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Baptist Quarterly 2.3 (July 1924)

C.O.P.E.C.

A Woman's Point of View.

FOR many months that cryptic word, "Copec" had been enough to cause a thrill of joyous anticipation. Probably two main ideas contributed to that feeling, (1) that the church really was going to get on with the job which is so imperative if it is to meet the needs of this age—that of relating its teaching on religion to the practical problems of living in a highly civilized and highly organized state of society; (2) that it contemplated focussing its work in a conference, that, in its character, would be more like an assembly of the Universal Church than some had ever hoped to see realized in this generation. As the questionnaires were issued, and one heard something of the work of the Commissions, the fact came home that the preparations were being undertaken in a very thorough manner. There was gratifying evidence that while it was to be a Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship, with the emphasis on Christian, yet the organizers had not assumed that a committee of parsons, or even of bishops, would find the way through the diverse problems, but had called in men and women of specialized training and practical experience of the problems under consideration. As the time drew near, and as the batches of commission reports followed one another at intervals of a few days, the scope and depth of treatment became more evident. Were the leaders attempting the impossible? Had their consciousness of the great arrears of thought on the part of the church led them to the idea of making a supreme effort to atone by a week of concentrated thinking? With such a range of matter could anything definite be done? Much would depend on the leadership.

And what of the reality? It was good to join in prayer and thought with the representatives of all the great Christian communions; good, too, to have so many overseas delegates. It seemed fitting that greetings should be read from the leaders of all political parties, as well as from the King and Archbishop of Canterbury. The Conference was out to discover the extent of its unity in Christ, and as the days passed,

the Conference became a great religious experience. In small groups that guidance of the Spirit had been experienced, and men and women had been led through frank statement of differing aspects to a common expression of truth. Now the experience was repeated with hundreds instead of tens. Probably some of those present will never forget the discussion of "Christianity and War," not for the resolutions passed, but for the Guidance through a session, when disruption seemed possible, to almost unanimity.

The Conference gathered in the belief that "the Christian faith rightly interpreted and consistently followed gives the vision and the power essential for solving the problems of to-day." It was deeply conscious of the gulf between the social ethics of Christianity and English life of the last two centuries. To quote "Artifex," of the *Manchester Guardian*, "The period of the industrial revolution . . . corresponded with the era of the church's greatest deadness and inactivity. Modern democracy sprang into being while the church slept, and she has never caught up her work of evangelizing it." Realizing that much of modern life was a denial of Christianity, it accepted responsibility for the present conditions, because it had failed to give them a Christian basis. Realizing, too, that repentance involves action, it accepted its penance of unmaking and re-making—a particularly difficult job, as women, who use the needle, know. The chief concern was how to make life more Christian—and not rhetoric, but clear fundamental thinking in the sight of God, was what the Conference demanded and usually got. Any speaker who could "think clear, feel deep," and put the result into terse phrases was welcome, whether bishop, philosopher, or political leader, and the balance of contribution was pretty evenly maintained between parson and layman, man and woman. The Conference took itself and its decisions seriously—even if it took its jokes uproariously—and the organizers made great demands on both speakers and listeners. Never surely did any religious organization succeed so well in eliminating waste of moments; and never before did one so resolutely refuse to degrade praise by using it as a means of relieving the physical tension of sitting two and a half hours in one position! One very small point—the convention that women must wear hats was broken, and headaches were fewer, and brains worked better in consequence.

As regards pronouncements, only lines of thought can be indicated. (Facts can be obtained from *The Proceedings of Copec*, 1s.). Someone was overheard saying that Copec meant the death of Puritanism. If by Puritanism is meant a religion of mere negation, then probably it is true. Copec sought to

fill up all life with a Christian content, and not even a small preserve was left to which one had the right to bar the entrance of Christ. Starting with the belief in the Fatherhood of God, the value of human personality, and the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth," the Conference proceeded to claim the whole of Education as a religious process, and therefore to stress the importance of the personality of the teacher. Housing was viewed from the standpoint of the Fatherhood of God; sex was regarded as a God-given in-instinct, and marriage a divine ordinance. Those engaged in dealing with criminals were seen as having a chance to join with Christ in the redemptive work of the world. International relationships afforded scope for being corporately Christian; the affairs of industry were seen to be the means of helping God in the distribution of His provision for mankind, while the paying of rates and taxes—provided you paid enough—became the means whereby God's will could be done. In dealing with problems relating to imperialism, war, industry, &c., an attempt was made to get at the causes of wrong action. Here the Church found itself in the province it had felt to be peculiarly its own, confronting self interest, greed, jealousy and kindred evils, and emphasis had again to be put on the necessity for a new spirit. One good feature of Copec was, that where insufficient data existed, as over the subject of birth control, the Conference, instead of recording a decision, asked that research work might be carried on. It followed, as a matter of course, in a gathering where men and women were acting together so naturally and helpfully, that there should be complete repudiation of the double moral standard. Among other things Copec demonstrated, in a remarkable way, the value of the principle of the co-operation of the sexes.

