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Editorial

Two of the four meetings of the Society were devoted to visual presentations - the excellent video, "A Weaver's Son: William Carey 1761-1834" produced by the Baptist Missionary Society to mark its bi-centenary, and a multi-media presentation by Mr Claud Macquigg on the annual young people's and family camps organised by Baptist Missions in Peru. Both occasions were worthwhile although they did not provide fodder for a hungry editor.

The programme for next year includes two topics of current interest in Baptist churches in Ireland - one on "The pastoral office, past and present" and a stimulating treatment on how Irish Baptists might relate to "Evangelical Catholics" of whom there is a growing number in the Irish Roman Catholic church. This latter paper, to be read at the annual meeting of the Society in Belfast in May 1993, continues the Society's policy of providing a platform and forum for discussion of contemporary topics that will be of historical interest.

Volume 25 of the *Journal* maintains the quality of previous years, the printed articles contributed by David Kingdon and Steven Curry being supplemented by David McMillan's excellent and provocative paper on "Evangelical Catholicism".

We are grateful for our friends in other countries who take the *Journal* each year. There is evidence in recent church history literature that the *Journal* is being used as a resource in scholarly research. We welcome this development.

During the past year our collection of photographs has been enhanced by some useful additions. We are in the process of cataloging photographs which appeared in the Irish Baptist Magazine from 1877 to date. It is hoped that the index of articles and writers for the *Journal* published in Volume 17 will be updated in Volume 26.

History Is Not Bunk

by David P. Kingdon

(A paper read at the annual meeting of the Irish Baptist Historical Society on 12 May 1992 in Belfast.)

"...the importance of having a grasp of history to understand the significance of what is happening."

The title of my address this afternoon is 'History is not bunk'. Henry Ford Jnr. may have known something about motor cars. He knew very little about history. In fact, a lot of Christians effectively take Henry Ford's position. They really do, by implication, seem to suggest that history is bunk, because of their complete lack of interest in it - indeed their indifference toward it. Now there are a number of reasons, I would suggest, why this is so.

The first, and perhaps the foremost reason is that they had a bad experience of history at school. (Now I had better be careful for there may be some schoolteachers here.) But history, so very often, in the way that it was taught, and perhaps still is taught in schools for all I know, came over as boring - dates rather than significance.

And many people have been put off from history for life because of their experience at school.

A second reason is that there is a great contemporary emphasis on relevance; being 'with it'. And that emphasis makes history seem passing, unimportant. And so history is seen as having little or no relevance to life today - except in this Province! "Remember 1690" etc.!

Thirdly, there is an absolutizing of the present. There is a great deal of emphasis in Christian circles upon this being 'the age of the

Spirit'. Now I don't know what the Holy Spirit was doing before this, but many people give the impression that this is the age of the Spirit. Various schemas are advanced, for example, some say, 'Well, the key doctrine in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was justification; in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was sanctification; and in the twentieth century it's the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.'

Now, if you have this kind of outlook, which absolutizes the present, then history, of course, has little, if anything to teach one. We don't really need to know what happened in the past, especially the more distant past, because the present is all-important.

One practical consequence is this, that it is very difficult to sell books on church history. I know, because I try to get books on to the market in various areas of church history, and I continually am told by my superiors, 'Books on church history don't sell. The market is simply not there.'

But I want to suggest to you that thinking Christians cannot possibly take an anti-history position. Now there are not too many thinking Christians about. Bertrand Russell did say one true thing, 'Men would rather die than think. Most, in fact, do.' And that, alas, can be applied to far too many Christians. They don't think!

Now a number of reasons may be suggested why, if we are thinking biblical Christians, we ought to be interested in history in general, and church history in particular. And the first reason is this - the historical nature of the Christian faith.

1. The Historical Nature of the Christian Faith.

Our faith is not a philosophy. It is not even a religious philosophy, as is Hinduism or Bhuddism. Nor is it primarily a system of ethics, as, for example, Confucianism. Christianity is the only major religion which stands or falls on history - the history of the redemptive acts of God. Christianity is not nature-based as, for example, Canaanite religion was - closely tied up with the recurring cycle of the seasons, and Canaanite religion is, of course, reappearing in the New Age movement in many ways.

The Old Testament religion, the religion of Israel, was history-based. So, for example, the Ten Commandments begin in this way (Exodus 20:1), 'And God spake all these words saying, " I am the Lord your God" [He identifies Himself] "who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of

bondage.'" So, the Decalogue is preceded by a statement as to the mighty act of God that He performed in history in bringing his people out of Egypt.

And the feasts of Israel, though they were largely connected with the agricultural year, were, none the less, history-based. For example, in Exodus 23:14-15 we read, 'three times you shall keep a feast unto Me in the year; you shall keep the feast of unleavened bread: (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, in the time appointed in the month of Abib; for in it you came out of Egypt ...' So here again is evidence that the religion of Israel is history-based.

And then the weekly feast of the sabbath has its base in history - Exodus 20:8-11 - 'Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God. In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh and therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it,'

The exodus from Egypt is, in fact, the pivotal redemptive event in Old Testament history. It provides the terminology of redemption for the New Testament, and it also provides the paradigm for the redemptive acts of God in the future, and in particular, for the 'new exodus' that will take place when God's people return to Judah from exile in Babylon (Isaiah 51: 10-11), and, ultimately, it provides the model for the redemptive work of Christ at Calvary, for when Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with our Lord on the mount of transfiguration we are told that they spoke together (according to Luke 9:31) of the decease that the Saviour would accomplish at Jerusalem. In the original Greek it says, 'they spoke together of the exodus that he would accomplish at Jerusalem' when He would bring a multitude that no man could number out of slavery to sin.

The Old Testament then throughout is the interpretive record of the mighty redemptive acts of God. And it is the anticipation of a yet mightier redemptive act in Jesus Messiah. Indeed, the exodus shapes Old Testament ethics. For example, in Deuteronomy 5:15 we read this, (in the Deuteronomic version of the Decalogue concerning the sabbath), that the children of Israel were to remember 'that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out thence by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm: therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.' God is saying, 'You had no sabbaths in Egypt. You had to work seven days a week. Now you have in

the land of Canaan and through the wilderness years you have a sabbath, one day in seven set apart, for you are no longer a slave people, and you are to give your slaves their day's rest on the sabbath as well.

So the Old Testament determines the historical nature of the new covenant redemption, and we therefore neglect the Old Testament at our peril.

2. The Incarnational Character of the Gospel

The second reason why we as Christians should be interested in history is this: because of the incarnational character of the gospel. The good news as I've said is not a philosophy, it is not a timeless message independent of history. The good news is a declaration. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' (John 1:14).

The incarnation of the Son of God fits into the pattern already established in the Old Testament. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes clear in the opening verses of that letter, 'God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, to whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he by himself purged our sins sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.' The incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God, took place in what the late Francis Shaeffer used to term 'space-time history'. His was an historical obedience, that is, an obedience rendered to the Father on our behalf in the days of his flesh. And the redemptive acts of God in Christ are historical; the atonement at Calvary's cross, the resurrection from the grave on the third day, the ascension into heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. So ours is not an atemporal, ahistorical gospel, rather it is a gospel that is rooted in the acts of God in history. So it is impossible to maintain with Henry Ford junior that 'history is bunk'. This history most certainly is not. It is definitive saving history concerning the once and for all event of the death of Christ at Calvary and his resurrection from among the dead.

3. The Continuing Works of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

A third reason why biblical Christians should be interested in history is because of the continuing works of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Now we could draw a wrong

conclusion from the once and for all nature of the redemptive work of Christ. We could draw the conclusion that history, particularly church history, has no longer any vital significance. That is to say, the once for all character of the work of Christ would on this view render an interest in history from that time superfluous. But that would be a wrong and indeed a baneful conclusion. It would be wrong because the New Testament itself suggests otherwise. Acts 1:1 says this, 'The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus *began* both to do and to teach.' This is speaking, in the first instance, of the period immediately after Calvary, immediately after the resurrection. 'Jesus *began* both to do and to teach.' But, the book of Acts records the works of Jesus in his kingdom through the Spirit, mighty acts of power, such as healings and exorcisms, secret works of the opening of the heart as in the case of Lydia. The book of Acts shows us that Christ is exercising his kingly power, and is doing so in his mediatorial reign, 'for he must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet'. And the story of the church in many ways is the story of Christ progressively, successively, putting his enemies under his feet, because all authority and power in heaven and on earth has been given to him by the Father to exercise in his mediatorial reign. And the day is coming, Paul tells us, when the Lord Jesus has put all his enemies under his feet, 'then will come the end when he delivers the kingdom to the Father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority, for he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet' (1 Corinthians 15: 24-25).

We have here then, I would suggest, a theological, a doctrinal basis for a profound interest in history on our part. First of all there is the historical nature of the Christian faith. Secondly, there is the incarnational character of the gospel. Thirdly, there are the continuing works of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

* * *

Now having sketched a theological basis for a profound interest in history on our part, I want now to suggest to you some ways in which the study of history, and especially the history of the church, can be of great value to the Christian believer and to the Church at large.

1. The Study of History can provide us with a Necessary Perspective

It is very easy, as I've already suggested to absolutize the present, and to think that what is *now* is what always has been. I recall the late

Pastor Louis Deens saying to me, that when he was a young minister and the ministers gathered together in the Assembly of the Irish Baptist Union, he said you couldn't see across the room for smoke! They all had their pipes out - well, unless there are any secret smokers among us, times have changed.

