least 70% of the voting membership present and voting'. Translated into figures this means that with a voting membership of 100 persons, 70 need to be present and voting for the vote to be valid, and of the 70, 56 must vote for the motion for it to pass.

Some Constitutions stipulate that voting at Special Meetings is to be by ballot. This is sound practice and ought to be observed by all our churches.

Most Constitutions provide for the pastor to act as chairman at all Church Meetings although he may decline to act whenever he wishes to do so. In the absence of the pastor most churches will appoint an elder or deacon or member to preside. In one case no church meeting can be held unless an elder or deacon is present.

None of our churches has adopted the device (common to Baptists in most other countries) of appointing a neighbouring pastor as 'moderator', to act as chairman of church meetings during a vacancy. On occasions of internal difficulty some of our churches have sought the services of an independent chairman, calling on the services of a pastor or elder of another church who has their confidence. The practice has much to commend it.

6. Communion and Discipline

The traditional link between the Lord's Supper and discipline has been noticed above under 'Church Membership'. Discipline is provided for in most Constitutions. The provision may be phrased in general terms -

' all members of said Church shall be subject to Church discipline and may be cut off from membership at such special meeting of Church members duly summoned for the purpose according to the interpretation by said Church members present of what constituted a valid and scriptural cause for such discipline.'

Or the provision may be more specific -

'In matters of personal offence, private reconciliation should first be sought. If this fails the elders of the church should be consulted and if necessary the matter should be submitted to the judgement of the church itself (Matt 18:15-17). Believers should not take one another to civil law, nor should they disturb the peace of the church over personal disputes (I Cor 6:1-7).

'All discipline should be exercised with love and patience, the end in view shall be the repentance and reconciliation of the offender and the purity and blessing of the church.

'If any member accepts or propagates heretical doctrines, or in the event of a member being guilty of such open sin as would bring public dishonour to the Gospel he shall be subject to the censure of the fellowship and, in the unhappy event of persistent impenitence, to exclusion from membership. The same will apply in the case of one party in a dispute refusing to be reconciled.(I Cor 5:13)

'Any member lapsing from his commitment by being absent from the church meetings over a three month period without satisfactory reason being given to the elders may have his membership terminated according to the discretion of the elders. This discipline is to be confirmed at a members' meeting and the member concerned shall be informed in writing of the church's action.'

In most churches discipline is provided in cases of doctrinal error or moral turpitude. How effectively church discipline is administered is open to question. In cases of moral failure, the member often resigns rather than face the discipline of the church, and the resignation is as often greeted with relief. One has heard of churches receiving to membership those who were under discipline by another church. As the provision for discipline shows the churches acknowledge the need for discipline. The problem with discipline seem to lie in finding a balance between laxity and severity.

7. Pastor, Elders and Deacons.

Stemming from their belief in the priesthood of all believers, the churches generally state their rejection of 'an exclusive ministry'. Most constitutions provide for the election of a pastor, elders and deacons. Some, especially among those formed in the last ten years, do not mention the pastor or the pastoral office specifically. Others stipulate that the number of elders shall 'include anyone called to the pastorate'.

Tenure of office varies among the churches. In a few, elders are appointed for life. In one, the elder's appointment is permanent during his membership of the church. Otherwise, elders are appointed for periods ranging from seven to three years. The churches normally elect deacons for three years, eligible for re-election. Recent practice in some churches has provided for a 'fallow year', that is, the individual is not eligible for re-election during the year following any three year term. This rule poses problems in cases where the church secretary and treasurer are also required to be deacons. Some constitutions prescribe the actual number of elders and deacons the church is allowed to have.

One church compulsorily retires its officebearers at 70 years of age, although they may be invited to continue 'in an honorary capacity'.

With reference to pastors, doctrinal soundness is paramount. The procedure for calling a pastor is fairly consistent. Either the elders, or the elders and deacons, or a vacancy committee, are required to consider candidates and to make a recommendation to the church in special meeting. A call is only valid if it receives the vote of a prescribed percentage of church members. The vote is usually by secret ballot. Some constitutions stipulate that the pastor's tenure may be terminated by three month's notice on his or the church's part. In some cases the period of notice may be six months. In one case one month's notice on either side is required.

While the Baptist Union issues, from time to time, a recommended salary scale for pastors, no church constitution embodies any reference to it. Apart from coy references about members' responsibility 'to support the ministry of the Word' the Constitutions are silent on the financial arrangements to apply to a pastor. A few constitutions stipulate that their pastor is expected to be full-time and not to engage in secular employment with the consent of the church in special church meeting.

8. Trustees

In the nature of things, a local church normally has no legal entity and consequently cannot 'own' property. The common practice was for the churches to appoint individuals as Trustees to hold property in trust for the purpose. This course had and has certain limitations. Most serious of these were that individual trustees eventually died and had to be replaced, involving a Deed of Appointment of New Trustees with the trouble and expense involved. In some extreme instances churches discovered that all the trustees had died, and their trust had passed to the heirs and assigns of the last trustee to die. Churches could be embarrassed in cases where an individual trustee had abandoned his Christian profession, or for some reason had become hostile to the Church, or was reluctant to carry out his duties as a trustee, or had emigrated and could not be traced.

With the formation of the Baptist Union of Ireland Corporation Limited in 1902, the churches had another option. The Corporation could hold church, manse and other properties and investments as Trustee. Since the Corporation was a continuing legal entity, this obviated the trouble and expense incurred on the deaths of individual trustees.

Churches existing at that time often had provisions in their Trust Deeds as to the number of trustees required. In some cases the church was able to appoint the Corporation as one of the trustees, and as time passed the Corporation became the sole Trustee. New churches and churches acquiring new properties were encouraged to appoint the Corporation as Trustee, and a model trust clause was drawn up for their use. The Corporation offered a satisfactory solution to the business of securing the churches interests in matters of property law.

It is ironic that the functions and powers of the Corporations [the Baptist Union of Ireland (Northern) Corporation Limited was registered in 1922 with identical powers to act for churches located in Northern Ireland after the partition of Ireland] have been misunderstood and sometimes misrepresented. In some cases people objected to the appointment of the Corporation as trustee because they feared that the Baptist Union 'might go modernistic' or change its doctrinal stance. Others objected to the Corporation 'owning' property the local church had paid for. These misconceptions stemmed from ignorance of the meaning of 'beneficial ownership' and the limited extent of trustees' powers. They also ignored the protection that the Corporation, as an active trustee with its monthly meeting of Directors, afforded to the local church. It is to be sincerely hoped that such attitudes will be replaced with confidence in what is truly a most useful body.

In April 1988 the Grove Church, Belfast, set up "Grove Baptist Church Trust" and this body assumed responsibility for administering the trusts of the church. It will be interesting to see how this arrangement works out in the long term. One can only regret the loss of confidence in the Baptist Union which underlies the action.

9. Relations with Other Denominations

This aspect of church life finds very limited expression in the Constitutions of the churches. Sometimes the general sentiment is expressed that the church desires 'to live in love and harmony with all followers of our common Lord'. Older trust deeds give the office-bearers power to invite occasionally 'to lead or take part in the ministry and worship of the said church any Trinitarian Protestant belonging to any of the recognized Evangelical Protestant Churches.' Negatively some constitutions state that the church 'cannot have Christian fellowship with any who do not hold the doctrines of Scripture, and of the Person and work of Christ as given above ...' A number expressly require intending members coming from another denomination to resign their membership of that denomination prior to being received into membership of the local church.

