

The  
BULLETIN  
Of the  
PRESBYTERIAN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
Of IRELAND



DECEMBER, 1970

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<b>Origins and Objects of the Presbyterian Historical Society</b>	- - -	2
Rev. W. D. Bailie, M.A., B.D., Ph.D.		
<b>Irish Presbyterian Magazines 1829-1840</b>	- - - - -	4
Rev. Prof. J. M. Barkley, M.A., Ph.D., D.D.		
<b>Council 1970-71</b>	- - - - -	8
<b>Josiah Welsh: A Pioneer of Irish Presbyterianism 1598-1634</b>	- - -	9
Rev. Eifion Evans, B.D., Ph.D.		
<b>Treasures of the Society's Room and Museum</b>	- - - - -	12
Aiken McClelland, Esq., F.S.A.I.		
<b>Fasti of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (Part 1)</b>	- - - - -	16
Rev. Prof. A. Loughridge, M.A., M.Litt., D.D.		

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# THE ORIGINS AND OBJECTS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND



The authorisation by the General Assembly in June, 1906, of the formation of an agency soon to be called The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland brought to reality a desire long cherished by a number of historically-minded members of the Church.

Back in 1877, in response to a Memorial from the Presbyterian Historical Society of the United States of America, founded in 1852, requesting the Irish Church to forward copies of documents, books etc. illustrative of Presbyterianism in Ireland, the Assembly set up an Historical Purposes Committee to procure historical material for transmission to America. This work was soon completed and the Committee, with the approval of the Assembly, turned its attention to the collecting of original MSS., books, tractates and pamphlets of Presbyterian origin, with the intention of having them deposited in one or other of our Theological College libraries. However, the Committee's efforts met with little success and only a few documents were handed over. The Committee's principal task during its existence of 32 years was the transcribing, raising of subscription lists and publishing of the seven manuscript volumes of Minutes of the General Synod of Ulster covering the years 1691-1820.

The first thing that really stimulated interest in collecting and preserving Presbyterian historical material was a suggestion made by the Deputy Keeper of Public Records in Dublin, in response to an enquiry from a Government Committee on the collecting and calendaring of local records, that an effort should be made to gather the records of the Presbyterian Churches at Belfast. This suggestion was followed by an article in the 'Irish Presbyterian' by Mr. J. W. Kernohan in September, 1903, and by letters of support from Mr. Samuel Symington and a Reformed Presbyterian minister from Derry, the Rev. Samuel Ferguson. But nothing definite emerged as yet. Then a letter appeared in 'The Northern Whig' on 16th June, 1905, from Mr. Alex. G. Crawford of Portstewart, in which he called for the establishing of an Irish Presbyterian Historical Society with headquarters at the new Church House buildings in Fisherwick Place, stating how impressed he had been with the American Presbyterian Historical Society rooms, when he had visited Philadelphia a few years previously. His proposal was enthusiastically taken up and a preliminary meeting of interested people was held in Portrush Presbyterian Church on 9th August, 1905—Portrush, rather than Belfast was chosen because the majority of those interested were out of town during the holiday month. The chair was taken by the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rev. Dr. William McMordie and the attendance included the Clerk of Assembly, the Rev. Dr. W. J. Lowe.

A provisional committee of clergy and laity was appointed to pursue the matter. Following a series of committee meetings, a Memorial was drawn up and signed by fourteen leading ministers and laymen and presented to the

General Assembly in June, 1906. Prof. J. Heron, Dr. W. T. Latimer and Messrs. R. M. Young and A. G. Crawford were appointed to appear at the Assembly in support of the Memorial which stated—

“That it is desirable to have some agency in connection with the Presbyterian Churches in Ireland by which records, documents, portraits and objects of value in connection with the history of these churches might be collected and preserved for the purpose of reference and in order to stimulate and encourage a closer and fuller acquaintance with the history of Presbyterianism in this country.

“That in the opinion of memorialists this object would be served by the appointment of an active Committee of not more than twenty members to co-operate with similar Committees representing other churches of the Presbyterian Order, to initiate the work, collect materials, provide a suitable room in which to place the materials collected, appoint a competent person to act as Curator or Librarian, and in general to take such steps as they might consider necessary to further the object in view.

“Memorialists therefore ask the Assembly to take the matter into consideration, to appoint a Committee for this purpose, to grant out of some Fund a sum of £50 per annum, to carry out the objects herein set forth, and to request members of the Church having objects of historical interest, in this connection to hand same over to the custody of this Committee.”

The prayer of the Memorialists was granted and the Assembly appointed a Committee to further the work of establishing the Society appointing Messrs. A. G. Crawford and J. W. Kernohan, joint-conveners.

In January, 1907, the Society secured premises in Room 20, Church House. On the 14th May, 1907, a draft Constitution was submitted by Dr. Lowe, who appears to have based the articles on those of the American Presbyterian Historical Society, and agreed to by the Executive Council. These rules made provision for members of other Irish Presbyterian Churches to become members of the Society and serve on the Executive Council. Mr. R. M. Young was appointed Treasurer and Messrs. A. G. Crawford and J. H. Kernohan, Hon. Secretaries.