Now we can see, as we study the history of the Church, how much the Church has been influenced by the society in which it is set at any particular period. Also, of course, the Church influences society, but the influence is not simply one way. For example, in South Africa the Dutch Reformed Church (there are actually three Dutch Reformed Churches) until recently supported the doctrine and policy of apartheid. Now why did those churches support a policy that was so manifestly unjust? Well, they supported that policy because of what is called 'the poor white problem'. And we were partly responsible as a nation for creating 'the poor white problem', because we fought a series of colonial wars against the Dutch settlers at the very end of the last century and the beginning of this. My father, in fact, fought in the Anglo-Boer War as a scout in a Canadian regiment. And what did we do? The Boers led Kitchener's troops such a merry dance, that Kitchener resorted to a scorched earth policy. The Boers' farms were burnt to the ground, and the women and children were herded into concentration camps. We invented the concentration camp! Twenty-six thousand women and children died of disease in those camps. And when the Boer wars were over there was a massive social problem. The Dutch Reformed Church realised that something had to be done about it. Their answer, ultimately, to the problem was a self-help programme which promoted Afrikaner self-respect, which eventually led to the triumph of the Nationalist party in 1948, and the official adoption of apartheid in order to protect the interests of poor whites. Now you can see how a church is thus shaped by society.

Now it would be very easy for us, as Baptists, to assume that gathered churches such as we are, churches made up of professed believers, are not influenced by society overmuch. Well if you think that you are in for a bit of a shock. A lot of German Baptists supported Hitler during World War II. The Principal of the Hamburg Baptist Seminary was particularly notorious for his espousal of Nazism, and this led to very tense and difficult relationships, when, after the war had ended, Baptists from other parts of the world began to visit Germany. Irish Baptists, I suggest to you, may

well be influenced by the society in which they live far more than they realise. So that's the first thing then, the study of history can provide us with a necessary perspective, and perhaps have the effect of making us rather humble.

2. The Study of History, and especially the study of church history, can furnish us with Salutary Warnings.

W.G. Channon, whom I quoted last night, used to say, 'In no realm is decline so swift as in the realm of the spiritual.' That's very true. We've got a clear biblical example in the book of Joshua (24: 31). Right there at the end of Joshua this note is struck by the historian, and we read these words, 'Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which he had done for Israel.' But the very next book in the Hebrew canon is the book of Judges, and you are familiar with the story of the book of Judges. It is a story of successive apostasies from the living God.

Church history is full of examples of decline, of turning away from God on the part of the professing Church. Think of the Church of North Africa, the Church of Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine. Go there today and you will find little trace of that Church. Those countries of North Africa are predominantly Moslem countries. Think of the restoration period in England, when Baptists were severely persecuted, it seems that they flourished, they grew. But after the restoration of the monarchy they declined. When they entered upon days of ease, comparatively speaking, it would seem that the fire of devotion began to die down. Now it is no good saying, 'It cannot happen to us'. It can, and those searching letters to the churches of Asia Minor in chapters 2 and 3 of the book of the Revelation warn us that the Lord of the Church can take action against the church in judgment. For example, the message to the church at Ephesus contains these words, 'Remember therefore from where you have fallen, repent and do the first works or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place unless you repent.' And that has happened again and again in the history of the Church, the lampstand and testimony have been removed.

Now it's terribly easy to forget this. A church, a group of churches, even a whole country, may know great revival, but within a generation there can be profound spiritual decline. For six years I

ministered in Welsh-speaking Wales. I had a couple of goes at learning Welsh, but it's a difficult language. I nearly offered a challenge to some charismatics from the district, offering a £1,000 reward for the gift of Welsh. The interesting thing about Wales is this. It is the Welsh-speaking areas that were most visited historically by successive revivals. It is precisely in those Welsh-speaking areas that you find the greatest lack of gospel light. There is more gospel light in the English-speaking areas of Wales than the Welsh. I have often thought about this, and I have come to this conclusion, that when you get a turning from great light, the darkness is not ordinary.

3. The Study of Church History can save us from developing a Sectarian Spirit.

It can deliver us from a 'narrow as a herring eyes' syndrome. I once visited a former secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, who shall be nameless. I was interested in getting published William Carey's diary which covers his journey out to India, the voyage on the *Kron Princessa* , and his first eighteen months in India - a very, very revealing document. It had never been published in its entirety before. I discovered that my request was being blocked by Dr. E.A. Payne, whose name will be familiar to you. And this particular secretary said of Dr. Payne and his friends, 'They study church history like this,' and this is what he did. Well it's terribly easy to read church history in this way; to take the 'Trail of Blood' approach - you remember that booklet by Carroll, *The Trail of Blood through the Centuries* ? What Carroll does in that book is to group all the anti-Catholics together as if they were all true witnesses to the faith. He lumps us poor Baptists with some of the greatest heretics going, simply because they are anti-Catholic! This is the sectarian approach to church history. Now we need, brethren and sisters, to appreciate that we are enriched, and have been enriched, and shall continue to be enriched and influenced by sources other than Baptist sources, or, dare I say it, by Baptist 'Reformed' sources! We sing hymns, some of them written by Catholics, - 'Praise to the Holiest in the height' by Cardinal Newman. 'Jesus Thou joy of loving hearts' was written by Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the greatest promoters of the cult of Mary, but that hymn I can sing with real feeling, because that man knew the Lord. He was in error certainly, but he knew the Lord it would appear from that hymn. Now a knowledge of church history can help us here because it can save us

from developing a sectarian spirit. I had to learn this lesson as a student reading history at Cambridge. I was in my first year and my supervisor in that year was an agnostic historian, Max Smith, now a Fellow of All Souls, Oxford. The pattern was that you were set a subject, and you had to write an essay on it once a week, and then take the essay to your tutor at a time arranged and read it to him and he made his comments. Well I was writing on some of the medieval popes, and was going along merrily reading this to this learned gentleman, and I read 'the pope suffered another humiliating defeat' whereupon Mr. Max Smith said, 'Stop!' He said, 'Kingdon, the pope is always suffering humiliating defeats in your essays'. Now that taught me something. The older I get the more I come to believe in catholicity with a small 'c' - the catholicity of believers, that there is a universality about the Christian faith. We need to be able to combine depth of doctrinal conviction with catholicity of spirit, because most certainly we shall have to exhibit that catholic spirit in the Glory, indeed we will exhibit no other spirit.

4. A Study of Church History can help us to appreciate Diversity even within a particular ecclesiastical tradition.

Let me give you some examples. In the eighteenth century it may surprise you to know that there was considerable Baptist support for republicanism. William Carey was a staunch republican. A young missionary who went out to join him, John Fountain, was so rabid a republican that they almost had to put a gag on him, to keep him quiet because he was causing so much offence among the Anglicans in Calcutta. There were in the last century differences among Irish Baptists over Home Rule, some were for it, some were 'agin' it. Again, C.H. Spurgeon was a staunch Liberal, and he was not ashamed to let that fact be known even in the pulpit. A Plymouth brother wrote to him reproving him for this regrettable trait, and exhorting him to leave politics to the devil, and to 'mortify the old man' (to quote his letter). Spurgeon wrote back and assured him that he was doing precisely that since. He said, 'my "old man" is a Tory and so I make him vote Liberal!' Spurgeon replied to another correspondent, who criticised him for descending from his and lofty position as a servant of God and preacher of the everlasting gospel into the defiled arena of party politics. Spurgeon wrote back, 'Your letter amuses me, because you are so evidently a rank Tory, and so hearty in your political convictions

that, in spite of your religious scruples, you must needs interfere in politics and write to me. If there is anything defiling in it you are certainly over head and ears. However, dear sir, I thank you for your kindness in wishing to put me right, and I can assure you that I vote as devoutly as I pray, and feel it to be part of my love to God and to my neighbour to try to turn out the government whom your letter would lead me to let alone.' Now how Horton Davies could say of Spurgeon that Spurgeon took the pietistical view that preachers should keep politics out of the pulpit I do not know, That simply is a gross inaccuracy.

5. A Study of Church History can encourage us in Difficult Days.

I once bumped into the late Pastor Jim Irvine of Newcastle in Alderdice's bookshop (I don't know whether it is still 'Alderdice's Bookshop') in Mountpottinger, and I said to him, 'How are things about Newcastle, Pastor Irvine? 'Ach! David', he said, 'so dead that I can't even get a false profession!' Now I tell that story to illustrate the point that there are low ebb days and periods in the life of the church when you can't even get a false profession. There have been generations of decline, for example, in the eighteenth century with its rationalism, moderatism, so powerfully affecting the visible church. People were writing in those days as if the Church would not last another generation. I love it when I read in newspapers like *The Guardian* and elsewhere that the Church is not going to last another generation. I think that's great because God is going to do something when people talk like that. God has got a sense of humour, I believe. You know what happened. God raised up George Whitefield, the Wesleys and a host of others and the whole face of England was changed. God does not forsake his Church. He has his remnant. But we need to beware, to learn here that the mentality that we are the 'chosen few', the only faithful ones, is to be avoided at all costs. You know the story of Whitefield when he went to Scotland. The Erskine brothers, who belonged to a Secessionist Church which had come out of the Church of Scotland, took Whitefield on one side and said, 'You mustn't go and preach for the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, they're all apostate. You must only preach in non-apostate churches.' What happened? God visited the apostate Church of Scotland (at least in the Erskines' eyes) with revival through the preaching of Whitefield, and that revival bypassed the Secessionist

Church of the Erskine brothers. Beware! lest we develop a mentality that we are the only faithful ones, and that God must visit us for our faithfulness. The only reason God will visit you and me, dear brethren, is in grace. Not because we deserve it, not even because of our impeccable doctrinal orthodoxy. Now don't mis-read me. I'm not saying that doctrinal orthodoxy is unimportant. I am saying that you can have doctrinal orthodoxy and God can pass you by, if your heart is proud and lifted up.