10. Miscellaneous.

The Constitutions reveal some quirks of Irish Baptist life and attitudes. Many of them carry the solemn prohibition, 'No pastor of this Church shall at any time assume the title "Reverend" or claim the position of an exclusive ministry.' A few say, 'All female members are expected to wear a head covering in accordance with Scripture (I Cor 11) and to dress appropriately at all meetings.' In one or two churches this prohibition is applied not only to members but also to lady adherents and visitors. One Constitution makes clear that 'No Pastor shall be asked to officiate at the Wedding of a Believer to an Unbeliever'. Another has a rule 'that any member becoming bankrupt, or unable to pay his or her debts, is requested to abstain from the Lord's Table until it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Pastor and Elders that such member is free from blame as to the condition of his or her affairs.' .One has a sensible rule that at Church Meetings no business shall be conducted after 10.30 p.m.!

J. THOMPSON

Reminiscences of An Ulster-American Baptist

Address given at the annual meeting of the Irish Baptist Historical Society in Belfast on 16 May 1989 by Dr. James A Stewart, North Carolina.

I am very honoured and very happy to be invited to meet with this group. The last time I was present at the annual meetings of the Baptist Union of Ireland was in 1925 or 1926. I have kept a very keen interest through the years in the work of the Irish Baptists.

Something about myself

I left this country in 1927 to go to an American Baptist seminary for one year. I stayed for a second year because they renewed my scholarship. Then I stayed permanently because I got married. I found a very attractive middle-western girl who captured my imagination and my life and has been a wonderful helpmeet. Her mother, by the way, was born in Antrim.

Conversion

Perhaps I had better go back to 1919. I was a product of the W.P. Nicholson evangelistic campaigns. I was converted in the old St. Enoch's Presbyterian church, baptized by Louis Deens in Cliftonpark church, and have kept a close connection with the denomination ever since. Many, many years later, when I was in Jacksonville, Florida, where I had a church, I heard that W.P. Nicholson was going to be there. Sam Thompson, whom some of you may remember, was visiting me at that time, and so we slipped down to the church, met Nicholson and told him that we were products of his evangelistic work in Belfast. He still retained a lot of his vigour and a lot of his magnetism, though at this stage he was a very old man.

Training for missionary work

I left Belfast in 1922 to go to London, because I had an the inner feeling that I would probably devote my life to the foreign mission field. I joined the WECmovement, and entered the Missionary Training Colony in 1922 to prepare for going up the Amazon River. While there, for a little over two and a half years, I met some very remarkable people, including Hall who died up the Amazon, Kenneth Grubb, Norman Grubb and people like that. Gradually, however, I found that my outlook and feeling did not quite fit in that of the WEC movement.

Dublin days

At the end of two years, therefore, I made application to the Irish Baptist College committee and was accepted through the good services, I think, of Pastor Deens. I came over, and I think undoubtedly that the three years I spent in Dublin were the most formative of my life. Since then, as I will point out later, I have been involved not only in the pastorate but in academic institutions, both as a student and as a teacher. I doubt seriously that I met anywhere in my life and studies a group of students that impressed me more than those students at Dublin from 1923-27 - W.P. Rankin, Bob Clarke, Bob Kerr, Herbert Hunter - an unusual group of people; nor do I recall any teaching experience that I would rate with what I got under Spurgeon and Louis Deens. T. Harold Spurgeon had one of the keenest minds, coupled with a keen sense of humour as well as a little sarcasm, that I ever knew; but he was committed to teaching, to helping his students, and I remember with gratitude those years at Dublin under his tutorship.

Student in the USA

At the end of my third year I decided then that I might seek further training abroad in preparation for mission work up the Amazon. So I wrote a number of schools in America, and three of them offered me financial help as well as admission. One was in California, one was in Louisville, Kentucky, (the old theological seminary) and the third was in New Orleans, a rather new school, but upon examination of the curricula I felt it offered to me, more than the others, what I wanted. So I accepted and in August 1927, and I remember Bill Rankin and the other students being at the wharf when I went over to Liverpool en route to America for one year. Well, I stayed a second year and finished my work there, did some special work in language study with the idea of going to Spanish-speaking country.

In Cuba

The American Baptist Convention (the Northern Baptist Convention) had a very excellent college in eastern Cuba, near Santiago, and they were contemplating building a theological department for the training of native Cuban pastors and my job was to help set that up. But the background to all of that was that I got the job, not because of my qualifications (at least I don't think so), but the man who came down to interview me from New York, a North American, had a companion with him, a businessman from Philadelphia who put quite a bit of money into the American Baptist Home Missions Board, and I had not starting talking very much until he said, "Where are you from?" I said, "Belfast". It turned out that he, too, was from Belfast. So I think as far as everything was concerned I had the job. These north of Ireland people have a habit of sticking together, and so that worked out all right! I went to Cuba. I got off the boat at Havana and travelled by train late into the night up into the mountains of Oriente province. The train stopped and I got out but there were no lights at all. I did not see anybody. There was no town there, and I thought, Well, this is one night I will sleep out in the open air in a strange country. Then a voice said, "You must be Mr Stewart". I said, "Yes, that's my name". It was the principal of the college, who was a Canadian, Robert Routledge. I spent a year there. I had landed in September and in November that year the Wall Street crash took place at the beginning of the Great Depression, and the people who put money into the Northern Baptist Home Mission Board could not keep the level of

contributions up. So word came down to Cristo, where the college was, that the plans to establish a theological seminary would have to be put into abeyance, if not completely given up. I decided that I would teach there for that year and then go back to the United States.

The Haitian Boat Lift

When I made application for re-entry to the United States as an immigrant (when I had entered earlier it had been as a student) the American Registrar told me the British quota was filled and it would take five years before you may leave and go in on the British quota. As it happened his father had been a former teacher in one of the mission schools in Cuba. He said,"I think there is a way around this. The Haitian quota is never filled. People will sign up and then not show up. You keep yourself ready and I'll call you, and you come down and take the physical exam and I'll get you in on the Haitian quota. About a month later he called me, and I went down and took the physical exam. Three days later, I was on a boat headed for Key West. Fine. All the passengers who wished to enter the United States were called on deck,. I was the only white man in about a hundred blacks from Haiti. The North American immigration officer came along, and he looked at me and said, "What are you doing there?" (except that *he* used some profanity!) I said, "I'm entering the United States as an immigrant." He replied, "What are *you* doing there? Get out of here and go through". That was the days before civil rights and I made it all right. I joked with my youngsters (I have three girls), "Back a few years ago you read a great deal about the Haitian boat lift to Florida, well I was the first Haitian boat lift to Florida! I came in on a Haitian immigrant visa."

Weleetka Days

What I want to do now is to give you just a brief outline of my experiences, as I have asked to do, but also to give you an insight into the amazing growth of the Southern Baptist movement. I would rather give most of the time to this latter part because it has been quite remarkable through the years.

I left Cuba and taught Spanish as Mercer University for one summer. Then I went from Mercer to Oklahoma where my wife's people lived. Now Oklahoma in 1929-30 was still frontier country. There were people living there who "made the run" when the territory was opened for white settlement back around the turn of the century. It is rather a beautiful country, except when it is dry in the summertime. The weather bothered me quite a bit, but I stayed there four years.

The little town where I lived in eastern Oklahoma and where I was pastor of the Baptist church was called Weleetka, a Cherokee Indian name. One night at the prayer service a little boy ran into the church and that there was going to be a shooting across the street. I gave the congregation a hymn to sing, went across the street and ran up on to the veranda of what they called a "gunshot" cottage, that is a tiny, narrow building divided into two or three rooms. There was a cowboy on the veranda. He had a gun in his hand, and he was saying to a man in the house, "If you don't get out of the way, Mr ------- , I'll have to kill you too." Now this is the story. This man's daughter claimed that a young man, then inside the house, had made an indecent approach to her. That, of course, was an insult at that time to the father. He was going to do the honourable thing and kill that boy. The other man was standing in front of the lad to protect him, and this cowboy (his name

was Reilly Autrey, an uncle of Gene Autrey the movie star) was threatening to shoot him if he did not move away. It was getting dark, and I ran up on the veranda. Autrey turned around and put the gun in my ribs and said, "And I'll shoot you, too". He did not who it was. It turned out he was a member of my church. [laughter] I knew the man and his record. He was a good man, and a very honourable man. I said, "Reilly, they tell me around this town that you are a first-class pistol shot. If you shoot that boy he'll never feel a thing. I think it would be a whole lot better if you let your son (his son was there, about six feet tall) go in and beat him up. It would be a lot more painful." He said, "That's a good idea!" [laughter] So he let the son go in and said, "Beat him up". What followed was like a staged fight in a movie, with chairs and tables flying everywhere. Then I said, "Reilly, how about giving me that gun". "No", he said, "I've worn that gun for over thirty years and I'm not about to part with it now." In the meantime the sheriff came up. Well, it turned out that Reilly Autrey was a very honourable man and highly thought of in the community, in fact he was on the school board. It became common knowledge around Weleetka that if anyone wanted a job teaching in the school system they first came to see me and I would see Reilly Autrey, and Reilly Autrey would get them a job.