Soon a nucleus of the fine collection of Manuscripts, pamphlets, books, Communion vessels and tokens and other historical items, which the Society possesses today, was handed in, thanks to the generosity of Dr. John Kinnear of Letterkenny, Dr. Wylie of Coleraine, the Rev. H. P. Glenn of Bray and others. When the collection became too large for one room, additional accommodation was obtained in Church House, Rooms 19 and 20 being merged into one large room, and this remained the home of the Society until its recent removal to the newly equipped premises in Room 218, Church House.

—W. D. BAILIE.

## IRISH PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINES, 1829-1840

In the period 1829-1840, Irish Presbyterianism was divided into four distinct groups (i) the General Synod of Ulster, (ii) the Secession Synod, (iii) the Remonstrant Synod and the Presbytery of Antrim, both of which had formerly been members of the Synod of Ulster, and (iv) the Reformed Presbyterians.

In the years 1829-1830, each of these groups started the publication of a magazine for the advancement of its interests. They were respectively 'The Orthodox Presbyterian', 'The Christian Freeman', 'The Bible Christian', and 'The Covenanter'. The probable reason for this was the fairly wide circulation in Ireland of 'The Christian Moderator' and 'The Christian Pioneer', two London publications, both of which supported non-subscription.

### **The Orthodox Presbyterian, 1829-1840**

'The Orthodox Presbyterian' was established in October, 1829. The first number contained thirty-six duodecimo pages, but twenty-four was to be the usual number. The publisher was the well-known Presbyterian bookseller and poet, William M'Comb, 1 High Street, and the price half-a-crown per annum. The prospectus stated,

'In its pages the precious truths of the Gospel shall be faithfully maintained . . . the principles of the Reformation vindicated . . . the cause of vital godliness advocated, and the distinguishing tenets of Presbyterianism explained and defended'.

At a meeting in the Session-room of Rosemary Street Church, Belfast, in 1829 the advisability of establishing a periodical for the dissemination of church-news and the propagation of orthodox teaching was approved, and Dr. J. Seaton Reid suggested that it should be called 'The Orthodox Presbyterian'.

Dr. Reid and Dr. Cooke and Dr. Robert Stewart, who were among the chief promoters of the project, as well as Alexander Henderson and John Stuart were frequent contributors, although the editorship devolved chiefly on Rev. James Morgan. No names were attached to the articles, but that on 'Presbyterianism' in the first number and a series on Education came from the pen of Henry Cooke. The journal dealt extensively with the Arian controversy, and the two articles on 'The Doctrinal Principles held by the Founders of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland' were by Dr. Reid. Many of the articles deal with 'The Use of Creeds', 'the Deity of Christ', and similar topics.

The articles on education cover Wyse's Bill, the final one being a review article of Killen's 'The Bible versus The Board, The Priest, and the Court of Chancery'. The fourth and fifth volumes contain ten articles on 'The Presbyterian', and others cover topics, such as, 'the Administration of Oaths', 'the Precentor', 'Establishments'.

It also contains notices of many events of the day, and is especially useful for its congregational histories, its detailed accounts of ordinations, and its record of speeches and decisions taken at meetings of Synod. The obituary notices are full and supply much information not only for the historian, but for the recording angel!

What were considered to be social evils are the subject of many articles, for example,

'In my peregrinations through Ulster, I have repeatedly noticed the altar of bacchus set up close over against the altar of God, . . . in other words, a dramshop near the meeting-house gate. On inquiry, I have sometimes found, that the rent goes into the stock-purse of the congregations . . . Congregations deriving part of their funds from the profits of the sale of whiskey, etc., appear to be very little scrupulous whether the money was taken from persons in helping them forward to the commission of suicide, fornication, profanation of the Sabbath, or what else'.

Volume viii ended in September, 1837, and an announcement was made that the size would be altered from duodecimo to octavo, and the price increased to 4s per annum. The new series began in January, 1838, under the editorship of Rev. Samuel Davidson, LL.D., Professor of Biblical Criticism. A new feature was the introduction of a Missionary Register, containing accounts of the progress of home and foreign missions. Now the names of contributors are given. Dr. Morgan wrote a series on 'The Fruit of the Spirit', Rev. J. Glasgow wrote on 'Church Polity', and the editor contributed a series on Hebrews 4 : 4-6.

The first six volumes were printed by Thomas Mairs and the last three by Paul Kelso. With the December number, 1840, publication of 'The Orthodox Presbyterian' ceased. Mr. McComb announced that its place would be taken immediately by a new magazine, but nothing more was heard of the project.

During this period two other magazines were started within the Synod of Ulster, but their aim covers only a specific field.