6. The Study of Church History can help us to appreciate the Significance of Present Events.

The 1973 War of the Day of Atonement was a turning point, it altered the balance of things. The Gulf War will, I think, prove to be another turning point. Certainly, in today's world the greatest challenge is no longer Marxism, it is Islam. Islam is on the march and the author of a little-known book that was published a number of years ago entitled, *The Betrayal of the West*, foresaw this. There is a very interesting section in Paul Johnson's magnificent book, *A History of the Modern World*, which at £9.99 for a paperback of this size must surely be the bargain of the year. He has this to say on the Russian Revolution and its significance in its early days. Lenin as you know really captured the Russian Revolution. It began without him, and Lenin and other refugees were put on what was known as the Blue Train from the Finland station and allowed to go into Russia (and our government colluded in this it would seem) and they took over the Russian Revolution with the consequences that we know about. Paul Johnson says this:

> "It may be asked, granted the slender, almost non-existent popular support Lenin enjoyed in Russia, how did his regime manage to survive? The short answer is that it was very nearly extinguished in the late summer and early autumn of 1919. There was absolutely nothing inevitable about its endurance. A number of quite different factors worked in its favour. In the first place, with one exception, none of the allied states involved even began to grasp the enormous significance of the establishment of this new type of totalitarian dictatorship, or the long-term effect of its implantation in the heart of the greatest land power on earth. The exception was Winston Churchill, who with his strong sense of history realised some kind of fatal watershed was

being reached. What seems to have brought the truth home to him was not only the murder of the entire Russian royal family on 16 July 1918 without any kind of trial or justification, but Lenin's audacity on 31 August in getting his men to break into the British Embassy and murder the naval attaché, Captain Crombie. To Churchill it seemed a new kind of barbarism had arisen, different to any standards of law, custom, diplomacy or honour, which had hitherto been observed by civilised states. He told the Cabinet that Lenin and Trotsky should be captured and hanged "as the object upon whom justice will be executed however long it takes and to make them feel that their punishment will become an important object of British policy". He told his Dundee electors on 26 November 1918 that the Bolsheviks were reducing Russia "to an animal form of barbarism", maintaining themselves by "bloody and wholesale butcheries and murders carried out to a large extent by Chinese executions and armoured cars ... Civilization is being completely extinguished over gigantic areas while Bolsheviks hop and caper like troops of ferocious baboons amid the ruins of cities and corpses of their victims." "Of all the tyrannies of history," he remarked on 11 April 1919, " the Bolshevik tyranny is the worst, the most destructive, and the most degrading."[1]

Churchill never wavered in his view that it ought to be a prime object of the policy of the peaceful democratic great powers to crush this new kind of menace while they still could.

Now when you reflect upon that, in the light of subsequent history, for example, the death of ten million Russian peasants, the Coolaks, because of the policies of Lenin and Stalin, in particular, you will realise the importance of having a grasp of history to understand the significance of what is happening.

Well we know, though we can't always see how, God *is* working his purpose out as year succeeds to year, and we know this, in the words of Romans 11: 36, "Of him, through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

"...God *is* working his purpose out as year succeeds to year..."

[1] Paul Johnson, A History of the Modern World: From 1917 to the 1980s (Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1983, p.73.

CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

by Steven Curry

"This world is not *the* punishment for sin but it sometimes may be *a* place".

(A paper read to the Society on 11 March 1993 to mark the centenary of C H Spurgeon's death).

In 1857 there was a mutiny in India and some terrible atrocities were committed, not only against British troops but their families as well. The government in London appointed Wednesday 7 October of that same year as a day of national repentance and humiliation. The directors of the Crystal Palace, built to hold the Great Exhibition of 1851, proposed, in response to the government's call, to open this large glass building for prayer and they invited Mr C. H. Spurgeon to preach.

At 12 noon on a specially built platform at one end of the rambling hall Spurgeon rose and came to the desk. He had jet black hair parted in the middle and was rather plain and ordinary looking. One of his contemporaries described him as "a hair-dresser's assistant" and the Archbishop of Canterbury was heard to remark, "Mr Spurgeon is certainly uglier than I believed!" When he began to preach the congregation, numbering twenty three thousand six hundred, heard him perfectly. He had a country style to his preaching and his voice had a distinctive quality which was the envy of many actors. Some said it sounded like a silver bell in its clarity, others said it sounded like an organ for tone, and still others like a trumpet for strength. The truth is it contained all of these qualities of clarity, tone and strength which made it possible for him to be heard in the largest of buildings.

Spurgeon preached from the text Micah 6:9 "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it" The first line of his sermon began "This world is

not *the* punishment for sin but it sometimes may be *a* place". He proceeded to expose the sins of the nation:

1) The sin of open toleration of sin in public life.

2) The sins of the rich - how they oppressed the poor and took advantage of the helpless - "In this age there is many a great man who looks upon his fellows as only stepping stones to wealth."

3) The sins of the poor - "Your time is bought and paid for yet you steal it for something else."

4) The sins of the Church - "The Church has slumbered, it has clothed itself in a shroud of orthodoxy and has slept right on while Satan was devouring the world."

Spurgeon concluded his sermon with an appeal for individual and national repentance.

This story is remarkable for three reasons:

1) Spurgeon went home and slept from Wednesday night to Friday morning not realising that he had missed a whole day.

2) Many years later two old men were talking, one was a semi-invalid and near death and his friend asked him how and when was he converted: "Many years ago in the month of October 1857 I was a workman in the Crystal Palace in London. The building was empty and I was in one of the nine balconies when suddenly as though from nowhere came a voice of extraordinary power, clarity and sweetness which said "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" It was only a few days before the Wednesday and Spurgeon had gone down to the Crystal Palace to test its acoustics. Unknown to him a small group of workmen heard him and one of them traced his conversion to that point.

3) The third and perhaps the most remarkable thing of all was that Spurgeon was only twenty two years of age, the equivalent to a final year student at university. Indeed his youthful looks became a point of amusement. He wrote to an aunt "They call me the 'boy preacher' or more commonly 'the lad'".

He pastored one of the largest non-conformist churches in the world and occupied the pulpit of Keach, Gill and Rippon.

Three volumes of his sermons were already in print and after being preached on Sunday were telegraphed to America to be published in the Monday morning papers. Twenty five thousand of his sermons were sold every week, two-thirds of the households in Ulster subscribed to them.

At his death fifty million of his sermons were in print and today the figure is around one hundred million. Truly a remarkable achievement.

OUTLINE OF HIS LIFE

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was born in Kelvedon in Essex on 19 June 1834. East Anglia is one of the most important areas for Church history. The home of many of the martyrs, it was a centre of puritan activity and the home of so many of the New England puritans. After the Act of Uniformity in 1662 many families followed their ministers out of Anglicanism into non-conformity. In 1676 a survey in England revealed that East Anglia had the greatest number of non-conformists anywhere in the country. In one community in Stambourne the non-conformists outnumbered the Anglicans. It was in this community that Charles' grandfather, James Spurgeon, was installed as the Congregational minister in 1810 at the age of thirty four and where he remained for fifty-eight years.

Shortly after his birth, in 1834, Charles was taken to his grand-parents' home and stayed there for the first seven years of his life. This may have been due to the ill-health of his mother, Eliza Spurgeon, who had seventeen children with only eight surviving infancy. So it was with his grandparents that Spurgeon spent the formative years of his life spending hours in his grandfather's library at first looking illustrations and then reading for himself *Pilgrim's Progress* and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. He loved *Pilgrim's Progress*, a book he read over one hundred times during his lifetime and he says of it: "When I first saw the picture of Christian carrying the burden on his back I felt so interested in this poor fellow that I thought I would jump for joy when he got rid of it". His grandmother gave him a penny for every Isaac Watt's hymn that he learnt and his grandfather gave him a shilling for every rat that he killed!

At this time Charles revealed strong moral courage. He learned that his grandfather had been grieving over the moral conduct of one of his members who frequented the tavern - a man called Thomas Roads. One day young Charles marched up to the tavern and singled him out and said "What doest thou here Elijah, sitting with the ungodly and breaking your Pastor's heart. I am ashamed of you. I wouldn't break my Pastor's heart I am sure."

Spurgeon was a bright child at school, always sitting at the top of the class until one winter the standard of his work dropped until he was moved progressively to the bottom - next to the classroom stove!