It was a lot of fun in that frontier town of Weleetka. The banker opened his bank in a tent when the state was opened for settlement. It was the homeland of the "Five Civilised Tribes", the Cherokees, the Choctaws and so on. One of the experiences I had was going late a night in the summertime to an Indian stomp-dance, that was "the corn dance". This was a good many years ago; it was a little after white people settled in Oklahoma so many of the Indians there were old enough to have been alive at the time of the Custer massacre. They had been drinking for a week some alcoholic concoction that was supposed to give them enlightenment. I was just a little bit nervous but I need not have been for everything passed off without incident. By the way the best organized Baptist church in eastern Oklahoma was the Creek Indian Baptist church. The Creeks have a long history of government. I have been to this church and knew the pastor of it who was a Creek Indian chief. The members were very fine people.

Early Pastorates

I went from Oklahoma to Mississippi where I spent three or four years in the delta country. Then I had an invitation to go as pastor of the Broadway Baptist church in Louisville, Kentucky, which was a wonderful thing for me, a newcomer and a young man just beginning in the ministry in North America. The Broadway church was the church of the Louisville Seminary, and in it were most of the faculty and the widows of people like A.T. Robertson, E.Y. Mullins and others. So really for me, coming from abroad, it was a grand place. I stayed there a number of years, and then was called to the Riverside Baptist church in Jacksonville, Florida, with a church building designed by Addison Meisner, one of the outstanding architects of the United States. It is now a listed historical building.

An interesting story about that comes to me. A few years earlier the church decided to build a new building. A doctor (a surgeon) and his wife went down to West Palm Beach and found this architect and said to him, "We want you to design our church building". He said, "I haven't time. I'm an atheist and I make too much money out of rich Yankees. I can't give the time to it." So they left. About a week later, they went back again and this is how the conversation started. I should say the surgeon was a Virginian. His wife was from west Florida. He said to Meisner, "If you have the soul of Michaelangelo you'll draw the plans for this church." This man thought for a minute, then

he said,"I'll do it, and I won't charge the church a penny. I'll do it in honour to my mother". The result was the most outstanding Baptist church structurally on the eastern seaboard of the United States. I spent seven happy years there right after the World War Two.

Stetson University

While in Riverside church I got to know the people down at Stetson University, the oldest liberal arts college in Florida. It was built as an extension of Chicago University, which at one time was Baptist. I was invited to join the faculty as dean of chapel and professor of philosophy. I accepted because my heart had always been in teaching anyway. I spent yet another seven very happy years there. I had to conduct services twice a week. Chapel attendance was required. That bothered me. I did not think it was quite within the context of the Baptist tradition. But the college had been doing it for a hundred years or so, and people over the state expected it. When I made a recommendation to the Chancellor and the faculty that we have voluntary chapel, they said we are in harmony with your thinking, but we don't think the Convention of churches would stand for it.

I had a good congregation, naturally, which was nice, but unfortunately they paid no attention to my preaching - at least I thought they didn't! They would be reading books, preparing lessons, and one thing and another. This was during the first or second session after I went to Stetson. In the meantime I was invited back to Riverside to preach one Sunday, and I came back on Tuesday morning for chapel. As usual the young people were doing their work, getting ready for the next class. I said, "You know, I told my old congregation at Riverside that I always thought they were extremely attentive members, but they would not compare with the students at Stetson University, because nearly every student takes notes on my sermon!" Well the notebooks just closed like that. They appreciated the humour of the remark. I stayed at Stetson and enjoyed it.

I was professor of philosophy, but I also lectured at the law school, which is the oldest college of law in Florida. One day the Dean of the College of Law asked me if I would join the faculty as a lecturer in philosophy and law. I said, "Yes. I would be glad to do it part-time". I could drive down from De Land where Stetson University was located about 150 miles to St. Petersburg where the law college was. The law college was unique in that they had mostly retired judges on the faculty, and it was built so that the judges would live in the college and be out on the campus sitting around so that they could enter into conversation with the students. On that faculty there were two Florida Supreme Court justices, three others had served on the courts at Nuremberg - a very distinguished group of jurists. Those men came to me one day - I was not only teaching a course in philosophy and law, but also conducting a Sunday afternoon service at the time - they said, "Would you mind meeting with the law faculty once a week for the next year and talk to us about religious questions, philosophy of religion and theology?" I agreed. Now if you want to get in conversation with a group of brilliant people, shrewd thinkers, get in conversation with a group like that. I think I learned more than they did! It was a wonderful year and I look back with gratitude to that opportunity.

Move to North Carolina

Because I could never quite bring myself to fit into a situation where I had a

captive congregation I accepted a teaching position as professor of philosophy with the University of North Carolina at Ashville, NC. It was a state university. I resigned, and the people at Stetson said, "Don't resign. We'll give you a year's leave of absence, and then make up your mind after that." At the end of the year I found I did not want to go back to De Land in the circumstances. Also my wife liked it in North Carolina. So I resigned from Stetson University permanently and became full professor of philosophy at NCSU, and later on Director of International Studies. I organized a group of students and brought them to Oxford every summer, where we rented accommodation in Regent's Park College. This turned out to be a very profitable and worthwhile thing.

The Ulster Connection

Now while I was looking for property in North Carolina back in 1940 I stayed in a little hotel, and each morning went out in a different direction along the ridges back into the country roads of western North Carolina, two things struck me: the names on the mail boxes and the accents of the people. The names were names you would find anywhere in the north of Ireland; the accents, too, I felt at home with. I said to some of my friends, "I could pick one of those mountaineers up, take him to Cookstown and he would pass for a native."

So I began to wonder about this, and then I looked into the history of the settlement of that area and found that beginning in the 1600s and through most of the 1700s, 250,000 immigrants crossed to western North Carolina. Of that one-fourth were of English background, about one-fourth from the south, the rest were from the north of Ireland. Those people did not settle in New York or Boston, they settled in western Pennsylvania.

An Ulsterman called James Logan was the secretary of state for William Penn, and because of the Indian trouble on the frontier Penn asked, "What can we do about it?" Logan replied, "We need some of those Londonderry men." That was after 1689. Penn agreed and Logan wrote to the presbyteries and that is when the great Ulster migration took place - as many as 17,000 in a two-year period.

Now the remarkable thing is this that according to the *Londonderry News* of that time, those people were able financially to pay their own way. So this was no "potato famine" group. These were farmers, people who had money, but who because of business oppression from England and lack of opportunity decided to go to America. After all, they had a history of migration. Not too many years earlier they had come from the west of Scotland. So they moved out to western Pennsylvania and James Logan said nine years later, "To tell you the truth, five Ulster families give me more trouble than twenty-five from other groups of people.". [laughter] They came down the valley of Virginia before the revolutionary war, and they fought in the American Revolution. It is said that about two-thirds of the fighting force were of Ulster background.