#### **The Presbyterian Penny Magazine, 1834-1837**

The first was 'The Presbyterian Penny Magazine, or Protestant Missionary Revivalist'. It first appeared in October, 1834, with the object of promoting 'vital godliness, active piety, and a spirit of missionary enterprise amongst professors of religion throughout the Province'.

It contained articles on Luther, Wycliffe, Calvin, and Knox, on 'Religious Revival', and 'Directions for Prayer Meetings', one of which might well be remembered even today, 'Never pray long at one time'. It includes summaries of sermons, anecdotes, and suchlike material. Something of the economics of the period may be judged from the fact the national debt was 'one thousand and fifty millions,' or from the address 'To Gin and Whiskey Drinkers':—

'Two glasses of gin or whiskey a day at 1½d a glass, will cost £4-11-0 per year, a sum which will purchase two shirts, two pairs of hose, two pairs of shoes, a fustian jacket, a waistcoat, pair of trousers, garment, cap, a coarse cloth coat, neckcloth, a pair cotton sheets and two large blankets'.

The last number appeared in September, 1837, completing three yearly volumes. It consisted of twenty octavo pages and was published at 1, Donegall Square East. Up to February, 1836, it was printed by James Wilson, High Street, and afterwards by Macauley and Quin, Hammond's Court.

#### **The Monthly Missionary Herald, 1837-1842**

The second was 'The Monthly Missionary Herald', which first appeared in January, 1837. Sydney Hamilton Rowan was its founder, editor and financier. Its purpose was to stimulate interest in missions. It was printed by S. Cummins at Downpatrick till May, 1839, by J. Sands till June, 1840, and at the office of 'The Recorder' till December, 1842, when it was taken over by

the Mission Board of the General Assembly, and continued as 'The Missionary Herald' until 1942. During the years 1837-42, it consisted of four octavo pages, with a double number every quarter, and the price was sixpence per annum.

### **The Christian Freeman, 1832-1836**

The journals already discussed all had their origin within the Synod of Ulster, but the Secession Synod also produced one. This was 'The Christian Freeman', which first appeared in November, 1832. It was published by Hugh Rea, Waring Street, and was printed by James Wilson, High Street. It was foolscap octavo in size, and each number contained thirty-six pages. Rev. Robert Wilson, later Professor of Biblical Criticism, was principal editor and the Rev. John Edgar a frequent contributor. The number for October, 1836, is the latest I have seen, and although a new series to begin on 1st January, 1837, was given a glowing announcement it does not appear to have materialised. 'The constant aim of the Christian Freeman', according to the notice in the first copy, 'will be to free mankind from the slavery of error and sin . . . and to be the advocate of voluntary association'.

Apparently it was a 'sin and error' to belong to the Synod of Ulster, for the articles discussing 'subscription' seldom refer to the Remonstrant Synod but rather to the General Synod. Indeed, its raison d'être was so anti-Synod of Ulster that when the General Synod made 'subscription' obligatory in 1835 'The Christian Freeman' died a natural death the following year. It contains articles on the eldership, National education, patronage, religious revival, attendance at public worship, as well as accounts of ordinations, sketches of ecclesiastical life in the 18th century, and reports on the work of the Secession Synod.

Its articles never reach the standard of those in 'The Orthodox Presbyterian', and those on social issues are far superior to those on theological subjects, where one has to endure, from time to time, interesting but not very illuminating theological papers on subjects, such as, 'Why was man born naked?'

### **The Bible Christian, 1830-1845**

Members of the Synod of Ulster had started 'The Orthodox Presbyterian', so the Non-subscribers, not to be outdone in literary matters, produced their own journal, 'The Bible Christian', four months later. The 'non-subscribers' had asked the 'orthodox' 'to unite with them in the establishment of a joint publication whose pages should go forth monthly, having the sentiments of the two parties placed side by side, to enable the people to compare their respective arguments with each other, and both with the Word of God'. This had been rejected, so for years the two journals were issued regularly each month, and seldom an issue appeared which did not contain some attack, either direct or indirect, upon the practice or teaching of the opposite party.

'The Bible Christian' first appeared in February, 1830, at 5s per annum, or 6d per copy. It consisted of thirty-six duodecimo pages, and was printed in 1830 by R. Donaldson, 1831-38 by Joseph Smyth, and 1839-45 by C. J. M'Alester. It appeared in three series 1830-35, 1836-38, and 1839-45. I have not been able to trace the editors for the first series. J. Scott Porter was editor in 1835-36 and 1838-42, D. Maginnis in 1843, and C. J. M'Alester in 1844-45.

For the most part, 'The Bible Christian' is better written than its 'orthodox' counterpart, many of the articles being of a high standard. At the same time, like its contemporaries it is frequently spoiled by its partizan standpoint, for example, in the second volume there is a series of four letters addressed to

Presbyterians in Ireland, but they are so abusive of the General Synod that it is unlikely that they made any converts. Again, in 1832, when the Synod of Ulster tried to restore the practice of the Early Church and the Reformers of public baptism, this was too good an opportunity to miss so an article appeared stating that baptism should be 'in the bosom of the family'. In volume four there is an attack on anonymous writers probably based on the practice of unsigned articles in 'The Orthodox Presbyterian'. While agreeing with its sentiments, this article is quite amusing when one examines the critic, for although some articles are signed most of them are written by anyone from 'Erasmus' to 'Antitrinitarian'.