When Charles was seven his parents moved to Colchester and he left his grandparents to rejoin his family. When they parted both were very upset and the grandfather said to his grandson: "Now, child, tonight

when the moon shines don't forget it's the same moon that your grandfather will be looking at". Later Charles recalls "For years I loved the moon for I felt somehow my grandfather's eyes and my own met there". James Spurgeon rarely left Stambourne, never went to London and never heard his grandson preach there.

The Christian influence continued in Colchester, Charles' father also being a minister although on a part-time basis. Charles' mother exerted a tremendous Christian influence over her children. Charles wrote: "Well do I remember hearing my father speak of an incident that greatly impressed him. He used to be frequently away from home preaching and at one time, as he was on his way to a service he feared that he was neglecting his own family while caring for the souls of others. He therefore returned home and arriving there he was surprised to find no-one in the lower rooms of the house but on ascending the stairs, he heard a sound as if someone was engaged in prayer. On listening at the bedroom door he discovered it was my mother pleading most earnestly for the salvation of her children and especially for Charles her first-born and strong-willed child. My father felt that he might safely go about the Master's business while his dear wife was caring so well for the spiritual interests of the boys and girls at home, so he did not disturb her but proceeded at once to fulfil his preaching engagement". She often read her children Richard Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* and Joseph Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted.* A flavour of Baxter's book is given in the following quotation: "I beseech you now that instead of quarrelling with God and His word you will presently receive it and use it for your good. You must be converted or condemned, there is no other way but to turn or die." These words had a profound effect upon young Charles, and he said of the *Alarm to the Unconverted*: "Oh that book! How many dreams it gave me about the devouring flames and the everlasting burnings". Not surprisingly at the age of ten he fell into conviction of sin which continued until he was fifteen. "For five years as a child there was nothing before my eyes but my guilt. For years I sought pardon and found it not".

He speaks of the law as, ten great ploughmen that ploughed up his conscience and then cross-ploughed it.

Finally on the 6 January 1850 on a snowy morning Spurgeon was prevented from going to Church with his father and he went to a Primitive Methodist Church instead. There were about fifteen people present and the preacher had failed to turn up so a

thin, elderly man entered the pulpit. Spurgeon said later "He had not much to say, for which I thank God, for it caused him to repeat his text, Isaiah 45:22 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth'. 'This is a very simple text', said the preacher in a broad Essex accent, 'Lookin' don't take a lot of pain. It ain't lift'n your foot or finger it's just look'n.' After ten minutes the man finished all that he had to say and looking round his congregation spotted Charles beneath the balcony. 'Young man you look miserable and you will always be miserable - miserable in life and miserable in death, if you don't obey the text. Lifting up his hands he shouted 'Young man look! look! look! You have nothing to do but look.'" At that moment Spurgeon looked. He says "I had a vision, not a vision to my eyes but a vision to my heart, I saw what a Saviour Christ was.

Later that month he wrote "I felt I could do anything for Christ and give up everything and know it would be nothing in comparison to his love for me". He displayed a great love and intensity in his devotion that characterised not only those early days as a Christian but all of his life. "I used to rise with the sun that I might get time to read some gracious book and seek the Lord" and again, "I could scarcely content myself for five minutes without trying to do something".

In 1849 Spurgeon went to Newmarket to an Anglican school run by a Mr Swindell as a kind of assistant teacher and in return for his help with the younger boys he was permitted to continue his education free of charge. One of his fellow assistant teachers was Professor J D Everett of Queen's College, Belfast who described him as "a clever, pleasant little chap, small, delicate, with a pale but plump face, dark brown hair and eyes, a bright, lively manner and a never failing flow of conversation".

The matron/housekeeper/cook at the school was one Mary King who belonged to the local Gospel Standard Church. She often discussed with him the doctrine of election and the covenant of grace and through their conversation Spurgeon was able to put salvation in order and embraced a theology that would characterise his ministry in later life. When Mary King was older she fell into difficult times and Spurgeon sought her out and was able to help her financially.

HOW DID HE BECOME A BAPTIST?

It is not generally known that the Sunday after he was converted Spurgeon returned to the Primitive Methodist Church and was bitterly disappointed. "The next Sunday I went to the same chapel, as it was very

natural that I should, but afterwards I never went again for this reason:- During the first week the new life that was in me was compelled to fight for it's existence. Conflict with the old nature had been vigorously carried on and I know this to be a special token of the indwelling grace in my soul, but I heard in the same chapel 'O wretched man that I am' and the preacher declared that Paul was not a Christian when he had this experience. Babe that I was, I knew better than to believe so absurd a statement. I resolved to go into that pasture no more for I could not feed therein."

It was while at the Anglican school in Newmarket and by studying the Church of England catechism that he became convinced of the Baptist position. He read: "What is required of persons to be baptised?" and the answer was given "Repentance whereby they forsake sin and faith whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in the sacrament". Later as Pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle he said "I looked that answer up in the Bible and I found it to be so and here I am, it is due to the Church of England Catechism that I am a Baptist".

He had written to his parents telling them of his conviction and his father, a Congregational minister was slow in replying. Eventually he gave his reluctant consent and Charles was baptised in the River Lark, eight miles south of Newmarket on 3 May 1850. His mother Eliza said to him: "Ah, Charles, I often prayed that the Lord would make you a Christian but I never asked him that you might become a Baptist." To which Spurgeon replied "Ah, mother dear, the Lord has answered your prayer with his usual good bounty and has given you exceeding abundantly above all that you asked or thought."

In the summer of 1850 Spurgeon moved to the city of Cambridge to take up a teaching post in a small non-conformist school. He joined St Andrews Street Baptist Church and became active in tract distribution and Sunday School work. Thomas Vinter who organised the Local Preachers' Association from the Church overheard him speaking to his Sunday School class and recognised his potential as a preacher. He asked Charles to accompany another young man who was due to preach at one of the several out-stations. As they made their way Spurgeon enquired of the young man what he was intending to speak on. "I have never preached in my life," was the shocked reply, "I was accompanying you as the preacher". Spurgeon, realising what Thomas Vinter had planned, prepared as he went and preached on the text "Unto you who believe he is precious". He said afterwards "It was not half such

a task as I thought it would be".

He began to preach regularly and at seventeen he was called to pastor the small Church in the village of Waterbeach. He said of preaching "That is the great object of my life, I don't want to be anything but a preacher of the Gospel". The little Church at Waterbeach grew from forty members to over four hundred in the space of two years and the village was virtually transformed. Spurgeon later said:

> "Did you ever walk through a village notorious for its drunkenness and profanity? Did you ever see poor wretched beings, that once were men, standing, or rather leaning against the posts of the ale-house, or staggering along the street? Have you ever looked into the houses of the people, and beheld them as dens of iniquity, at which your soul stood aghast? Have you ever seen the poverty, and degradation, and misery of the inhabitants, and sighed over it? 'Yes,' you say, 'we have'. But was it ever your privilege to walk through that village again, in after years, when the Gospel had been preached there? It has been mine. I once knew just such a village as I have pictured - perhaps in some respects one of the worst in England - where many an illicit still was yielding its noxious liquor... and where in connection with that evil, all manner of riot and iniquity was rife. There went into that village a lad, who had no great scholarship, but who was earnest in seeking the souls of men. He began to preach there and it pleased God to turn the whole place upside down. In a short time the little thatched chapel was crammed, the biggest vagabonds in the village were weeping floods of tears, and those who had been the curse of the parish became its blessing. Where there had been robberies and villainies of every kind, all round the neighbourhood, there were none because the men who used to do the mischief were themselves in the house of God, rejoicing to hear of Jesus crucified."

At the age of nineteen Spurgeon was invited to preach at New Park Street Chapel, the Church of Keach, Gill and Rippon and immediately they invited him to be their pastor on a trial period of six months. Five voted against the call but within one month the congregation grew from around eighty to over twelve hundred with people sitting in the windows, standing in the aisles and crowded

shoulder to shoulder in the Sunday School area. The expression "Resist the devil and he will flee from you, resist a deacon and he will fly at you" is often attributed to Spurgeon, but although he said it may be true, he would not take the credit for that statement. He described his deacons as, "A fine gentlemanly race but rather stiff and unmanageable, not quite to our mind but honourable, respectable and prudent". On one occasion after complaining about the lack of oxygen in the building to the deacons who refused to replace the windows with ones that could be opened, he went round the building and broke a pane of glass in each window with his walking stick! He also paid for their replacement. After the Church had put up with the difficulty of the over-crowding for a few months the services were moved to Exeter Hall. This large auditorium had four thousand seats with room for one thousand standing. Soon the hall was also crowded to capacity and admission had to be by ticket with Spurgeon often asking his own congregation to stay away to accommodate the crowd.

In 1856 three important events occurred.

First, Madame Tussaud's Museum made a wax model of him!

Then, he married Susannah Thompson. She was the daughter of a prosperous ribbon manufacturer and although initially she thought the young pastor to be rather "countrified" in his manner, when he proposed to her at the opening ceremonies of the Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace, she accepted. Ten months after they were married she bore him twin sons and soon afterwards she became ill and was bedridden for the rest of her life. The famous and kindly gynaecologist, John Simpson, operated on her, his fee being £1000 but he said to Spurgeon that he could pay when he became Archbishop of Canterbury!