The war ended, and, by the way, something that you do not find in the text books, a group of Ulstermen (now I am still a loyal Ulsterman and although I live in America I never lost my attachment to Britain or to Ireland. I love America, but I still recognize my roots in this country) went up through Massachusetts at the time of the revolutionary war, crossed the frontier and *almost* captured Quebec. Had they succeeded, Canada would have been part of the United States! Now that story is not often told but it is a valid part of history.

Each year I had a month off, which I usually spent with my family in that area. We normally took one route which seemed to be the most direct route to our destination.

One year I said to the family, "Let's go a different way this time". We took a turn and, as we were driving around 45-50 mph through that lovely countryside which always reminds me of the north of Ireland, there right in front of us was a magnificent plantation home, all in white, and a big sign "Belfast" on it. I came to a grinding stop, anxious to find out something about the place but there was no one living there at the time. I proceeded to do a little work on it and found out that it was built by a family called Simpson from county Antrim, who came over before the revolutionary war, and who brought the bricks with which they built it up the river from Charleston on boats and barges. They built, of course, with local lumber. That house, by the way, is still standing, still beautiful, and now owned by the Champion Paper Company. Within thirty minutes drive of where I live there is the Logan house, the Carson house, people from the north of Ireland. Now these were frontiers-people, and these houses were built in the late 1600s and early 1700s.

One long street in Ashville, near where I live, is called "Patton". Patton was an immigrant from Co. Fermanagh who came to America before the revolutionary war and started driving cattle from Virginia to New York, back and forth. That is a wonderful story. Davy Crockett used to come down on week-ends to shoot a rifle with Logan at his house. The prize was a keg of whiskey. Crockett, of course, was the man who died in the Alamo. Name after name after Ulster name - that struck me after I went to North Carolina. So then I began to look into the history a little bit more. Finally we got a conference going between the University of Ulster and the university I was teaching in on the migration of the Ulster people. This takes place now every two years, alternating between here and there.

Growth of Baptists

Now a little bit about the Baptist movement. The thing that struck me in those early days was the tremendous growth of the Southern Baptist Convention and churches. There were Baptists everywhere, churches everywhere. And I wondered about it when doing the work on the immigration of the Ulster people, most of whom were Presbyterians with a few Anglicans, and later on Methodists.

This is the story. The Presbyterians insisted on an educated ministry, on degree-granting institutions. The Episcopalians also had rather rigid requirements. With the movement of thousands and thousands of frontiers-people down the valley into an area of maybe a hundred thousand square miles of jungle, of woods, there was no way those denominations could adequately care for the people.

Among the frontiersmen were people from Methodist background, people of Baptist background - people who could preach with or without ordination. Ministers were ordained very much as I was. I was ordained by an Oklahoma Baptist church. It was a very simple thing. The church called in a group of local pastors, asked the me a few questions and ordained me; but the local Association and Convention had nothing to do with it. So the result is that, I am afraid, many, many people have been ordained throughout the years without even the minimal requirements as far as education is concerned. But they had lots of enthusiasm, lots of commitment, lots of Christian commitment. And in those lonely backwoods of the Carolinas, north and south, and in Georgia, and over the mountains into Tennessee and out west, people in desperate need of the services of a minister, and, I think, the great evangelistic movement that started before

the revolutionary war, and then picked up again after the Civil War, just swept the whole country, and tens of thousands of people were caught up in the camp meetings which were held in the fall of the year after the crops were in. Baptist churches just sprang up everywhere.

I will give you an illustration of it. I moved to the little town of Black Mountain (by the way where Billy Graham lives - Billy Graham is my neighbour) in 1964. Between where I live and the little town of Black Mountain there was one thriving Baptist church. Ten years later there were four within walking distance from that church. There would be some kind of internal row, some of the deacons would pull out and start a new church. Or maybe they would give the pastor a pretty hard time of it and he would pull out and go and form a new church. And so they scatter all over the place. Many of them die, but many of them live.

I think this, plus the very excellent organization work by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board (one of the most effective educational institutions in America), providing Sunday school material, Training Union material (for people who want to be trained in church work and so on), the summer assemblies like Ridgecrest (near where I live) which will have 17,000 or 18,000 people during the summer, where they get promotional talks, instruction on how to organize. The other thing is the emphasis on Sunday school. The Sunday school is highly organized and is used to enlist people. The Sunday School Board puts out the necessary guides and instruction, very excellent handbooks on Bible study and daily devotions. Through the guidelines, the Sunday School Board, and the pressure of local missionaries and state officials, the Sunday schools are the chief recruiting agency of the local church. If you moved into a neighbourhood in Jacksonville, Florida, you would probably have two or three visitors the first week, and this contact would be kept up by people from the Sunday school not only to enlist the children but the parents and the grandparents. I have a feeling that maybe this is one of the strengths and causes of the growth of the Southern Baptist Convention and churches.

My time has gone. I hope that what I have said might lead to further investigation of the impact of the Ulster migration, which I am very much interested in; and secondly, the role of the Sunday school and evangelism in the growth of churches.

Notes:

Pastor L.E. Deens was pastor of the Cliftonpark Avenue Baptist Church, Belfast at the time.

Pastor S.C. Thompson was pastor of Bally keel Church, Co. Down for many years before he emigrated to Florida.

The Worldwide Evangelization Crusade.

William Park Rankin, Robert Clarke, Robert Wallace Kerr and Herbert J.L. Hunter became highly-esteemed pastors.

Thomas Harold Spurgeon was Principal of the College and Pastor Deens taught Homiletics.

A T Robertson was a renowned Baptist scholar. E Y Mullins was a leading Baptist theologian and author of *The Christian Religion in its Doctrinal Expression* a volume of systematic theology that followed that of Augustus Hopkins Strong.

H. A. Johnston (1883-1959)

I should like to explain at the outset that this is by no means a standard biography. On some aspects of H.A.Johnston's life we know virtually nothing, whilst on a few matters of detail we are unusually well informed. For reasons which will become apparent I propose starting with his father, James Johnston.

Younger son of William Johnston, a county Cavan farmer, and unlikely to inherit land, James came to Belfast as a young man and found employment as a clerk in the Harbour Office. No doubt he started in lodgings but by 1874 at age twenty-two he had got the tenancy of a house, 39 Meadow Street, off York Street. He is believed to have been a Methodist, but when he married a year later, on 24th June 1875, the wedding took place in the parish church of the district in which he lived, St. Paul's, opposite the railway terminus, and fortunately still standing. His bride was Margaret Frizelle of Downpatrick, a young lady, also twenty-three years of age, of Church of Ireland upbringing. For something over five years they lived in Meadow Street and started a family, but then moved to the Antrim Road and settled at 20 Baltic Avenue where Henry Arthur, the fifth of the family of eight children, was born in 1883. Two other children were born in Baltic Avenue, and then followed a move across the town to East Belfast where there may have been more than one address. At any rate, three of the children attended Mountpottinger National School before the family moved, probably to Ravenscroft Street, around 1893. In 1898, on promotion to cashier, James Johnston moved above the Holywood Arches, first to Cyprus Avenue and then, about 1901, to 'Rainswood' on the Upper Newtownards Road. He died at 'Rainswood' in October 1905, still only fifty-three years of age, having reached the rank of 'Assessor' in the Harbour Office, which I take to mean that he was responsible for assessing the rates due on ships and cargoes entering the port. In economic history terms it was a good example of upward social mobility, made possible by the very adequate supply of houses to rent in Edwardian Belfast.

Some details about the family members other then H.A. are relevant. For instance, the eldest brother, W.R., became prominent amongst Open Brethren; James, the next brother, may have been a founder member of Bloomfield Baptist Church, established 1903 - certainly a James Johnston was one of the first deacons. The James Johnston in whom we are interested inscribed his name in 1900 in a book of Spurgeon's sermon notes. When Meta, a younger sister, married in 1907, the wedding took place in Apsley Street Gospel Hall; another sister, Ena, was baptised in Bloomfield in 1913 and remained in membership until she transferred to an English church around 1920. Although we know nothing of the religious life and views of James (Sen.) it is clear that there must have been a strong evangelical, nonconformist influence in the home from one or other, or possibly both parents. In later life the widowed Margaret Johnston joined the Exclusive Brethren. Rather curiously, the two elder children were entered in Belmont School as 'Established Church', the younger ones as 'Wesleyan'.