It provides much information on events of the period — the Lady Hewley Case, the Clough Case, the Killinchy Case, Puseyism, the Dissenters' Chapels Act, R.B.A.I., the Ferrie Case — as well as historical articles on the origins of Presbyterianism in Belfast, on the 1791 riots in Birmingham, etc. It is an invaluable source for the study of the Remonstrant Synod, presbyteries and congregations.

Theological articles discuss the Deity of Christ, Charity, Reason in Religion, Public Fasts, 'Revivals, Cant, and Hypocrisy', and above all 'the inconsistency of Calvinism'. As an example of the last 'The Ready Reckoner' under the pseudonym 'John Calvin' may be quoted: Having stated that the world's population is 800 million and the Christians (Orthodox, Roman, and Protestant) number 175 million, it continues:—

18,540,000 human beings are damned every year,  
1,537,000 human beings are damned every month,  
584,375 human beings are damned every week,  
54,910 human beings are damned every day,  
2,288 human beings are damned every hour,  
38 human beings are damned every minute,  
3 human beings are damned every 5 seconds,  
Let me observe my watch—one, two, three, four, five . . .  
3 of my brethren are gone to hell'.

The only comment necessary is that predestination apparently did not include the power to divide, for if 18,540,000 human beings are damned every year, surely not 1,537,000 but 1,545,000 are damned every month. Perhaps, of course, 'John Calvin' was not predestined!!!

### **The Covenanter, 1830-1847, 1853-**

If the 'subscription' controversy gave birth to the journals of the Synod of Ulster, the Secession Synod and the Non-subscribers, it was one of a very different character which led to the foundation of 'The Covenanter' in 1830. Its origin lies in the differences between Houston and Paul over the doctrine of the civil magistrate. In December, 1830, Houston published, apparently at his own expense, the first copy of 'The Covenanter' setting forth his views. He denied Paul access to its pages and so he was forced to reply through the medium of 'The Belfast Newsletter'.

The first series was a monthly twenty-four page duodecimo publication, increased in its second year to thirty-six pages. It was published by Hugh Small, North Street, and printed by Stuart and Gregg. Its aim was to set forth the 'system of religious doctrine and discipline' of 'the good old cause'.

Its first issues contain an account of the Covenanters, and other historical contributions cover events such as the Crusades, the Waldenses, the Scottish reformation, etc.

It deals with the events and social problems of the period, as well as providing much information about the Reformed Synod, its presbyteries, congregations and ministers. Theological articles discuss topics, such as, 'Terms of Communion', 'Divine Right of Presbyterian Church Government', 'Fallacy of Human Judgment', 'Gospel Conversion' and 'the Importance of Covenanting'.

In January, 1841, there began a new series, edited by Thomas Houston and James Dick, published by William Moore and William Pollock, both of North Street, and printed by Paul Kelso. It now became a forty-eight page demy-quarto bi-monthly, and has become the official publication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

### CONCLUSION

These old journals are mines of information and worthy of study. When one makes allowance for the prejudices of the period and its background and divisions the lasting impression is that they were written by men who, under Christ, had one and only one loyalty—to their Church.

—JOHN M. BARKLEY.

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### THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IRELAND

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# JOSIAS WELSH : A PIONEER OF IRISH PRESBYTERIANISM

Under the guiding hand of God two men were responsible for bringing John Knox's grandson, Josias Welsh, to help in the work of reform in Ulster. One was an English puritan layman, Humphrey Norton, who employed Welsh as chaplain to his household at Templepatrick (1). The other was Robert Blair, a Scottish clergyman settled in the parish church of Bangor (2).

The former was friendly with Sir Arthur Chichester, King James I's Deputy in Ireland. Chichester was responsible for the Ulster Plantations in the early seventeenth century and was uncompromisingly committed to "the extirpation of Popery" in Ireland, expressing in a letter to the King, "until the hearts of your subjects be clarified from the dross and poison of the Church of Rome, you shall never be free from the practices of rebels and traitors in this land." (3).

Blair had been at Bangor some two years and had become acutely conscious of the need for more godly ministers in the Province. Visiting Scotland, he met with Welsh and recorded in his Autobiography, "perceiving how weak and how zealous a spirit he was, exhorted him to haste over to Ireland, where he would find work enough, and, I hoped, success enough . . . He, being under great exercise of spirit, spake vehemently, to convince the secure; sweetly, to comfort the cast down." (4).

