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## William Staughton.

WILLIAM STAUGHTON deserves to be rescued from anonymity. He had a share in the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society in England, and was one of the leaders in organising a similar society in America. He was the first principal of a university in the City of Washington. When he died his name was honoured all over the United States. Surely he deserves more than a mere passing notice.

According to his son-in-law, Dr. S. W. Lynd,<sup>1</sup> who was himself a famous Baptist minister in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Staughtons were an honourable Baptist family in Warwickshire. Our William Staughton's grandparents on his father's side were William and Anna Staughton. Anna Staughton died in 1810 at the age of ninety. His parents were Sutton and Kezia Staughton. His father was a deacon in the Baptist Church of Coventry. The pastor of the church at the time was John Butterworth, who was the author of a concordance. In later life Sutton Staughton moved to London, where he attended Rippon's church.

William Staughton was the oldest of seven children. He was born in Coventry, January 4, 1770. At the age of twelve he wrote poetry which relatives and friends thought indicated he was a very gifted child. He received a plain education in Coventry. At the age of fourteen he was placed with the family of a Mr. Claybrooke in Birmingham to be trained as a silversmith. While living with the Claybrookes he sometimes wrote light and silly stuff which he afterwards regretted. During his apprenticeship in Birmingham he was convicted of sin by a sermon on "Prepare to meet thy God." For eight or nine months he was in great distress. He found comfort and peace in contemplating Isaiah I. 18. He was about seventeen when converted. Soon afterwards he felt called to preach, and went to Bristol to prepare for the ministry.

In the autumn of 1792, Staughton was preaching in various churches in Northamptonshire. He was at the meeting in Kettering on October 2nd when the Baptist Missionary Society was organised. According to Lynd, Staughton's name was on the list of those who founded the Society, though it was later omitted from the printed list. The esteem in which he was held by his brethren is indicated by the fact that though only twenty-two years of age he was elected a member of the Executive Committee of the Society. He was also present at Carey's farewell meeting in Leicester, March 20th, 1793.

During that year he preached for a while in the church at

<sup>1</sup> *Memoir of the Rev. William Staughton, D.D.*, by Rev. S. W. Lynd, A.M., published in Boston 1834.

Northampton. Staughton was invited to succeed John Ryland as pastor of the church. Ryland had just resigned to become principal of the college in Bristol. But Staughton was already planning to go to America. Richard Furman of Charleston, South Carolina, had written to certain Baptist leaders in England asking for a preacher for Georgetown in that state. Staughton was recommended for the place. Lynd publishes some of the letters written from England introducing Staughton. Rippon, Hinton and Hughes, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, wrote warmly commending Staughton to American Baptists. Rippon said in his letter, written July 18th, 1793, that Staughton was not a fair sample of English ministers—he was above par.

After a slow and disagreeable voyage, Staughton arrived in Charleston, S.C., in the autumn of 1793. Soon afterwards he married Maria Hanson, whom he had known in England. She had been a school teacher, and was a great help to him in all his later school work. Of this union two sons and two daughters were born. The older of the two daughters became the wife of Dr. S. W. Lynd.

Soon after Staughton began to preach in Georgetown, north of Charleston on the Atlantic coast, a church was organised. The church grew rapidly, but after seventeen months Staughton decided to leave South Carolina. The climate did not agree with him, and he disliked the slavery he saw all around him. His church was greatly surprised when he resigned, and offered to increase his salary if he would stay.

Staughton first went to New York. Yellow fever appeared there about that time; Staughton took the fever and came near to dying. Soon after recovering he went across the Hudson River and preached for a while in Bordentown, New Jersey. It was here that he was ordained on June 17th, 1797. While in Bordentown he often went to Philadelphia, which was not far away. About this time he met and had a long conversation with Tom Payne. Afterwards, when invited by the Philadelphia Association to prepare a circular letter, he wrote on Infidelity in answer to some of the things Payne was saying. In 1798, Staughton settled in Burlington, N.J., just across the river from Philadelphia. While here, he and his wife kept an academy. Also here, his first child died.

In 1805, Staughton was called to the pastorate of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, then the largest city in the United States. Staughton's ministry in Philadelphia was the most important of his life. The First Church was one of the smallest and poorest in the city when Staughton became its pastor. But it grew rapidly, and the building had to be enlarged. Out of this church were formed the Third Church of Philadelphia

and, the First African Baptist Church. In his early ministry in Philadelphia, Staughton usually preached four times on Sunday, and he was also a faithful pastor, visiting the sick and the poor and comforting those in distress. In the summer of 1807 there was an epidemic of influenza in Philadelphia, and ten thousand people were sick. Staughton also gave much time while at the First Church to teaching privately young men who were preparing for the ministry. And he was often invited to preach in other churches.