The third notable event of 1856 was that Spurgeon leased a new music hall that had just opened in Surrey Gardens. Surrey Gardens was a zoo, an amusement park and a place of entertainment. They had giant turtles used for children's rides and all kinds of musical evenings. He faced a little opposition from his own members, one deacon said "Don't go and preach in the devil's house". The music hall was, however, twice as large as Exeter Hall and could accommodate twelve thousand people. In the morning service at New Park Street, Spurgeon preached on the text Malachi 3:10 "Prove me now". He didn't realise how prophetic his words were and how soon they would be fulfilled. In the evening the music hall was filled with an additional ten thousand people in the gardens.

During the pastoral prayer several malicious individuals shouted "Fire! Fire! The galleries are giving way". In the ensuing panic seven people died and twenty eight were taken to hospital with serious injuries. Spurgeon was literally carried from the pulpit and taken to a friend's house where he remained for several days in a state of deep depression. Later he said of that time, "Perhaps never a soul went so near the burning furnace of insanity and yet came away unharmed". This incident remained with him for the rest of his life giving him a fear of crowded buildings. However, in spite of severe criticism in the press, Spurgeon returned to the hall four weeks later and continued there for three years only cancelling the lease when the directors of the Surrey Gardens proposed to open it on the Lord's day.

On 15 August 1859 the foundation stone of the Metropolitan Tabernacle was laid. Underneath it in a ceramic jar was placed a Bible, a copy of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith and Dr Rippon's hymn book. The cost of the impressive building amounted to £31,000, £11,000 of which Spurgeon contributed personally through the sale of his sermons. It was opened on 31 March 1861 debt-free, was the largest non-conformist building in the world and could accommodate six thousand people. The first words spoken by Spurgeon at the opening of the tabernacle were "I would propose that the subject of the ministry in this house as long as this platform shall stand and as long as this house shall be frequented shall be the person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist, I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist, but if I am asked what is my creed I reply, It is Jesus Christ". At its opening one day was given over to an exposition of the five points of Calvinism which was to be the distinctive emphasis for the ministry of the Tabernacle. Thirty years later when Spurgeon died in Mentone in the South of France, aged fifty seven, he still held to the historic faith that he cherished and loved.

There is much one can say about Spurgeon but perhaps the best way to summarise his character is to look at his life from different angles.

Spurgeon the Preacher

When he began to preach, many of the older preachers had died and a new kind of preaching was being popularised. It was fashionable, tasteful, educated and polished but it did not have earnestness, authority and unction - it did not penetrate the conscience. Spurgeon was not like these new preachers, his theology had been moulded, not by a theological college, but by the Puritans. He

began to preach and say things that people thought could no longer be said in the 1850s and said them in a plain, forthright and direct way. He later told his students "I said damn where God said damn. I have not sweetened it to condemn. Don't be squeamish in the pulpit" and "Soft preaching is for soft heads".

He said of his theology "A Calvinistic Creed and a puritanical morality that's what they want and that's what they get". Now we must not misunderstand Spurgeon at this point. Although his theology was moulded by the Puritans that's not to say he preached in an old-fashioned way. When Darwin published his *Origin of Species* in 1859, Spurgeon preached with a stuffed gorilla in the pulpit beside him. Hearing Spurgeon was a fashionable thing to do in Victorian London. Among his many hearers were W.E. Gladstone, Lord Shaftesbury, John Russell, Lady Peel, Florence Nightingale, Vincent Van Gogh, Lloyd George, George Eliot. Nine-tenths of his congregation were men and were drawn from the lower to middle classes. One journalist said "He speaks to people not in the language of books but in his own language", and George Eliot said, "He has the gift of a fine voice, very flexible and various, admirable, clear, fluent in his language but (and here is her criticism) common, empty of guiding intelligence, it's a sad state of affairs when crowds go to hear him".

It was true of Spurgeon as it was of Jesus "the common people heard him gladly". His sermons were always interesting. John Ruskin said, after attending the Tabernacle, "Very wonderful, there is in Spurgeon's sermons at least one passage that no other man in London could have given." He said himself, "Dull preachers make good martyrs, they are so dry they burn well." Indeed it is not without warrant that Spurgeon is called "the Prince of Preachers".

Spurgeon the Philanthropist and Educator

The involvement of the congregation of the Metropolitan Tabernacle and their Pastor in social and educational ministries was quite remarkable. In addition to almhouses and ragged schools for the poor of London, they also maintained a blind society, a sewing circle to make clothes for those in need, a coffee house mission (there is nothing new under the sun), a police mission, a maternal society to care for expectant unmarried mothers and most notably an orphanage and pastor's college.

The Orphanage:

An unexpected gift of £20,000 from Anne Hilligard the widow of an Anglican minister, led him to establish a boy's home in Stockwell. By the

end of the 1880s this work developed to include four boys' houses and five for girls. These houses were opened to all classes and creeds and admission was based simply on need. "No child is prejudiced as a candidate by the creed of his parents", said Spurgeon. In contrast to the work-houses, the children were placed in "large families, and, instead of uniforms, were allowed to dress individually". Between 1867 and 1892 over fifteen hundred children passed through the orphanage. Spurgeon, speaking of the liberal theologians and their criticisms of his conservative evangelism said "What does their socialism amount to beyond words and theory? At any rate we care for both the bodies and souls of the poor and try to show our love of truth by truthful love."

The College:

The college began out of need. A recent convert in the church, Thomas Medhurst began to preach in the open-air but some church members complained to their Pastor about Medhurst's evident lack of education and asked Spurgeon to stop him. "I had a talk with the earnest young brother", Spurgeon later recalled, "and while he did not deny that his English was imperfect and that he might have made mistakes in other respects yet he said, 'I must preach sir; and I shall preach unless you cut off my head!'" Since Spurgeon was unwilling to cut off his head he decided he must provide Medhurst with an education. From these small beginnings the college grew until in 1877 they had one hundred and ten men training for the ministry, over nine hundred having already graduated. The highlight of the week was Friday afternoons when Spurgeon himself lectured on pastoral theology, the substance of which was published in one of his most popular books, *Lectures to My Students.* In it he gives such practical advice as "The minister must not display the attributes of God, invisible during the week and incomprehensible on the Sunday!"

For Irish Baptists it is worthy to note that Thomas Medhurst went on to become pastor of the church in Coleraine and some interesting correspondence exists between Spurgeon and Medhurst concerning his possible move from Ireland (see *The Life and Work of C. H. Spurgeon* by G Holden Pike, vol 2 pp. 88 - 90).

Spurgeon the Pastor

Although the Metropolitan Tabernacle was the largest non-conformist church in the world, it still functioned as a local church. They celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly and had a baptismal service once a month. Spurgeon personally inter-

viewed every applicant for membership, about forty to fifty per month and a staggering fourteen thousand six hundred and ninety one members were added during his lifetime. He conducted, on average, two funerals a week, had eight thousand Sunday School scholars with six hundred teachers. He said of himself, "I never had the ability to manage a small church, they are like those canoes on the Thames, you mustn't sit this way or the other or move in this way or that lest you upset the boat. I happen to have a big church like a big steam boat and whatever way I walk my weight will not upset it". He told the Archbishop of Canterbury, "Mine is a benevolent autocracy based on absolute democracy". "An ideal committee", he said, "consisted of three members, two of whom stayed in bed." For the first eleven years of his ministry he was called the Reverend Charles Spurgeon but afterwards he dropped the title and was simply known as the Pastor. He only wore a gown once when at the age of twenty six he was invited to preach in Calvin's Church in Geneva. "I would have worn the Pope's tiara to preach there," he said.

Spurgeon the Evangelist

It is generally acknowledged that Spurgeon held those doctrines commonly called Calvinistic. "Calvinism," he said, "is nothing more or less than the good old gospel of the puritans, the martyrs, the apostles and of the Lord Jesus Christ," and again, "I preach the doctrines of grace because I believe them to be true because I see them in Scripture and because my experience endears them to me." When Henry Ward Beecher criticised Spurgeon's Calvinism saying it was "like a camel's hump, an awkward and unnecessary appendage", Spurgeon replied in the *Sword and Trowel* with a lengthy defence of the utility of a camel's hump"! Those who claim that Spurgeon "mellowed" in his Calvinistic theology fail to remember that his chapter 'A defence of Calvinism' that appeared in the first volume of his autobiography was in fact written in later life just before his death. In saying all that, C. H. Spurgeon despised hyper-Calvinism, those who denied the doctrine of common grace, failed to invite men to Christ and taught duty-faith. Some of the Particular Baptists who had lapsed into hyper-Calvinism criticised and ostracised him as an Arminian. The Pastor of Surrey Chapel spent time every Sunday criticising Spurgeon's previous sermon because he considered it not Calvinistic enough.

Spurgeon was not deterred. "The best, surest and most permanent way to fill a place of worship is to preach the gospel and preach it in a

natural, simple, interesting and earnest way." Almost every sermon of his was evangelical in substance and ended with a strong evangelistic appeal. "I announce my text and make a bee-line for the cross." As a result it has been estimated that Spurgeon was the human instrument in the conversion of over twelve thousand people through his pulpit ministry alone.