In Welsh, Ulster was blessed with a man of outstanding spiritual qualities. After an early education at Geneva he had received further training at St. Andrews, finally teaching at the University of Glasgow. His motive in removing to Ulster in 1625 is given as "his opposition to prelacy", and his reputation for stirring up the consciences of his hearers was such as to earn him the nickname 'Cock of the Conscience'. (5). After a short period with Norton he was episcopally settled in the living of Templepatrick. His ministry was thus exercised in close proximity to that of James Glendinning whose preaching of the law brought severe conviction of sin to the people. Andrew Stewart, a contemporary, says of Welsh's work at that time, "God gave him the Spirit to preach the Gospel, and to bring the Word to heal them, whom the other by his ministry had wounded, so that the slain were breathed upon, and life came into them; and they stood up as men now freed from the spirit of bondage . . . Indeed, the joy and spirit of that time in this place can't by words be well expressed." (6).

Together with other ministers, Welsh was mightily used in the Six-Mile Water Revival, which continued from about 1625-32. At the height of that remarkable work of God he wrote describing the scenes witnessed at the sacrament: "The Lord's work prospereth graciously in this country . . . notwithstanding the great opposition, it has flourished indeed like the palm tree, and even the last Sabbath in Antrim, an English congregation, the superstitious form of kneeling at the sacrament was put away, and the true pattern of the institution directly followed, which was a thing we could never look for in that place . . . Now the Lord worketh more in one day than in ten before; and where they flocked before, they flock ten times more, so that in this little church, last Sunday week, we had above fourteen or fifteen hundred

at the sacrament; and never such a day had we from morning to night, without fainting or weariness . . . Since the bishop began to question us, there is . . . above 300 that God has taken by the heart that never knew him before, and this within the seven months; upon this condition long may we be in question, and never may the bishop rest!" (7)

The reference to 'the great opposition' is to the persecuting efforts of the bishops. With the ascendancy of Archbishop William Laud, notorious for his opposition to puritanism, the Irish episcopalian authorities were obliged to become more hostile to the clergymen of Presbyterian sympathies under their jurisdiction. Archbishop James Ussher of Armagh, strong Calvinist and moderate episcopalian that he was, did his utmost to alleviate the conditions of these persecuted ministers. At a later date, 1641, he could claim, "I have had much to do to work with His Majesty for the necessary relief of the Scottish ministers which are here." (8). Even in 1632 he had obtained a respite for them, although the extent of his help was curtailed by the ecclesiastical and legislative pressure of his superiors. (9).

One of the most important and outstanding achievements of these Presbyterian ministers during the rich spiritual harvest of revival was the setting up in 1628 (10) of the 'Antrim Meeting'. Hugh Campbell, a layman originally from Ayrshire, began holding "a kind of revival meeting" at his house in Oldstone near Antrim on the last Friday of each month, attended by vast crowds of people. (11). The ministers gladly undertook the supervision of this meeting and regularised it on classical puritan lines. (12). John Ridge, the English incumbent at Antrim would be familiar with puritan practice; Blair, Welsh and John Livingstone enriched the meeting with the traditions of Scottish Presbyterianism. Consequently, the 'Antrim Meeting' provided a balanced diet of preaching, fellowship, and discipline.

Such exercises followed a rigorous but salutary pattern. "That day", says Livingstone, "was spent in fasting, and prayer, and public preaching. Commonly two preached before noon, and two afternoon. We used to come together on the Thursday night before, and stayed the Friday night after, and consult about such things as concerned the carrying on the work of God, and these meetings among ourselves were sometimes as profitable as either presbyteries or synods. Out of these parishes . . . such as laid religion to heart, used to convene to these meetings . . . and frequently the Sabbath after the Friday's meeting the communion was celebrated in one or other of these parishes." (13).

Opposition from Romanism was hardly avoidable, and two Irish friars challenged the ministers to a public dispute. Blair and Welsh prepared their case but their opponents did not appear at the arranged meeting-place. As a further contribution to the great work of reformation, Welsh wrote a "small catechism", so that the fruits of revival were substantially consolidated. (14).

One of Welsh's sermons has survived in manuscript to this day, evidently taken down by one of his congregation. An extract from it would not be out of place, the text being Zechariah 4 : 8-9. "Is there any here that would be content to know if the foundation of their spiritual house be laid? Then stir up yourselves and hearken, for I shall give you six marks whereby you shall know. And first . . . he will not lay the foundation until he dig deep that he may have a seat for the stones that they may stand fast . . . The second mark . . . A building up of the work . . . third . . . there will be many oppositions many hindrances and impediments . . . fourth . . . there will be a correspond-

ence of words and a correspondence of love . . . fifth . . . a longing to have the work ended . . . sixth . . . you will know your master." (15).

Welsh died in his 36th year, crying out on his death-bed, "Victory, victory, for evermore!" (16). His will, as well as dealing with his temporal affairs, gives an account of his faith: "I do humbly acknowledge that although of all filthy backsliders I find myself the first, yet I find Him my Father and God in Christ, who has loved me and has washed me, and has redeemed me, and will glorify me . . . so that resting upon the everlasting covenant which He has made with me, well-ordered in all things and sure, my soul is at rest . . . abhorring from my heart to this hour the least rag of that whore and the least mixture of human inventions in this Gospel, blessing Him from my heart Who has kept me free from the pollutions of the time." (17).