At times one almost gasped at the eagerness of the Conference to assume responsibility for Christian pronouncements involving radical changes in the attitude of the churches to many problems, and considering the diverse elements represented it was amazing how many resolutions were carried *nem. con.* As one speaker pointed out, the Conference led up to Palm Sunday, and we might be ready to acclaim Christ as King as we caught a glimpse of another Jerusalem, but the testing time would follow. Christ won through sacrifice, and many present felt that He was leading His church, and wondered whether this body of His would be as subservient to His will as the body of Jesus of Nazareth.

For the churches Copec is not a goal, but the starting-point of a fresh venture. A plea is being made that the following-up of Copec shall be done interdenominationally,

in order that that wonderful sense of the unity of the church shall be preserved. Much needs to be done, however, in the way of education in our own denomination, if our churches are to be ready to take their part in whatever united action may be evolved. The writer is haunted by a question asked by a leading Baptist woman as she left the Conference Hall after the last session, "What are we going to do about it?"

VERA BARSON.

The Value of Denominational History.

(*As illustrated from an unpublished church book of the 17th and 18th centuries*).

(*An address given to the Congregational Historical Society on May 15th,* 1924).

ANTIQUARIANISM is regarded as the hobby of the few, and sectarian antiquarianism—the study of denominational origins—is at a double disadvantage of limitation, for why should we trouble about sects when the reason for their existence seems largely to have passed away? The result is that a Society for the study of denominational history is apt to become a Cinderella without Cinderella's good fortune—for she may count herself lucky to get an invitation even to an obscure corner of the annual denominational ball, and it is not often that a denominational prince picks up her slipper. I wonder whether the relative neglect from which all such societies suffer is not partly their own fault, and whether it is not largely due to our failure to present more clearly the practical values and present interests of the study of our past. That, at least, is the aim of this paper. Instead of an abstract argument that a denomination ought to support its own Historical Society much more widely and generously than it does, let us take a definite field of study, and see what it may yield along these lines of practical values and present interests.

The example here taken is a church-book of the Baptist Church gathered by the well-known Hanserd Knollys about 1642, but its continuous record does not begin till a year or two before his death in 1691. The manuscript, in many different hands, which belongs to the Angus Library of Regent's Park College, is found in a vellum-covered volume, with clasps, its size being 16in. by 6in. The book is not the

Minute-Book of the church (to which reference is occasionally made), though for part of the period covered it seems to have been used as a minute-book; originally, the record might better be called a Discipline Book, in which the more private and personal matters were recorded. The earliest date is September 26, 1689, and the latest Christmas Day, 1723. Four regular pastorates are included, though we have only the first year of the fourth, viz., those of Robert Steed, who became co-pastor with Knollys in 1689, and died whilst still in office in 1700, David Crosley, who was ordained in January 1702-3, and expelled on August 14, 1709, John Skepp ordained September 7th, 1714, died in office, December 1st, 1721, Humphrey Barrow, ordained June 5th, 1723, died in office, 1727 (Ivimey, III. p. 366). The church had 113 members in 1689, and 212 in 1721. It was one of some 26 Baptist churches of all types, which were found at this time in London, Southwark and Westminster, with a population of over half-a-million (Whitley, *History*, p. 181). Probably its inner life and problems may be taken as fairly typical of a "gathered" community of the time, of what we now call the Congregational polity.

(1) The first point to be made is that the study of such a record is the best way to realize with accuracy and proper emphasis what the principles of a denomination really mean. Instead of conventional and colourless statements, which admit of very different applications, we have here a picture of real life, with men and women acting under the stress of living convictions. In the meeting-place, first in George Yard, Thames Street (1688), some years later at the Bagnio, Newgate Street, and a little later still at Curriers' Hall, Cripplegate, we listen to the speech of a solemn and intensely earnest group of men and women, and we find where their interest really lay. It was not the fact, as is often supposed, that their chief concern was the negative one of "independency," i.e. of repudiating any interference from without; their concern was the positive one of maintaining what they held to be the Christian standard of faith and conduct within. We may feel that their microscopic examination of the lives and thoughts of their fellow-members was not wholly healthy, and had grave perils; yet we must admit that the endeavour to maintain a high quality of Christian life was the logical and necessary outcome of their principles. They were a separated church of men and women; they were bound to insist on a Christian ethic, the expression of a Christian faith, which should stand out emphatically from the conventionalism and loose morals of the age.

For convenience, I shall confine myself under this head

to the Discipline Book kept by Robert Steed from 1689 to 1700.* There seem to have been only about a score of cases of discipline in the course of the dozen years, which is a remarkable testimony to character, when we consider the rigorous scrutiny, and the social level from which most, perhaps all, the membership was drawn. The occupation of some is characterized in the list of members:—

A Taylor in Hungerford Market.

Sister living on the backside of Clement's next to the signe of the Haunch of Venison.

A chambermaid to Squ. Barrington.

The daughter of her that keeps the meeting-house.

A schoolmaster in Gravell Lane.