Of H. A.Johnston as a boy we know very little save that he began his education at Mountpottinger National School and transferred to Belmont in February 1893 at age nine. He remained there until January 1898, achieving good grades, and left at age fourteen. What happened then is not clear. He may have had schooling at what would now be regarded as 'Intermediate level'; certainly in later life he was particularly literate both in speech and writing, but he may equally have enrolled, at age fifteen, in the commercial department of the Belfast Technical College, where he got a Pitman certificate for shorthand in 1901. In the same year he joined the keep-fit activities of the city YMCA. His first job was in the Courthouse, Crumlin Road, probably recording court proceedings, but he seems to have found the atmosphere and clients there no more attractive than they are today. At any rate, he enrolled for evening classes in book-keeping at the Technical College 1903/4 to 1908/9 and following that or perhaps simultaneously, entered into articles with the accounting firm of Craig Gardner, Donegall Place. His activity in Christian work began about the same time, but it may be best to chart his business career and personal life first.

He had moved with his widowed mother to Madison Avenue, Cavehill Road in 1907 and was living there when he completed his articles with Craig Gardner and set up his own accountancy business at 12 High Street in 1910/11 under the title 'H.A. Johnston & Co'. I have no information about the '& Co'. It was not a registered company and the title may simply have referred to some kind of partnership. Having built up a successful business, he married in 1919 Edith Frizelle, a school teacher, and daughter of W. G. Frizelle, a founder member of the Cliftonpark Avenue Baptist Church. The wedding took place at the bride's home, Knutsford House, Cliftonville, where the religious service was conducted by Pastor Alex Jardine. The best man was F. W. Gracey and the bridesmaid Evelyn Kennedy, sister of Fenton Kennedy. Pastor Gracey was a lifelong friend of the family. The young couple lived first at Rosetta Park but moved shortly afterwards to Jordanstown where their two daughters were born - Margaret, to whose preservation of family records the greatest part of this paper is due, and then Florence, both still living in Newcastle, Co. Down. With the girls at school age the family moved briefly to Saintfield Road and then to 3 Ailsbury Road (off Haypark Avenue) around 1932. The next move was to Dundela Avenue, Strandtown, then to King's Crescent, Knock and finally, in 1936 to Newcastle. There were family, or possibly business reasons behind most of these moves. For instance, it was whilst living at Knock that H. A. had a severe heart attack, and recuperation at Newcastle drew his attention to the attractions of the place. And, of course, being self-employed in his business as accountant he was able to move from place to place provided he kept within a train or tram ride of the centre of the city. He did not own a car until 1955, some years after the move to Newcastle, but had many good friends who provided transport when he went to meetings outside the town. (Mr Davison of Dundela was an example.) And of course for all his life he remained a regular and vigorous walker.

If his domestic life was subject to change from time to time, so was his business life. As an accountant he was necessarily in touch with the commercial affairs of the city, and early in 1920 took the opportunity of acquiring a small garment manufacturing concern. This proved to be a mistake. Anyone less suited for the cut and thrust, the petty sharp practice of buying and selling, than H.A. Johnston, it would be hard to imagine. And of course the 1920s became progressively more difficult for even the most experienced business man. The manufacturing concern folded, accountancy could not be immediately resumed and, for a short while, H.A. taught book-keeping in the 'Tech'. But this episode

was soon over and by 1927, possibly a little earlier he had returned to his career as an accountant, setting up as 'H.A. Johnston, Accountant' (no '& Co.' this time) in 7 Bedford Street. This time there were no setbacks and by 1934/35 he had returned to his previous location in High Street. Unfortunately, his heart attack forced the closure of the office there. In 1938, however, having made an excellent recovery and having retained the esteem of many of his clients, he was able to re-open at 13 Ann Street and was there during the war and for some time afterwards. Some of us will remember the office in Ann Street and recall accounts of daily travel from Newcastle on the late lamented County Down Railway. Such journeys were far from arduous in the comfortable if somewhat faded grandeur of a first class carriage, followed by a brisk walk over the Queen's Bridge to the office. One can be sure that the morning and evening travelling were occasions for much reading, thought and compilation of notes for addresses and so on. Those were happy and useful years. Unfortunately, the railway line to Newcastle was closed in 1950. The jolting of an express bus over winding and sometimes snowbound roads did not prove a welcome alternative. There was no retirement however, the town office continued in use, and it was not until 1952 that H.A. decided to dispose of the Belfast section of the work. Even then he retained a number of clients in south Down and was still effectively in business as an accountant when he died at Newcastle in March 1959, still active and vigorous in his seventy-sixth year.

I will deal in a moment with his contribution to Baptist and interdenominational work but first, a word about the man himself. Active in mind and body, with a dry humour and twinkling eyes behind his spectacles, he was widely read, not simply in theological works but in good literature of very wide interest. A member of the Linen Hall Library for many years and habitué of Belfast's second-hand bookshops, he was, by reason of his occupation, acquainted with the workings of many professional and commercial concerns - boxmakers, linen manufacturers and the like. An outstanding characteristic was his love of music. As a young man he studied the violin but soon forsook it for a lifelong devotion to the piano. Those who heard him play, often accompanying singing, would never have credited that he did not read music, although he may well have been able to. His memory was a storehouse for innumerable tunes, which he could play faultlessly by ear. Somebody told me of a meeting where the pianist could not find in her book the appropriate tune for the hymn he had chosen. He relieved her difficulty by sitting down and playing it himself - without a book. It is evident that H.A. inherited a facility with figures, and also a disposition not to become over-attached to any particular residence or location. In *his* order of priorities the setting up of an ancestral home came very far down the list. It is also probable that he inherited or benefited from an early introduction to Christian teaching. I have mentioned something of the nonconformist evangelical leanings of some other members of the family and must now deal with his own.

We do not know how nor when H.A. Johnston's personal Christian life began. He was present in 1908 (age 23) at the first general meeting of the Belfast and District Baptist Sunday School Union (the body which preceded the IBSSU) and after serving as secretary pro tem. during 1907 was appointed their permanent secretary in January 1908. In July 1912 he was convenor of a committee representing the Baptist Union of Ireland and the Belfast and District Sunday School Union. From the work of that committee the Irish Baptist Sunday School Union was born. Thus his interest in children's work began very early, indeed before he was baptised, for that took place in the Iron Hall, Templemore

Avenue in August 1907. There is something here which requires explanation for he was baptised by Pastor Burt Sharp who had been evangelist in charge of the work at the Iron Hall before being called to be the first pastor of the newly-formed Bloomfield Baptist Church in 1903. Pastor Sharp had resigned in May 1907 and was soon called to Lisnagleer where he took up the pastorate in September. Why in the meantime did he return to the Iron Hall to baptise H.A. Johnston in August? The only explanation I can think of is that H.A. had become firmly attached to Mr Sharp during his ministry in Bloomfield, and possibly earlier, and wanted to be baptised by him before he removed to Lisnagleer. If this is so, then it would argue H.A's early association with Baptist work at Bloomfield and possibly Ravenscroft Avenue. His name does not, of course, appear on Bloomfield's earliest roll, though a James Johnston, whom I believe to have been his elder brother, does. By December 1907 H.A. was attending Cliftonpark and was probably a member, though the absence of early records makes confirmation impossible. At any rate he chaired a Band of Hope meeting there in 1908. He was still at Cliftonpark in 1911, after 1912 becoming increasingly associated with children's work. He can hardly have avoided being present at the Young People's Demonstration of the Irish Baptist Sunday School Union in February 1915 at which Miss E.M. Frizelle was accompanist. With shared interests in music, children's work and Cliftonpark it is scarcely surprising that, as already recorded, they decided to make their association permanent in 1919.