By his fervent preaching, godly life, and disciplined oversight of Christ's flock, Josias Welsh well deserves the title of 'A Pioneer of Irish Presbyterianism'.

—EIFION EVANS.

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- (2) *The Life of Mr. Robert Blair*, Edinburgh, 1848, p. 76.
- (3) *Calendar of State Papers (Ireland), 1608-1610*, 1874, p. 521.
- (4) *The Life of Mr. Robert Blair*, p. 76.
- (5) *ib.* p. 75, footnote.
- (6) Andrew Stewart, *op. cit.* pp. 319-20.
- (7) George Hill, *An Historical Account of the Macdonnells of Antrim*, Belfast, 1873, p. 19, footnote (style and spelling modernised); cf. Scott Pearson, *op. cit.* p. 222.
- (8) Belfast Public Record Office, Transcript 415, (Berwick Letters, 1634-1815, p. 23).
- (9) *The Life of Mr. Robert Blair*, p. 91.
- (10) Scott Pearson, *op. cit.* p. 259.
- (11) Andrew Stewart says of him (*op. cit.* p. 320), "a man . . . who had fled from Scotland, for he had killed a man there. Him God caught in Ireland, and made him an eminent and exemplary Christian . . . he became very refreshful to others who had less learning and judgment than himself; and, therefore, invited some of his honest neighbours who fought the same fight of faith to meet him at his house . . . where . . . they spent their time in prayer, mutual edification and conference . . ." Scott Pearson adds that he "maintained his good profession and became a devoted Presbyterian" (*op. cit.* p. 243). This is in conflict with the impression given by Alexander Gordon (*Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. John Ridge) that "fanatical excesses were fostered" at Campbell's meetings. In Josias Welsh's will, Campbell was to receive £4 "as a testimony of my love to him."
- (12) *D.N.B.* s.v. 'John Ridge'.
- (13) *Select Biographies*, ed. for Wodrow Society by W. K. Tweedie, Volume i, Edinburgh, 1845, p. 143.
- (14) *The Life of Mr. Robert Blair*, pp. 83, 76, footnote.
- (15) MS at Presbyterian Historical Society, Aghadowey Common Place Book, Safe I Shelf I.
- (16) *Select Biographies*, vol. i. p. 328.
- (17) Belfast Public Record Office, Transcript 284, 'Will of Josias Welsh, dated 2nd June 1634'.

# THE TREASURES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Presbyterian Historical Society was founded to collect and preserve records, documents and objects of historical interest relating to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. During the sixty years of its existence this policy has been extended to embrace a wide variety of interests. The result is that the Society's Room in Church House contains a fascinating museum.

There is a fine collection of church plate, communion tokens, psalters, hymn books and paintings, photographs and busts of Presbyterian worthies. Many relics are reminders of the changes that have taken place in public worship through the centuries. The change in the length of sermons is illustrated by a huge hour glass from Killead, many times larger than a modern "egg-boiler." It registered thirty minutes, and was turned upside down when the sand had run from one glass bulk into another — an action which gave rise to the phrase "a two glass sermon."

There are also many curios not usually associated with a church museum — the pike wielded by the famous Jemmy Hope during the 1798 rebellion and the dress sword of the Rev. Samuel Barber of Rathfriland, a captain in the volunteers, catch the eye.

The Society also possesses a fine library of books and pamphlets, many of them extremely rare, relating to every aspect of Irish Presbyterianism, and indeed, of the history of Ulster. Its collection of manuscripts, while consisting chiefly of minute books of kirk-sessions and presbyteries, baptism and marriage registers, also contains such diverse items as family-trees, wills, and letters of such well-known people as Henry Grattan, Thomas Addis Emmett, brother of the unfortunate Robert, and William Sharman Crawford, the land reformer.

Probably the most valuable object the Society has acquired is a 17th century manuscript, firmly bound in tough polished leather. More than 300 pages long, and a good deal faded in parts, it bears the cumbersome title "A True Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Presbyterian Government in the North of Ireland and the various troubles and afflictions which ministers and people adhering to that way did meet with from the adversaries thereof."

The narrative, which is written in a quaint but homely style, tells in a vivid manner the story of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland between the years 1622 and 1670. It was the work of a Scots preacher, Patrick Adair, who became minister of the only Presbyterian congregation then in Belfast.

The sole incident Adair records of his life in Scotland is the famous scene he witnessed in the High Church in Edinburgh, when the celebrated Janet Geddes hurled her stool at the dean when he attempted to read from the new service-book. Incidentally, the dean who was so rudely assaulted was an ancestor of George A. Birmingham, the Ulster novelist.