Spurgeon the Author

Even though Spurgeon read an average of six books a week and his personal library contained over twelve thousand volumes he was not only a prolific reader but author as well. His first book entitled *Antichrist: Popery Unmasked* was published in 1849 when Spurgeon was only fifteen and not yet a Christian. Other publications included *Lectures to My Students* (four volumes containing his Friday afternoon College lectures on pastoral theology). *All of Grace* was the first book published by Moody's Bible Institute and still remains the Moody Press all-time best-seller. His *John Ploughman's Talks* and *John Ploughman's Pictures* proved very popular with a mythical farmer giving homespun advice. His daily readings, *Morning by Morning* and *Evening by Evening* are still best-sellers throughout the world. Perhaps his greatest achievement in the literary field is the seven volume commentrary on the Psalms called *The Treasury of David*, still popular with preachers and students alike.

Spurgeon the Defender of the Faith.

Spurgeon was far from sectarian, he was generous and magnanimous in his relationships with other evangelicals. His first Principal of the college was a Congregational minister and he said on occasion, "Surely to be a Baptist is not everything. If I disagree with a man on ninety-nine points and happen to be one with him on Baptism this can never furnish such grounds of unity as I have with another with whom I believe ninety-nine parts and differ on the one ordinance". However as far as non-evangelical or non-evangelistic Churches were concerned he was scathing in his denunciation. I have already mentioned his confrontation with hyper-Calvinists and a similar controversy erupted when he preached his sermon against baptismal regeneration as he alleged was taught in the Anglican Prayer Book. In the first edition of his monthly magazine *The Sword and Trowel*, he said, "We do not pretend to be unsectarian if by this is meant the absence of all distinctive principles, and a desire to please all parties of all shades of

opinion. We believe and therefore speak. We shall not court controversy but we shall not shun it when the cause of God demands it." At the end of his life the whole Protestant Church was broadening itself to accommodate the new learning from Germany. Spurgeon stood almost alone in opposing the new view of Scripture in a controversy that became known as "The Down Grade". When Spurgeon resigned from the Baptist Union, the Union in retaliation passed what came to be called "a vote of censure" on the most famous Baptist in the world. This controversy led to the loss of congregations, allegiances, popularity and undoubtedly shortened his life. He died on 31 January 1892 still holding to the historic faith that he had preached for over forty years.

"The best, surest and most permanent way to fill a place of worship is to preach the gospel and preach it in a natural, simple, interesting and earnest way."

"It would appear that in our generation God is moving by His Spirit among Catholics through Catholics, bringing men and women to a saving knowledge of Christ."

Evangelical Catholicism

by David McMillan

(A paper read at the annual meeting of the Society in Belfast on 11 May 1993.)

In delivering this paper today there are a number of points which I need to make at the outset.

Firstly, I do not consider myself an expert on this subject and therefore offer this paper as a contribution to the subject and not a definitive pronouncement.

Secondly, each of us approaches any subject with only a limited degree of objectivity. Our thinking is moulded by those issues which are dear to us and motivate us. Over the years I have been greatly blessed and enriched in my Christian life through fellowship with God's people in all walks of life and from all kinds of backgrounds. The biblical principle of 'accepting one another just as Christ has accepted you'[1] is one I have learned through the open and accepting hearts of those who have accepted me even when I have been suspicious and judgmental of them. Consequently, identifying, understanding and fellowshipping with believers whatever their background or present affiliation has become something of a priority with me and undoubtedly colours my approach to this subject.

Thirdly, a number of people have been kind enough to give of their time in the preparation of this paper. Evangelical Catholics, a Catholic academic, the odd Baptist and a few others have given me the opportunity to discuss some of the

issues with them. This I have very much appreciated and will demonstrate my gratitude by ensuring that they remain anonymous!

Keith Fournier, Dean of Evangelism at Franciscan University in Ohio, in his book *Evangelical Catholics*, writes:

> "I am a Christian. I am a Catholic Christian. I am an evangelical Catholic Christian. To many who read all three claims, they are either contradictory or can only stand together in limited configurations. Nevertheless, it is my contention and my experience that not only can I be all three, but each is necessary to define my relationship with Jesus Christ and with His church ..." He goes on to say, "An evangelical wave is sweeping the churches of every tradition, including my own. And it is leaving in its wake renewed and committed believers who are striving to re-evangelise their churches and evangelise the nations ... without denying their important and genuine distinctives in doctrine and practice, evangelical Christians of all traditions must join forces if they have any hope of fulfilling the church's Great Commission..." [2]

In the leaflet, *What is an Evangelical Catholic?* endorsed by some forty lay and clerical Catholics we read:

> "Millions of Roman Catholics throughout the world have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ ... They are evangelical in the strictest sense of the term in that they have received the basic gospel, accepted Jesus as personal Lord and Saviour and are manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives. These 'Evangelical Catholics' have a growing love and respect for Scripture as the Word of God. They are born again Christians. They would identify themselves variously as committed Christians, Charismatic Catholics, renewed Catholics, born again Catholics or simply Catholics who love the Lord. Surely, they are brothers and sisters in Christ of all evangelical Christians in the various Protestant Churches." [3]

It is immediately apparent that Evangelical Catholics are seeking to find their place within the wider world of evangelicals. They do not see their identity determined solely by their Catholicism, nor do they seek fellowship with non-Catholics on exactly the same basis as those committed to traditional

ecumenism. They seek to make common cause with those who call men and women to personal faith in Jesus Christ. Our consideration of Evangelical Catholicism cannot be approached with disinterested detachment. An attempt is being made to attract our attention and we will need to give serious consideration to what is being said.

Two Important Considerations

It is important to recognise at the outset that we are not dealing with a coherent movement, or clearly defined structures when we speak of Evangelical Catholicism. By definition Evangelical Catholics operate within a Catholic framework but obviously believe that they possess some kind of distinctive experience and identity within Catholicism. However, there is no constitution, or basis of doctrine on which we can pass judgement; there is no official spokesperson to whom we can turn for a definitive statement of Evangelical Catholic beliefs. Consequently, if we are expecting to find a clear delineation of all the critical theological issues, or complete agreement on all aspects of theology among Evangelical Catholics we will be disappointed. It is therefore important to avoid making generalisations, or stereotyping individuals and groups as this may be both inaccurate and unfair. Having said that, whatever has been committed to print is open to examination and assessment. However, if we are wise we will not do this without discussion with those who endorse the material.

It is also important to recognise that there exists within the Catholic Church a broad diversity of interpretation of Catholic doctrine. Many of us tend to assume that all Catholics believe exactly the same things and, what is more, that they all believe what we have been taught that Catholics believe. However, there is a flexibility and diversity of belief within the Catholic Church. In an increasingly secular society the Catholic Church affords much greater liberty to those who remain within its ranks. It has always lived with the same kind of nominal unbelief as the Protestant Churches, yet without ostracising its unbelievers. It conveys the idea that simply to remain within the church is more important than to cross every theological 't' or to dot every ecclesiastical 'i'. So it should not be surprising that the Catholic Church can appear to accommodate those who identify themselves as evangelical nor should it be surprising that some Catholic believers are able to live and move within the Church. Failure to acknowledge these realities will

mean that rather than listen to what is being said and making a fair evaluation we may infer meanings from phrases, comments and affirmations which they do not necessarily bear.

Perhaps I can illustrate this diversity and the challenge to Protestant stereotypes it represents by recounting some of my experiences in discussing with Catholics their understanding of what takes place in the Mass or Eucharist. Every time I have been present at the Mass I have cringed as the celebrant says, "accept this our sacrifice...". I find myself annoyed and frustrated at the genuflecting before the host and the veneration of the elements. Yet, having read in the document *What is an Evangelical Catholic?* that Evangelical Catholics believe that "the Eucharist (or Mass) is not a repetition of Calvary, i.e. Jesus died once and for all",[4] questions were immediately and inevitably raised in my mind. Before discussing the matter with Catholics, evangelical or otherwise, I turned to my copy of Vatican II to find the official teaching. It read as follows:

> "the Mass, the Lord's Supper, is at the same time and inseparably, a sacrifice in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated; a memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, who said, 'Do this in memory of me'; a sacred banquet in which, through the communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the People of God share the benefits of the Paschal Sacrifice, renew the New Covenant which God has made with man once for all through the Blood of Christ, and in faith and hope foreshadow and anticipate the eschatological banquet in the kingdom of the Father, proclaiming the Lord's death 'till his coming'." [5]

There it is, on top of the list, "a sacrifice". Reading further the text says, "...in the sacrifice of the Mass Our Lord is immolated", According to my Collins Concise English Dictionary 'immolate' means "to kill or offer as a sacrifice" ,[6] so what kind of reinterpretation of authentic Catholic doctrine is being offered by Evangelical Catholics when they assert that there is no repetition of Calvary? Discussing the matter with Catholics who would not consider themselves to be Evangelical Catholics it became apparent that the idea that the Mass could, in any way, be considered a repetition of the death of Christ, another dying act, was totally anathema. "Christ died once for all" is their immediate response. Not surprisingly, therefore, discussing the matter with Evangelical Catholics solicits a

similar emphasis. Whatever Protestants may think, or indeed whatever other Catholics may think, Evangelical Catholics (the ones I have met) view the Eucharist as primarily a memorial of the death of Christ with the issues of sacrifice and a real presence relegated to the realm of symbol and mystery.