The 1920s were busy years. This decade saw him, with W.G. Frizelle and others, carrying on meetings in Monkstown Mission Hall out of which Monkstown Baptist Church was eventually formed. Also during these years he became a member of Belfast and District Baptist Council, and it was probably during the 1920s that he began the training of the Sunday School choir which occupied the Wellington Hall platform during successive annual demonstrations. He is recalled as the man who knew what he wanted, and got it. I wonder how many subsequent members of Baptist church choirs had their first introduction to organised singing under his instruction. Again, in the 1920s it is possible that his association began with the work at Haypark Avenue where a Baptist church was established in 1926. He was a member of the Committee (or Council) of the Baptist Union of Ireland from around 1922 and secretary of the Sunday School Committee 1918 to 1926. Somebody else then took over the secretaryship but H.A. remained for many years a member of that committee. Although a convinced Baptist, H.A. Johnston's interests ranged well beyond his own denomination. Thus, the 1920s saw him appointed to the committee of the Portstewart Convention, and he was a founder member of the Belfast Young People's Convention, serving for 28 years and being chairman for half of that time. But perhaps the most memorable activity of those years was his partnership with W.P. Nicholson during the Assembly Hall meetings of 1925. That the two men worked together on other occasions I do not doubt but in 1925 a friendship was formed which H.A. treasured for the rest of his life. Mr Nicholson's letter on the occasion of H.A's homecall was particularly warm and nostalgic. Altogether, in the revival of the 1920s which left so marked an impression not only on our own denomination but far outside it, H.A. Johnston played a very full part.

If the 1920s were busy years the 1930s were no less so. H.A. assisted W.G. Frizelle and others in conducting meetings at Glengormley 1930-1932 which preceded the establishment of a church there in the latter year and which he served as secretary for some months until it got on to its feet. It must have been in this decade, if not earlier, that he

became the Irish deputation secretary for the French Bible Mission, arranging meetings for Pastor Emile Guedj on his regular visits to Ireland. He also made the journey to France in July 1932 and visited a number of the FBM churches in France and Switzerland with Pastor Guedj. Again, it was possibly in these years that he took part in the gospel work of the Ravenhill United Testimony Male Choir, though in what capacity is not clear for he was acceptable equally as accompanist and preacher. After the move to Newcastle he became a regular speaker at Glenada Mission Hall, where he had, in fact, first preached in 1935. He was also largely responsible for meetings in Newcastle Orange Hall which commenced in 1938. (The meetings which preceded the formation of a Baptist church in the town were of a somewhat later date.) His own church membership was, and remained in Kilkeel which he served as secretary for over four years. Thus, the Newcastle years were by no means a period of retirement. Apart from committee work, H.A, preached up and down the country for Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians and various interdenominational bodies, at children's meetings and in the open-air. And he gathered around him a group of young men referred to by Godfrey Brown in this extract from a letter which he wrote in March 1959:

'Those of us who were brought up in Newcastle look back with thankfulness to the earnest way in which he spent himself for our spiritual welfare - particularly in the Orange Hall and the Youth for Christ movement. For me personally, I owe a debt to him which I can never hope to repay. From the moment that I was old enough to do any public service for Christ, Mr. Johnston gently but steadily guided my footsteps. On many occasions he gave me opportunities of sharing meetings with him, going to some pains to fit me into his programme. I know now that he was one of the influences with which God surrounded my life and led me into full-time service.'

Note:(Rev. A.W. Godfrey Brown B.A., Ph.D., D.D., Minister of Ballycastle Presbyterian Church, Co.Antrim.)

Godfrey Brown's reference to Youth for Christ reminds me that H.A. was, as one would expect, very much involved in that movement, first as vice-chairman and then for some years as chairman. Details are lacking but I suspect that his active participation continued well into the 1950s. In December 1943 and January 1944 he contributed an article, 'Notes on Revival' to the *Irish Baptist* , and the theme of revival had clearly been prominent in his mind when he became vice-president of the newly formed Baptist Revival Fellowship in 1943. Again, when he became president of the Baptist Union of Ireland in May 1944 his presidential address, 'Things That Matter Most' was particularly concerned with two main themes - the revival of an active spirit amongst God's people and the more vigorous presentation of the gospel to the world. He looked forward to the end of the war and saw it as an opportunity for the soldiers of the cross to advance, but such advance as he saw it, would be possible only if current impotence, barrenness and indifference could be overcome. It was an uncomfortable address which pulled few punches and can have left none of his hearers with any sense of complacency. H.A. did not waste words but rather used them in a direct and forceful manner. For example, 'Children of light can surely have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness . . . when God divided light from darkness, he established the principle of separation, and what God has put asunder, let no man attempt to unite.' Among several references quoted with approval and typical perhaps of his own attitude was: 'I have known men with a creed as long as your arm, but no more spirit of venture than a limpet! Controversial ardour is no proof of the value of our faith.'

The magazine report of the meeting says, 'Mr Johnston is of course one of the best known

of Irish Baptists. For many years he served our churches in various capacities. His chief work, perhaps, was done when he was the moving spirit in laying, well and truly, the foundations of the Sunday School work on which others are building with great benefit to the denomination.' His presidential address was not only printed in the *Irish Baptist* but cirulated in pamphlet form among the churches.

His presidential year gave H.A. fresh opportunities for visiting and preaching around the churches. That such visits were fruitful appears from a letter which Mrs White, wife of a deacon in the Cork Church, wrote recently to Dr. Thompson. An extract says:

'I well remember H.A. Johnston for it was on one of his visits to Cork that I heard for the first time the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God. It meant an absolute change in my Christian life, and led to my being baptised and becoming a member of the church here in Cork.'

You will note that this was on 'one of his visits to Cork', so obviously his preaching activities had already taken him far afield. Following his presidential year H.A. served on the Council of the Union and as a director of the Baptist Union of Ireland Corporation Ltd. from 1946 to 1956 at least. These were clearly spheres in which his practical business experience was used in support of his and the denomination's evangelical interests. His Baptist work during the 1940s included membership of the Home and Foreign Mission committees. The latter indeed extended back to the early 1920s, though there may have been a break in committee membership, though not of course in interest, between 1930 and 1940. As in so many other fields H.A's missionary involvement was very wide, including the Regions Beyond Missionary Union and the Emmanuel Mission, Belfast of which he was a trustee, the latter another example of the combination of his legal/financial knowledge and his zeal for the extension of the Lord's kingdom. Finally, let me include in his work during the 1940s the composition of the words and music of a chorus which appears as No.48 in T.B. Rees' *Hildenborough Book of Hymns and Choruses* :

'Enter my life more fully.
Take now complete control.
True Thou hast been my Saviour
Thou shalt be Lord of all.'

The closing six years of H.A's life contained and continued many of the strands of earlier years. He remained a member of the Council of the Baptist Union of Ireland up to 1956, but was travelling less often to Belfast. On the other hand work in Newcastle and district received more of his attention. He joined the Faith Mission Prayer Union in the 1950s and was still a member in 1959. Few summers saw open air meetings in Newcastle without his active participation. And there were regular preaching visits to Ballynahinch, Banbridge and,of course, Kilkeel. What might have been a highlight of those years was his membership of a committee which arranged for a series of meetings by W.P. Nicholson on a projected visit to Northern Ireland in 1958. Unfortunately, W.P. became ill and the visit had to be cancelled. That apart, H.A's retirement seems to have been a time of gradual if scarcely perceptible slowing down. Even in 1959 there was little indication that his life of service to his Master was drawing to a close. It was therefore with a feeling of great sadness that the wide circle of those who knew him learned that after a brief illness he passed into the immediate presence of his Lord on 24 March 1959.