No one was better qualified than Adair to write this history. From the time of the execution of King Charles I, against which he publicly protested, until the accession of William of Orange 40 years later, he was a leading figure in the Church. Such a career was not without its dangers. During the Cromwellian regime he was suspected of royalist sympathies, and his home searched by

the military in the hope of finding incriminating documents. A few years later, during the reign of Charles II, he was arrested on suspicion of being a republican!

After the death of the author in 1694 the manuscript passed into the hands of his successors in the Belfast congregation — Dr. Kirkpatrick and the Rev. John McBride, ancestor of Edgar Allan Poe. Both these men were too busily engaged in carrying on a vigorous controversy with the Anglican Church to edit the 'Narrative', and who next owned it is a matter of conjecture. It would appear to have been in the hands of Dr. Victor Ferguson, a prominent townsman, whose initials may be seen attached to marginal notes on the manuscript.

In 1764, however, it was lost to public view, and an advertisement in the local press of that year offered a liberal reward for its discovery. The advertisement adds that the manuscript had been in the possession of the Rev. Thomas Brown of Glenarm. It must have soon returned to Belfast into the possession of the Rev. Gilbert Kennedy, for it was found in 1810 among the papers of his son, James Trail Kennedy of Annadale.

The finder was Dr. Stephenson, a distinguished antiquary, whose history of his native parish of Templepatrick is still prized by collectors. He presented it to the Rev. William Bruce, another local historian who was the first headmaster of the Belfast Royal Academy. It then became the property of his son, who presented it in 1867 to the Rev. Classon Porter, minister of Adair's old congregation of Cairncastle.

On the death of Porter, who was the author of many historical articles in the local press, the venerable manuscript passed into the possession of his son who presented it to the Presbyterian Historical Society, 'the proper custodians'.

In 1866 the Rev. Dr. W. D. Killen, president of the Presbyterian College, Belfast, published a modernised version of the 'Narrative', which is now somewhat rare. This version was based on a copy of the manuscript made in 1825.

—AIKEN McCLELLAND

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### **THE BULLETIN**

The issue of a periodical in connection with the Presbyterian Historical Society will, it is hoped, heighten the interest of its own members and attract the support of many others. We have a past that should not be forgotten and the sources of our history must be preserved. There are historical records such as congregational minutes, reports and relics that should not be destroyed. The Bulletin will afford any who have made a careful study of such matters an opportunity of sharing their discoveries with us all and in so doing to record the story of the past for the inspiration of the future.

### **The New Room of the Presbyterian Historical Society**

In the re-arrangement of rooms in Church House the Historical Society leaves its old familiar corner room and now, still on the second floor faces onto

Howard Street. It is now Room No. 218. Members of the Society will be pleased with it and, as always, Mrs. McMordie will be glad to help anyone engaged in historical research or interested in Presbyterian annals. The P.H.S. Room is open on any day from 10—12.30 p.m. and from 2 p.m.—3 p.m. (Wednesdays until 5 p.m.).

#### **Treasure House of Ulster's History**

Under this title Kay Kennedy wrote an excellent article for the 'Belfast Newsletter' of July 9th of this year. She had visited our rooms and had obviously been fascinated by what she saw for herself, and learned from Mrs. McMordie. "There are enough treasures to make any collector go berserk," was how she put it and she described "many items of absorbing interest to be seen."

The need to draw the attention of Presbyterian people to this repository of historical relics and records is obvious and its value is highlighted by the fact that since the article appeared in print several gifts have been made to the Society and inquiries made about membership.

#### **Gifts Recently Donated**

Papers on Education and other MSS. of the late Very Rev. Dr. William Corkey, (by his son, Mr. J. Alison Corkey, F.R.C.S.).

Two Communion Cups and two plates formerly used in Westport Presbyterian Church, Co. Mayo, (by Mrs. Conroy, Newtownards).

#### **The McCahan Trust**

The relics and books which were left under this trust are now housed in a room adjoining the main room and can be seen to far greater advantage than formerly. It is hoped that those who have business in Room 218 will also visit the other room and see the McCahan bequests.

#### **Communion Tokens**

Many members read with interest Dr. T. S. Agnew's article on "Tokens" which appeared in the July, 1970 issue of the 'Christian Irishman'. The article reminded us again that this is a wide field for investigation and that in Dr. Agnew (who is a member of our P.H.S. Committee) we have an authority on the subject. He has done a lot of work and the very fine collection of tokens which are to be found in the Society's Room is very largely due to his efforts. The Churches owe him a great debt as does our Society.

#### **How You Can Help The Presbyterian Historical Society**

1. You can help by joining as a member and by persuading others to do so also. Get a form of application from the Assistant Secretary and send in your membership fee. You will obtain a copy of the "Bulletin" as it appears and be kept in touch with lectures, publications, etc.
2. You can persuade those who have objects of historical interest about Ireland in general and about the various Presbyterian Churches in particular to donate them to the Society.
3. You can ensure that nothing of that kind is discarded from any of our Churches when it is no longer in use. This applies to old minute books, communion tokens or vessels, or published works and diaries of ministers of the Church.