To give some examples of Catholic thinking on the Mass let me quote Raymond E. Brown, a Catholic biblical scholar not associated with the Evangelical Catholic constituency. Of the Eucharist he says,

> "... the Catholic Church ... accepts fully the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is once and for all; there is no need for other sacrifices. The liturgy of the Last Supper which we call the Mass is sacrifice in the sense that it makes present again for Christians of different times and places the possibility of participating in the body and blood of Christ in commemoration of Him, proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes. The Mass is in no way a separate sacrifice from the sacrifice of the cross.; it is not a new sacrifice replacing the sacrifice of the cross or adding to it as if that sacrifice were insufficient.. Jesus is the one High Priest of the New Covenant." [7]

Catholic theologian, Fr. Peter Hocken from Washington, responding to a paper published by Declan Flanagan [8] on the Evangelical Catholic movement writes:

> "While at the outset Declan Flanagan recognizes that things are changing in the Catholic Church, I think he is right to see ambivalent features in the changing scene in the Catholic Church. So presumably do all Evangelical Catholics."

Hocken goes on to cite what he considers to be some of the significant changes in Catholic thinking. According to Hocken Vatican II's teaching on the Mass is characterised by:

> "the recovery of the Biblical understanding and richness of *anamnesis* (memorial): the strong emphasis on the Mass not being a "repetition" but a "representation in sign forms", "a making present in its efficacy of the once and for all sacrifice".

However, he accepts that

> "it has to be admitted that Catholics not steeped in the Word have often explained the sacrificial character of the Mass in ways that could not be squared with *Hebrews*".

My concern in the above discussion has not been to debate the merits of different Catholic beliefs concerning the Mass. My concern has been to show, firstly, that Evangelical Catholicism is not a clearly-defined movement with clearly-defined beliefs and, secondly, that within Catholicism there is scope for diversity of belief and interpretation even in key areas of Catholic dogma such as the Mass. Consequently, we must not assume that Catholics necessarily believe what we expect them to believe. Therefore, we cannot expect to make progress in understanding the position of Evangelical Catholics by turning to Trent, Vatican II or Catholic Catechisms. We must at the same time seek to understand their interpretation of these standard texts.

What Evangelical Catholics preach

The two short publications currently being widely circulated under the auspices of Evangelical Catholics are the document already referred to *What is an Evangelical Catholic?* and a gospel tract entitled *Will I go to Heaven when I die?*, which is sub-titled *No doubt about it.*

The authors of *What is an Evangelical Catholic?* state that the intention is

> "not to produce a definitive theological statement on all aspects of Catholic belief, such as sacrament, ministry and authority, so much as a relatively simple definition of some fundamental beliefs that will, hopefully, facilitate a dialogue and a working together in evangelism..."

Accordingly, this document states that Christians in the Roman Catholic Church believe:

> "that salvation cannot be earned, it is a free gift...
>
> "that there is only one mediator between God and man, the person of Jesus.
>
> "that the Eucharist (or Mass) is not a repetition of Calvary." [9]

A helpful and thorough response to and assessment of this document has been published by Declan Flanagan.[10]

Turning to the tract, *Will I go to Heaven when I die?* it is clear that the evangelistic approach adopted would be defined by Protestant evangelicals as Arminian in character. Though it would hardly be expected that their theology would be 'reformed'! "God's gift to us is our freewill", it is argued, and this emphasis on freewill is maintained throughout.

Beginning with the principle that "God loves you and has a plan for your life..." the tract states:

> "Any church or denomination that does not teach that we are

saved and justified by **God's grace, through faith** is not truly Christian." [11]

Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:10 are quoted to establish universal sinfulness and it is then argued that:

"We have a horrendous terrifying price to pay for our separation and sin. Make no mistake about it - Hell is for real! ...What a hopeless condition I am in. God's perfect plan was for me to enjoy friendship with Him, but I am separated from Him through sin. Truly, I am a hell-bound sinner! But God in His great love has provided a way of escape. ...Jesus died on Calvary as a perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty for all our sins. God accepted this perfect sacrifice and raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus did what we absolutely cannot do. He bridged the unholy gap. All our good works, tithes, religious activities, training, study, etc. will not of themselves do it. Salvation is a **FREE** gift of God our Father in heaven."

Following these statements, Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 5:8 and 1 Timothy 2:5 are quoted. The leaflet continues:

"One does not roll up one's sleeves to work at salvation. We yield. If we earned salvation we would be mighty proud of what we accomplished. That is pride. Pride is the basis and root of all sin. No! salvation is the free gift of our Creator! Praise the Lord!".

This leads to the most important question of all - How is salvation to be obtained? The leaflet explains:

"Believing these God-inspired and spoken words with our minds only is not sufficient. God's gift of faith carries us much deeper than mere mental acceptance of certain statements about Him. God's gift of faith is given to all who acknowledge and turn from sin. His gift of faith calls upon us to accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour and surrender the very control of our lives to Him. All of us, who have reached the age of reason, must exercise our free will and decide for ourselves whether or not to accept eternal life in Jesus Christ. Mental assent on its own is not sufficient. '*You believe in the one God ... the demons have the same belief, and they tremble with fear.*' (James 2:19). We must act on our belief. We must allow Jesus to be our personal Lord and

> Saviour, giving us a whole new life. This is what Jesus meant when He told Nicodemus that he must be born again to enter the Kingdom of God. (John 3:3)."

The following verses are quoted, Acts 3:19, *'Now you must repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out ...'* 1 John 1:9 *'If we acknowledge our sins, then God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins ...'* John 1:12-13 *'But to all who did accept Him He gave power to become children of God ...'* and Revelation 3:20.

The section concludes with the following:

> "You must choose. Not your parents, nor your priest and not your church - not anyone can make that decision for you. It is a vital decision and I urge you to hear God's call upon you. We must yield to God so that He can deeply activate the grace and favour into which we were committed at our baptism. It is indeed a life or death matter - eternal life. We Catholics have had difficulty comprehending rebirth and responding openly to God's persuasive love in altar calls or decision times, but we must each come to a point of decision. Am I willing to surrender my will and my life totally and completely to Christ? Will I trust and obey Him?"

That this kind of call to conversion is being issued by Catholics to Catholics ought surely to be a matter for which we are grateful to God. That the Spirit of God is sovereign in His operation is beyond debate. Throughout the history of the church, God has raised up men and women with a clear conversion to Christ to be the means of furthering His kingdom in the hearts and lives of others. It would appear that in our generation God is moving by His Spirit among Catholics through Catholics, bringing men and women to a saving knowledge of Christ.

Some observations and reflections

1.There exists, in my experience, a vast gulf between the Catholicism I encounter from Evangelical Catholics and Catholics with a biblical awareness on the one hand, and the Catholicism I encounter on the streets and in Catholic schools.

Many of the young people I meet and work with believe that they became Christians at their baptism and recoil from the idea that need to be saved. In this respect Evangelical Catholics will have to issue many challenges to their own people and leadership if they seek to work

within the existing structure. That they are challenging their own people is beyond doubt. A written response, from a Catholic, to the *What is an Evangelical Catholic?* document reads as follows:

> "Your statement on What is an Evangelical Catholic? is incomplete in at least the following points: no acknowledgement of the central role of Our Lady in God's plan of salvation; no explanation of the Mass as a re-presentation of Calvary; frightening arrogance of disobeying the teaching authority of the Pope and bishops."

While those from the Protestant tradition may be going through Evangelical Catholic material with a fine-tooth comb to identify what it does not say, be assured that conservative Catholics are doing the same thing. That the latter find the document disturbing is of much greater significance for the Evangelical Catholic movement. Here lies the greatest challenge for Evangelical Catholics in the days ahead.

There exists also a considerable gulf between what some Evangelical Catholics continue to believe and espouse and the position of most evangelicals, and especially those of a Baptistic persuasion. Fournier in his book *Evangelical Catholics* bemoans the fact that:

> "Many Christians misunderstand the Catholic theology of salvation as one of salvation of good works ... They believe that Catholics have rejected the true gospel of salvation by faith alone and accepted the false gospel of salvation by faith plus good works."

Fournier is only partly right. It seems to me that many evangelicals are concerned that the Catholic theology of salvation is one of faith in the church's mediation of salvation through the sacraments rather than in the finished work on the cross. Furthermore Fournier is content to argue from the Scriptures on many points, but equally content to restate what Catholics believe when there exists no biblical evidence. For example, when dealing with baptism he states:

> "To the Christian, the sign of this invisible reality of conversion is water baptism."

However, he further states:

> "Although we often think of baptism and salvation as an adult affair, the church recognized centuries ago that they apply to children, even to infants... Obviously, the infant cannot respond by faith, but his parents, godparents, other believing relatives, and

> especially the church in its local expression can respond in his behalf. The faith exercised need not be his. Does this sound radical or new? Actually, it is neither."

Later on, when discussing how a Catholic can say that: "we have been saved, we are being saved, we hope to be saved" , Fournier quotes the Catholic theologian Alan Schreck,

> " ...a Catholic can say, 'I have already been saved'. It is an objective fact that Jesus Christ already has died and been raised to save me from my sin. The salvation of the world has been accomplished by Jesus Christ. This salvation has already begun to take effect in the life of everyone who has accepted Jesus Christ and been baptised."