I would rather not attempt a summing up of a life so varied, so active, so fruitful. H.A. was held in so much love and esteem at home, and in the churches and organisations which he served, and in the hearts of so many he influenced, that many voices besides mine would be needed for an adequate appreciation of such a husband and father, such a man of wide ranging talents, such a devoted servant of God. Among his papers, however, were, in manuscript, two choruses which he seems to have written, perhaps intended for publication; perhaps simply expressive of his own feelings. Here, as an insight into his mind, and to conclude this paper is one of them:

'Thy love, O Lord, has won this heart of mine.
Strange that so long I spurned such grace divine:
All that I have must be forever Thine.
To Thy sweet will I now myself resign.'

H.D. GRIBBON

IBA and BUI Past Presidents 1862-1964

Their Years of Office and Titles of their Presidential Addresses

[Sources: IBA Minute Book, IBM May 1928, p.60, Assembly Handbooks and IBM]

1862-63 Rev. Robert Mitchell Henry, Belfast
1863-64 Rev. Charles James Middleditch, London (Secretary,BIS)
1864-65 Rev. Robert Haldane Carson, Tobermore
1865-66 Rev. Robert Mitchell Henry, Belfast
1866-67 not recorded
1867-68 Rev. William Hamilton, Carrickfergus
1868-69 Rev. Charles Kirtland, London (Secretary,BIBHM)
1869-70 not recorded
1870-71 not recorded
1871-72 Rev. Robert Mitchell Henry, Belfast
1872-73 not recorded
1873-74 not recorded
1874-75 not recorded BM - July 1874 — RM Hon Secretary
1875-76 Rev. William Sloan Eccles, Grange
'The present position and prospects of our denomination'.
1876-77 Rev. Robert Haldane Carson, Tobermore
1877-78 Rev. Robert Haldane Carson, Tobermore
'The presence of Christ with us'.
1878-79 Rev. Samuel James Banks, Banbridge
'Love as brethren'.
1879-80 Rev. Robert Haldane Carson, Tobermore.
'Union amongst brethren'.
1880-81 Rev. John Dickson, Lisnagleer
'The Holy Scriptures'.
1881-82 Rev. John Taylor, Tandragee
'The Apostles' Life Work'.
1882-83 Rev. Richard Kerr Eccles, M.D., Dublin
'We are Few'.
1883-84 Rev. Archie Mackinlay, Belfast
'Have We a Mission in Ireland?' [not published]
1884-85 Pastor William Usher, Belfast
'What is our Mission?'
1885-86 Rev. Henry Phillips, Grange
'Preach the Word'.

1886-87 Rev. John Douglas, B.A., Waterford
'The Mission of the Irish Baptist Churches'.
1887-88 Pastor Hugh Dunlop Brown, B.A., Dublin
'A Plea for Primitive Christianity'.

1888-89 Mr. Henry A. Gribbon, Coleraine
'The Grace of God'.

1889-90 Pastor Edward T. Mateer, Belfast
'Conditions of Progress and Power in the Heavenly Life and Service'

1890-91 Mr. Robert Graham Glendinning,P.C., D.L., J.P. Belfast
'The Duty of Christian Forbearance'.

1891-92 Rev. Samuel James Banks, Banbridge
'Appointments and Disappointments'.

1892-93 Pastor Archibald M'Caig, B.A., LL.B., Brannoxtown
'Primitive Preaching'.

1893-94 Mr. Thomas Rufus Warner, Dublin
'Our Position and Practice'.

1894-95 Rev. John Taylor, Tandragee
'The Hindrances to the growth of our Village Churches'.

1895-96 Pastor Robert Clark, Mountpottinger, Belfast
'Our Work - An Appeal'.

1896-97 Davenport Crosthwaite, M.A., LL.D., Dublin
'The Unity of the Spirit'.

1897-98 Pastor Charles S. Donald, Antrim Road, Belfast
'Our Mission, Methods and Message'.

1898-99 Pastor A. Grant Gibb, M.A., Limerick
'Why could not we cast him out?'.

1899-1900 Mr. Henry Havelock Graham, Belfast
'Ireland and our Duty'.

1900-01 Pastor Hugh Dunlop Brown, M.A., B.L.,
Harcourt Street, Dublin
'Prospect and Retrospect'.

1901-02 Pastor Thomas Whiteside, Hill Street, Ballymena
'Things most surely believed among us'

1902-03 Colonel Robert Waters, C.B., J.P., Tobermore
'The Distinguishing Principles of Baptists'.

1903-04 Pastor John Dinnen Gilmore, Phibsborough, Dublin
'That which is lacking'.

1904-05 Principal Ambrose Upton Gledstanes Bury, M.A., Dublin
'Some Strategic Points in the Battle of the Book'.

1905-06 Mr. Alexander McCay, J.P., Londonderry
'The Kingdom of God'.

1906-07 Pastor Alexander Jardine, Belfast
'Spiritual Power in the Church'.

1907-08 Mr.R. Pope Froste, M.A., J.P., Dublin
'Our Principals (sic) Foundation Truth'

1908-09 Pastor George Marshall, Tobermore
'Our Great Need'.

1909-10 Mr. David McKelvey, J.P.,Belfast
'Revival Memories'.

1910-11 Pastor Samuel Joseph Reid, Londonderry
'The Place of Baptists in the Path of Progress'.

1911-12 Pastor R. Herries, Belfast
'The Position and Purpose of Christian Discipleship'.
1912-13 Mr. W.G. Frizell, Belfast
'Knowledge, Power and Service'.
1913-14 Pastor James W. Pearce, Limerick
'A Plea for the Child'.
1914-15 Pastor Hugh Dunlop Brown, M.A., B.L., Dublin
'The Past and Future of Baptists in Ireland'.
1915-16 Mr. Henry A. Gribbon, J.P., Coleraine
[no address due to illness of President]
1916-17 Principal James Willoughby, M.A., Dublin
'Verbal Inspiration'
1917-18 Pastor James Shields, Belfast
[no Annual Meetings due to the Great War and civil unrest]
1918-19 Pastor James Shields
'Some Things for which we Stand'
1919-20 Mr. Frank W. Carson, Belfast
'Usefulness in the Church'
1920-21 Rev. John William Darby Freeman, Coleraine
'Stepping Stones to Spiritual Success.'
1921-22 Mr. Robert Arnold, Belfast
'Our Work as seen through the eyes of a Layman.'
1922-23 Pastor Fred W. Gracey, Cork
'Revival and the Lord's Return'
1923-24 Pastor Charles Willoughby, M.A.
'Godly Fellowship'
1924-25 James Templeton, Esq., Antrim Road
'A Plea for Worship'
1925-26 Pastor Richard Hodgett, Ballymena
'The Spirit-filled Church'
1926-27 Charles G. Warner, Esq., Dublin
'Reminiscences of a common soldier for a common day'.
1927-28 Pastor Isaac Player Bell,
'The present-day need for and loyalty to the Truth.'
1928-29 Anthony W Tweedall
[Jly issue of IBM containing address missing from file]
1929-30 Rev David Henderson, Great Victoria Street, Belfast
'The Bible and Science'

1930-31 Henry C Gribbon, Antrim Road, Belfast
'Forward with God'
1931-32 Pastor Louis Edward Deens, Harcourt Street,Dublin
'Our Union'

1932-33 A B Hamilton, Limerick
' "Our Great Constitution" - The Bible'
1933-34 Pastor David Burrows
'Our Work with God'
1934-35 W J Chambers
'These We Will Maintain'