4. The Society would be glad to make photographic copies of all registers, minute books, etc., of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, if ministers and Kirk Sessions would allow them to do so. Perhaps you could make this possible.
5. The Society renders an invaluable service to historians in the Church at home and to interested parties from abroad. It supplies information to ministers and congregations at home who are celebrating centenaries and other historic occasions. Other denominations expect their congregations to support their "Historical Society", and the Presbyterian congregations of our land can surely support their own Society by their gifts and financial backing.

#### **Biography of J. Ernest Davey**

We congratulate the Very Rev. Dr. A. A. Fulton, a member of our Society on the publication of his book, "Biography of J. Ernest Davey" and are arranging to have a review of it in the next issue of the Bulletin.

#### **The Robert Allen Memorial Lecture**

In 1969 Mrs. Doris V. Allen, the widow of the Rev. Dr. Robert Allen, who was an Honorary Secretary of the Historical Society for many years, gave £1,000 to create "The Robert Allen Memorial Lecture" to provide an annual lecture dealing with some aspect of Irish Ecclesiastical History.

Arrangements are being made to hold the inaugural lecture in the Presbyterian College, Belfast, in March, 1971. J. C. Beckett, Esq., M.A., Professor of Irish History in the Queen's University of Belfast, will lecture on "Presbyterianism during the Restoration Period".

Members of the Society will receive fuller details later.

#### **Recent Congregational Histories**

We are delighted to salute the publication within the past year of several congregational histories. Some of these are longer than others but all of them are highly commendable and useful. We congratulate the authors concerned and hope that others will do a similar work for their own areas. The Historical Society is delighted to give all the assistance needed by writers pursuing this task. It would dearly wish to do more in the publication of such researches but the limited finances of the Society are a heavy deterrent here. Those who make use of the Society would perhaps remember its needs, join its membership and subscribe to its funds.

The books or articles referred to include :—

- (1) "The Dowry of the Past"—The story of Berry Street Presbyterian Church, Belfast by H. T. Combe, M.A.
- (2) The History of Macosquin Presbyterian Church by Rev. Victor Whyte, B.A.
- (3) A History of Clarksbridge and First Newtownhamilton and A History of Garmany's Grove by Rev. J. Brian A. Bell, B.A.
- (4) A History of Tullylish Presbyterian Church 1670—1970 by F. I. Knight.
- (5) History of Templepatrick Congregation 1619-1969 by the Rev. S. E. Adair, M.A., B.D.
- (6) History of Greenwell Street Presbyterian Church by the Rev. W. D. Weir, B.A., B.D.

# FASTI OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

For many years the only record of the life and ministry of Reformed Presbyterian ministers was to be found in a notebook in the handwriting of the late Rev. James McConnell. The work, while bearing the stamp of Mr. McConnell's painstaking research and careful compilation, was rather incomplete and some of the notes were mere fragments. Some years ago at the suggestion of some friends in the Presbyterian Historical Society I undertook the preparation of a Fasti of Reformed Presbyterian ministers. The first part has just been published jointly by the Presbyterian Historical Society and the Committee on Church History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

The size of the publication, some 16 pages, makes a small contribution to historical literature, but it represents a great amount of effort. The historically minded will readily understand that genealogical research is a time consuming and sometimes frustrating occupation. The main sources of information are the obituary notices in the Press and in Church magazines. The difficulty that confronts the student of history lies in the fact that 19th century obituary notices were eulogies full of purple patches in which facts were few and far between. We turn, for instance, to a copy of the *Covenanter* of 1875. We note in the index that on page 160 there is an obituary of the Rev. John Smith. We are hopeful that the record will supply the facts that are looked for. We find instead that John Smith was born towards the end of the previous century of excellent parentage; that after passing through various unnamed local schools he had a fine scholastic record and graduated with academic distinction; that he was licensed to preach the gospel; that after serving the Church of his fathers for more than 50 years he passed away peacefully after a brief illness. With records like these, and there are many of this sort, the historiographer's work is like that of making bricks without straw!

Yet research of this nature gives unexpected pleasures and rewards and the writer is stimulated with the sense of satisfaction that Old Mortality must have felt on the hills and moors of Scotland, as yet another tribute in stone to a worthy saint of God was uncovered and adorned by loving hands.

The fasti's earliest subject is David Houston, the turbulent contemporary of Cameron and Renwick, who, though a thorn in the flesh of the Route Presbytery, earned the fine tribute from Renwick: "As for Mr. David, he carries himself very straight". Others of outstanding interest are William Martin, the first Irish Covenanter to be ordained, and William Staveley, "the apostle of the Covenanters", who in an effective ministry from 1772 to 1825 was responsible for founding twelve congregations.

It is hoped at a later date to complete the record by issuing a second part dealing with ministers of the Eastern Reformed Presbyterian Synod, and ministers of the R.P. Church of North America who were born in Ireland.

—ADAM LOUGHRIDGE.