In 1811 there arose a certain discontent with Staughton in the First Church. He resigned to become the pastor of the Sanson Street Church, which had been organised at the beginning of that year with ninety-one members. His letter of resignation would indicate that he had been accused of trying to make his church too English. It will be remembered that a second war broke out between England and the States in 1812. The trouble was not serious, but Staughton feared that if he stayed there might be a division in the church. In accepting the pastorate of Sanson Street Church he stipulated that, as his health was not robust, and as he had many other duties, he should preach only twice on Sunday. This new church grew and soon had to put up a building costing \$40,000 (about £8,000), which was a large sum of money for that time. Although a Calvinist in theology, he strove earnestly to persuade sinners to accept Christ. He was greatly loved by young people. It was his custom to preach a special sermon to them once a year. Many students in the schools in Philadelphia, and especially medical students, came to hear him preach.

Let us look at some of the things he was doing besides preaching. He was active in promoting Sunday Schools. He organised a society among women to supply Bibles to poor families. Once more we find him and his wife running a school, this time for young women. In 1812 he helped organise a Baptist Education Society to help train young men for the ministry.

Leaving England did not diminish his interest in missions. Some of the missionaries going to and coming from Serampore passed through Philadelphia. Staughton entertained these missionaries and introduced them to others. He was instrumental in collecting from Baptists and others \$18,000 (about £3,600) for Carey's work. And when, after the conversion of the Judsons and Rice to Baptist views, the Baptists of America organised in 1814 "The General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States" to support the work in Burma, Staughton was the first secretary of the Convention. He was to that organisation what Fuller was to the B.M.S. Although there were not many missionaries to correspond with, many letters had to be

written to the churches at home. In 1817 there was an attack on him and his committee. An investigation was held, and Staughton and the committee were completely exonerated.

That same year a plan was submitted to the Convention for the founding of a College to be under the control of the denomination. The school was to provide a general education for its students, whether lay or ministerial. But it was felt that such a school was especially needed to furnish educated pastors and missionaries. The Baptist Education Society of Philadelphia having declared its willingness to co-operate, and as it was felt the capital of the country was the most suitable place for such a school, it was decided to open the institution in Washington. It began in January, 1822, with Staughton as its first president, and was called Columbian College. Staughton moved to Washington in the autumn of 1822. His church sought to persuade him to remain in Philadelphia. On January 10th, 1823, his wife died.

In spite of the fact that Staughton soon won a position of honour in Washington, that period of his life was the saddest and most trying. He was often depressed. He was very sad because of the loss of his companion of thirty years. The school was attacked from time to time by Baptists who did not believe the denomination should have a school, or who found something to criticise in the teaching or management. It was difficult to find the money to keep the College going. But there were a few lights as well as many shadows. When Lafayette was in Washington he visited the College and listened to an address by Staughton. He was invited to deliver a memorial address upon the deaths of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. And he was invited to preach at the dedication of a church in Trenton, N.J. After a few years he decided to give up the struggle, and resigned as head of the College. The school closed for a short time, but later opened again.<sup>2</sup>

On August 27th, 1829, he married Miss Anna C. Peale, of Philadelphia. That same year he accepted a call to become the president of Georgetown College, in the State of Kentucky. He fell ill soon afterwards and never reached his new post. He died in Washington on December 12th, 1829, being a little less than sixty years old. Former students and friends in Philadelphia felt he belonged to that city, and his body was taken there for interment. In 1834 the Rev. James Welch and others who knew him and loved him erected a suitable monument at his final resting-place.

<sup>2</sup> On account of failing Baptist support after the division of American Baptists into two conventions, Columbian College passed out of hands of the Baptists. It later changed its name to George Washington University. It still exists in Washington as an independent university.

Staughton was one of the greatest Baptist leaders in the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He made a deep impression upon the Baptists of America. But the influences that made him what he was were those that played upon him in his formative years in England. The men who formed the Baptist Missionary Society in Kettering contributed most to the formation of William Staughton. And the confidence placed in him by those who recommended him to America was abundantly justified.

WALTER O. LEWIS.

## Narrative of Andrew Leslie, 1823.

ON Tuesday, October 14th, 1823, at Coventry, Andrew Leslie, a student from Bristol College, was designated for work in connection with the Baptist Missionary Society. The service was lengthy and evidently deeply impressive. Those taking part included W. Hardcastle of Dudley, Francis Franklin of Coventry, and Dr. John Ryland. John Dyer, the junior Secretary of the B.M.S., asked questions of the candidate, as was usual in those days, and received in reply "a most interesting narrative of his early life, together with the confession of his faith." This narrative has been preserved in Bristol College Library, and through the courtesy of the Principal, Dr. Arthur Dakin, we are able to print it in full.

It may be well to precede it by stating that Andrew Leslie married the fourth daughter of Francis Franklin, and that on October 30th he and his wife embarked for India. The journey round the Cape of Good Hope occupied seven months, and they acquired the language on the long voyage. Andrew Leslie first laboured at Monghyr for seventeen years, and, following an extended furlough in England, arrived again in India in December, 1842, to undertake the pastorate of Circular Road Church, Calcutta, which he retained until his retirement in June, 1865. In writing of him after his death, the *Friend of India* said, "he was known as the ablest preacher among the Baptists in India, and as one of their most zealous missionaries. To the fervid spirit of his country [Scotland] he added the grace of a masterly English style, and the ability of an elegant scholarship." He died on July 24th, 1870.

S. J. P.