1935-36 Pastor Frank H. Forbes, Hill Street, Ballymena
'Denominational Assets'
1936-37 John Frederick Pepper, East End, Belfast
'The Church - Its Purpose, Power and Privilege'
1937-38 Pastor Thomas M Carleton, Banbridge
'Love, the First Fruit of the Spirit'
1938-39 Peter Ewing, Grove, Belfast
'Stand Fast'
1939-40 Pastor John Ravey, Shankill, Belfast
'Christian Liberty'
1940-41 J. Harry Corbett, Thomas Street, Portadown
'My Testimony'
1941-42 Pastor George Henderson Weir
'Serving by Love'
1942-43 Edward G. Combe, Haypark, Belfast
1943-44 Pastor Samuel Ruddock, Ballynahinch
1944-45 Henry Arthur Johnston, Kikeel
'Things That Matter Most'
1945-46 Pastor Louis Edward Deens, Dublin
'A Church Conservative and Progressive'
1946-47 James Guthrie,
1947-48 Pastor Frederick W. Gracey, Cork
'A Prepared People'
1948-49 Bert A. Jenks, Shankill, Belfast
1949-50 Pastor William Weir, BA BSc, Thomas Street, Portadown
'The Lordship of Jesus Christ'
1950-51 Ernest Boyle O'Reilly, Bloomfield, Belfast
'The Charter of the Church'
1951-52 Pastor William Wilson, Grove, Belfast
'The Unique Splendour of Our Baptist Witness'
1952-53 Christopher Davis, Limerick
'A Layman to Laymen'
1953-54 Pastor John Johnston, Banbridge
'Holiness'

1954-55 Stewart Neill,
'The Local Church and Evangelism'
1955-56 Pastor Robert Andrew Boggs, Tobermore
'Our Fellowship'
1956-57 Pastor Robert Andrew Boggs, Tobermore
The President-elect Charles M. Johnson having withdrawn, the Union Secretary gave an address on 'The Functions of Our Union' in place of the Presidential Address.

1957-58 Pastor Robert Clarke, Monkstown
'Forward'
1958-59 George E. Edge, Grosvenor Road, Dublin
'Witnessing'
1959-60 Pastor Minnis Mills, Orangefield, Belfast
'Hold Fast'

1960-61 Alexander Russell, JP
'God All-Sufficient'
1961-62 Pastor Robert Campbell, Londonderry
'Power Through Prayer'
1962-63 Norman Porter, Orangefield
'Contending for the Faith'
1963-64 Pastor Louis Edward Deens, Grosvenor Road, Dublin
'Our Raison D'Être'

[Compiled by Dr. Joshua Thompson]

'Census Concern'

A census form was sent last September to each church in the Union. Of the 99 churches, 81 took the trouble to complete and return the form. 17 made no response, and 1 indicated that it would not be taking part. This has been borne in mind and qualifies some of the comments which follow. Due to the timing of the census, some Sunday Schools and Bible Classes had not resumed when it was taken.

Concerning Preachers.

55 churches had their own pastor in the pulpit, 26 had visiting preachers.

In 25 churches there was no children's talk at the morning service. The advent of 'children's church' or its equivalent has led, in some cases to the weekly children's talk being discontinued or reduced to once monthly. Of the 55 children's talks given, the pastors or visiting speakers were responsible for all but 6 of them. If we are to have children's talks at all (and the majority seem to favour them) it would add interest and variety if church members (for instance, SS teachers, day-school teachers, youth leaders) were more widely used.

Concerning Music.

Some interesting and revealing facts emerged. A range of 16 different hymn books are in use! Of specifically Baptist hymn books, the *Irish Baptist Hymnal* sadly is no longer used. The *Baptist Hymnal* is still used in 8 churches. *Mission Praise* is used in 38 churches mostly alongside and supplementing another hymnal, but in several it is the *only* hymn book used. *Sankey, Redemption Songs* and *Redemption Hymns* are used fairly commonly at evening services. Of the newer hymn books - *Grace Hymns, Hymns of Faith, Christian Hymns* etc. - are in use, although more exotic varieties like *Hymns for Today's Church, Hymns of Truth & Praise, Songs of Fellowship* and the *Prophetic Hymn Book* have not gained general acceptance. Chorus singing is not as widespread as one might imagine.

The Church Choir survives only in 5 churches, and in only one case contributed special music on the day. Several churches can muster a youth choir for special occasions and one church sports a male voice choir. The churches are heavily dependent on visiting singers for public worship, and appear to confine their use to Sunday evenings. When one remembers the place praise has always had in Christian worship and witness, Irish Baptists appear neglectful, almost sinfully so, of a most valuable gift of God. In one or two churches where music and praise are stressed the congregational response is positive.

Concerning the Collection.

The long-standing practice of having boxes at the doors was used by 63% (or

51) of the responding churches for both morning and evening services. Only 16 churches lifted the offerings during both services. Another 7 took up the offerings at the morning service and used boxes for retiring offerings in the evening. 2 took up the offering at the morning service and had no provision for the evening service. Of the 5 churches which had only one service - 2 lifted the offering during the service, 3 provided boxes for a retiring offering.

Concerning Baptisms and Church Membership

The ten baptisms and eleven additions to membership returned are more flattering than our annual statistical returns allow. Even so, they are still poor when compared with earlier years. Ten years ago the ratio of baptisms to church members was 1: 17; twenty years ago it was higher at 1: 14; a year ago it had collapsed to 1: 25. The annual statistics published in the Assembly 1989 Handbook bear out this pessimistic view. The ratio still lags at a dismal 1: 23.

Concerning Attendances

9692 people attended the morning services in the 81 responding churches (which, according to the statistical returns had 7110 members). Of these, 5295 (or 55%) remained for the Lord's Supper. As a percentage of the baptised members this was 75%. This attendance was better than might have been predicted.

7203 people attended the evening services. These data confirm the long-term trend towards attendances at the morning services overtaking attendances at evening services. Obviously, our churches ought to give serious thought to the function and format of the evening service. All but 10 churches had *more* present at the morning service than their total membership. 35 churches had evening attendances *below* their membership.

The aggregate attendances at Sunday schools and Bible Classes differentiated between 'enrolled' and 'actual', the figures being 4418 and 3780, and 676 and 587 respectively.

This census does not answer the question as to the size of the Baptist 'community'. The guide to this must still be official government census returns.

Concerning Conversions

Not one conversion was reported! In a few cases this section of the questionnaire was left blank, the reporters seeming to feel it inappropriate to give a negative answer at that time. Allowing for the possibility that some of the non-reporting churches may have had conversions (and we trust they had), it is a sobering to reflect on the general absence of conversions. Can it be that our evangelistic zeal has cooled, that our presentation of the Gospel is flawed, that we have lost the ear of the unconverted?

Conclusion

The responding Churches are thanked for their help. Perhaps the exercise could be repeated in ten years' time, when a comparison might be helpful.

Analysis by Dr. Joshua Thompson

"Amateur Dabblings in History"

Report by the Editor

This modest title concealed a highly skilled and interesting presentation by Mr Claude Macquigg, a member of the Newtownbreda church, Belfast, to a well-attended meeting of members on 14 September 1989.

Using an epidiascope Mr Macquigg demonstrated various "projects" that as a staff lecturer, he had devised and carried through with students at Bangor Technical College, later merged in the North Down College of Further Education. He illustrated methods of gathering data, the various resources employed and the value and interpretation of oral testimony, especially in relation to the preparation of tapes and an exhibition telling "The Newtownbreda Story". This was a project forming part of the celebration by the Newtownbreda Baptist Church, marking fifty years of gospel witness in that village.

The lecture concluded with a video recording of the life and ministry of the late Minnis Mills, pastor of the Orangefield Baptist Church, Belfast. This demonstrated the exciting possibilities of this technique in collating, preserving and presenting a wide range of material in a diversity of formats. The script was written by Mr Macquigg and the voice-over commentary was done by members of the Mills family. The photography, technical preparation and editing of the video was by Mr David Spence.

Mr Macquigg generously donated tapes of "The Newtownbreda Story" to the archives of the Society.