There exist two serious problems with Fournier's position on baptism. The first is his acceptance of the church's teaching and practice as synonymous with Scripture, even when there is no Scripture to support his position. Secondly, and more seriously, he seems to restate the notion that through baptism the free gift of salvation is applied on the basis of the faith of others within the church. It is this kind of position which causes evangelicals to fear that what is being affirmed is a Catholic theology of salvation in which faith lies more in the Church's mediation of salvation through the sacraments rather than in the finished work on the cross. If I understand Fournier correctly it is extremely difficult to see on what basis there could exist a common ground for the proclamation of the gospel as I understand it.

However, it needs to be stressed that Fournier does not speak for all Evangelical Catholics. What he and others believe on these important issues needs to be drawn out on an individual or local basis. There is much that is changing and developing in the whole Evangelical Catholic scene.

2. I cannot believe that the power, wealth, ostentation and hierarchical systems of Catholicism reflect the spirit of the New Testament.

I cannot accept that the baptising of whole communities and a structure which embraces believer and unbeliever without distinction reflect the biblical teaching on baptism and the nature of the Church. I feel this about all paedo-baptist denominational structures, Protestant or Catholic. I cannot, therefore, believe that the present reassessment of Catholic teaching and the coming to faith of people within the Catholic Church are signs of a reformation and renewal within the Catholic Church.

Matthew records for us that on one occasion John the Baptist's disciples came to Jesus perturbed at the apparent lack of spirituality among Jesus' disciples. Jesus reminded them that new cloth on an old garment or new wine in old wineskins do not mix successfully. The principle he espoused here is one that seems to have been illustrated throughout the history of the Church. Time and again the new wine of the work of the Spirit in a new generation has burst the old wineskins. Given the historical links with politics, slaughter and division I do not believe the Protestant or Catholic wineskins will be capable of holding the new wine about to be produced in Ireland.

In two years' time we Irish Baptists will celebrate the centenary of the Baptist Union of Ireland. One hundred years on we, too, are dried-out wineskins. The last six years have seen a downward trend in baptisms and falling membership, yet a proliferation of buildings. We know nothing of a significant outpouring of the Spirit of God in saving power in our churches. We are as dry and as wrinkled as those at whom we point the finger.

While I cannot imagine that William Barclay might have been entirely enamoured of my application of this quotation from his commentary on Matthew 9, what he has to say beautifully summarises my own feelings as I consider the future of the cause of Christ in Ireland:

> "Throughout all its history the Church has clung to the old. What Jesus is saying is that there comes a time when patching is folly, and that the only thing to do is to scrap something entirely and to begin again. There are forms of church government, there are forms of church service, there are forms of words expressing our beliefs, which we so often try to adjust and tinker with in order to bring them up to date, we try to patch them. No one would willingly, or recklessly, or callously abandon what has stood the test of time and of the years and in which former generations have found their comfort and put their trust; but the fact remains ... there comes a time when patches are useless, and when a man and a church have to accept the adventure of the new, or withdraw into the backwater, where they worship, not God, but the past." [12]

3. However, if we fail to respond to what God is doing it will not be for lack of opportunity.

Irish Baptists are potentially strategically placed to be bridge

builders; Irish Baptists have the potential to be a major influence on those coming to Christ within the Catholic Church. This can only happen if we are willing to befriend, accept, fellowship with, debate and argue with Catholic believers. Nothing of any substance will be achieved from a distance.

Irish Baptist credentials with regard to their non-ecumenical stance are impeccable. There is no danger of our contacts with others being misunderstood as a desperate cry to be included in some kind of one world super-church or "any form of false ecumenism". Irish Baptists ought not to see themselves as some kind of fifth-rate denomination struggling for acceptance, recognition and inclusion in the ecumenical aspirations of denominational Christianity. Our way of understanding the church is supposed to be radical and biblical, therefore in theory we of all people are free to meet and talk with people of all backgrounds without fear of hidden agendas or cunning manipulation, that is, if our non-ecumenical stance is one of strength and not of fear.

4. I once had rather romantic notions of the Anabaptist movement until I discovered how broadly the term was applied.

Some Anabaptists were sincere men and women seeking God; others were frankly deranged and dangerous.

I do not doubt that like the terms 'Anabaptist' or 'Charismatic', the designation 'Evangelical Catholic' will be attributed to or taken by a broad range of people and groups. This means that if we believe that we must be slow to accept those who use the designation 'Evangelical' until we have explored their understanding of what they mean; we must be equally slow to reject without a fair and open hearing.

Jesus said, "A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35). This command is clear and unambiguous. It is a duty, not an option. I may not agree with my brother; I may not be able to stand with my brother in everything, but if he belongs to Christ he is my brother and I must deal with him in love.

In Acts 5:35 we read that Gamaliel addressed the Sanhedrin with these words:

> "Fellow Israelites, be careful what you do to these men ... If what they have planned and done is of human origin, it will disappear, but if it comes from God, you cannot possibly defeat them. You could find

yourselves fighting against God."

From within the very heart of legalism were uttered words of prophetic wisdom. We in our day would be well advised to take time to reflect on them.

"...identifying, understanding and fellowshipping with believers whatever their background or present affiliation has become something of a priority with me..."

Footnotes:

1 Romans. 5:17
2 Keith Fournier, *Evangelical Catholics*, (Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1990), p.11
3 *What is an Evangelical Catholic?* (A pamphlet published by Evangelical Catholics, Dublin, 1990), passim.
4 ibid.
5 *Documents of Vatican II*, (Fowler Wright Books, Leominster, England, 1981 ed.) p.102
6 ibid.
7 Raymond E Brown, 'Catholic Faith and Fundamentalism' in *Priest and People*, April 1991, p.134.
8 Until recently, pastor of Grosvenor Road Baptist Church, Dublin, Ireland.
9 *What is an Evangelical Catholic?* passim
10 Declan Flanagan, 'What is an Evangelical Catholic: A Considered Response'in *The Irish Baptist*, January 1992.
11 Bold caps. theirs.
12 William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible* vol 1, (St. Andrews Press, Edinburgh, 1975), p.338.

Book Reviews by the Editor

Brian Stanley, ***The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992***

(T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1992) 525 pages with select bibliography and index. hb £29.95.

For those to whom the BMS has been synonymous with William Carey, this is essential reading. The story of the early years in India is treated with the necessary sensitivity, and shows how advanced the missionary concept of the Serampore Trio was in resisting the strategy of committee control. C. H. Spurgeon later advocated consitutional changes which echoed the views of Carey about the role of a missionary society.

It is Brian Stanley's account of the development of BMS activities in India, the West Indies, the Cameroons, Congo, Ceylon, China, Zaire, Angola, Brazil and other countries, that reveals the multi-faceted response of British Baptists over two centuries to the "great commission". A response that is still live and energetic.

The interwoven account of "the domestic life and general policy" of the Society is itself a remarkable and enlightening story of human ingenuity and frailty in the hands of God.

Of interest to Irish Baptists is the section (pp. 377-381) dealing with the painful controversy in the early 1920s over biblical authority, which was deeply damaging to the interests and support of the BMS among the Irish Baptist churches, and led to the formation of the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission in 1923.

To come across names like R. H. Carson Graham, H. Ross Phillips, Haldane Gilmore and other Irish Baptists in this history is to be reminded of bonds that once existed. Other names - like Joseph Ivimey, John Saffery, Charles Anderson, Fred Trestrail - serve to remind Baptists in Ireland of the intimate links with English Baptists forged by the Baptist Irish Society, an offspring of the BMS.

Beautifully produced and written this is a major contribution to missionary history.

Irish Church Records: Their history, availability and use in family and local research

Edited by James G Ryan (Flyleaf Press, Dublin, 1992) 191 pages with Index. £24 hb

Well-produced on good paper with useful illustrations, the editor has brought together valuable information about church records in Ireland by various contributors. The eight chapters cover Quaker, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Jewish, Huguenot and Baptist records. The chapter on Irish Baptist Church Records is written by Dr. H D Gribbon, the esteemed President of the Historical Society.

Dr Ryan and the Flyleaf Press are to be congratulated on providing an excellent introduction to available archival material and where to find it.

Irish Baptist Historical Society

Report to Annual Assembly 1993

Four meetings were held during 1992. In March, in our local church history series, Mr Jim Billsborough presented a paper on the beginnings and progress of the Holywood Church, Co. Down. In May, in connection with the centenary celebrations of the Irish Baptist College, a former Principal, Rev David Kingdon, delivered a lecture on the importance of studying history, and particularly church history. The September meeting was devoted to a showing of the new BMS video on William Carey, "A Weaver's Son", marking the bi-centenary of the BMS. This video has been used by a number of churches at mid-week services, after-church functions and Baptist Women's Fellowship meetings. The Historical Society has acquired a copy for its archives and this is available for hire at a nominal charge of £5. In December, following his period of service with his wife at the Mitchell Memorial School in Moquegua, Mr Claud McQuigg spoke on Baptist Camps in Perú. His presentation comprised slides, film and video with taped interviews. The film included an inter-view with Hugh Mitchell recorded some time before his death. The members and friends present contributed to a retiring collection for the work of Baptist Camps held in January 1993.

The history of the College (published in two parts, the "Dublin Years" and the "Belfast Years" in Volumes 23 and 24 of the Journal) has received a notice in the Baptist Quarterly.

The Society continues to build archives of interest and relevance to Irish Baptist history, and welcomes deposits of correspondence, minute books, photographs and other literature. Publications by Irish Baptist writers and histories of local churches are also welcome.