Half-a-dozen of the cases of discipline illustrate the Scriptural truth that the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Two women members were convicted of having obtained money under false pretences from another woman—her little all of £40 saved up for old age. They told her that her capital would be increased if she lent it, but in fact the money was needed by one of these delinquents to pay her debts. They were both excluded from membership. Brother Brooksby, as a result of a transaction in hops with the member of another church, called him a rascal and a knave, and brought a law-suit against him. The matter received careful attention, but Brother Brooksby over-reached himself by putting in a document that was proved to be a forgery; exit Brother Brooksby. Brother Leeson not only failed to meet what was due to his creditors, and appropriated money due to his father-in-law, but aggravated this by behaving "as a rude Hector," as witnessed by a letter of threats duly read to the church. Brother Hind also failed to pay his debts, but the trouble here was intemperance in drink. Sister Foster was found guilty of a breach of trust in regard to some goods deposited in her keeping, and was proved a liar. In two cases the trouble was between husband and wife. A journeyman shoemaker was excluded for wife-beating, and for failing through idleness to make proper provision for his family. In another instance, the husband complained of the wife's bad language to him. After due examination, it was decided "that deep distressing poverty had afflicted her through his incapacity or negligence to get a livelihood or subsistence, wherby great provocations had been given her to speak and act unadvisedly"; the case was met by admonition and temporary suspension. Another set of domestic problems meets us in the relations of master and apprentice. Brother Hake, an apprentice to Brother Dennis, a scrivener, was charged with

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negligence and disobedience, and with calumniating his master and mistress to their neighbours. Young Hake was brought up before the church to express his repentance, but threw out a hint that he was not content with the food he got, and was eventually again brought up by his master. This time he had thrown down and beaten another apprentice, and threatened this youth's master when he came to his rescue. When found about the place next morning, and told to be gone, "he held up his fists against Mr. Reep and told him it was well it was Sunday morning, otherwise had it been another day he would have beaten Mr. Reep." This young swashbuckler's fault was aggravated because Mr. Reep had been friendly with him. It was testified that Hake "had idly spent his time at Coffee houses playing at draffts. And that one time Mr. Reep aforesaid playing with him and having won the game of him, He making him pay the forefeit which was a dish of Coffee, He fell out with Mr. Reep and say'd as soon as he was gone that he had about him that which would do Mr. Reep's business which he could find in his heart to make use off; which was a penknife he had in his pocket to stab him withall." It was unfortunate for young Hake that he was born before the time of the Boy Scouts; they might have made an excellent fellow of him. But the stern church sent him into the outer darkness, to flourish that scrivener's penknife of his beyond our ken. Another apprentice in trouble was called Joseph Faircloth, a haberdasher, who did not live up to his first name, if he did to his second, for he became too intimate with a cheesemonger's wife, who kept him out late. These London prentices must have given their masters a world of trouble. Another apprentice case of the same kind is reported. There are two instances in which action is taken for non-attendance at meetings; the defence was the experience of spiritual temptations, which might have been regarded as a reason for going, not for stopping away; in two others there were frustrated attempts to get back on the church roll without due warrant. The only instance of excommunication for heresy—that of a man and his wife who denied the divine nature of Christ—was quite fairly dealt with. The only other type of case is that of a man who persisted in preaching elsewhere at the public meetings then called "Lectures," without seeming to the church to have competent gifts for it. The way in which the church dealt with him is both drastic and ingenious, though I do not for a moment suggest that *they* saw the subtle humour of it. They condemned him for preaching without formal approval by the church, for neglect of his business whilst he went preaching, with the result that he had to compound with his creditors, and also for failing to be

in his place in the church to which he belonged, whilst he was away preaching elsewhere! His exclusion, after admonition, only served to harden him in his evil courses, for we read that "instead of repenting he turned from the truth and, joyned with them that sprinkl infants, is ordained the pastor of a pbiterian congregation at Epping in Essex."

These details are of interest in themselves, and help us to reconstruct a much more living picture of the life and relations of a Separatist Church of the congregational order at the close of the seventeenth century. But the purpose for which I have appealed to them is to show how seriously these people took what is, after all, the foundation principle of a separated or gathered church—the character and conduct of its membership. Whatever we may think about the perils or the impossibility of exercising any such discipline to-day, at least we ought to realize that the discipline was an honest attempt to carry out the principles theoretically expressed in the self-governing polity. As long as that polity is retained, it would seem that both Baptists and Congregationalists are committed to the principle underlying it, and it is denominational history that forces us to realize what that principle really means when it is taken as seriously as it was in Newgate Street.

(2) In the second place, the value of denominational history is seen in its enabling us to discriminate between the transient and the permanent, to get a true perspective, in fact, to see church life steadily and see it whole. None of us can do this with perfect confidence and success for our own generation; but a study of the past will often remind us that our own concern about this or that is not necessarily a measure of its permanent value. The past is strewn with the ashes of controversies where the fires of passion once burnt fiercely, and at least one interesting example of this is afforded by the book before us. At the beginning of 1693, a group of twenty-two malcontents from the church at Horsley Down, Southwark, under the ministry of Benjamin Keach, sought fellowship with the Bagnio Church under Robert Steed, "being dissatisfied with their setting up of common set form singing after it had been exploded by the Baptized Churches as a humane invention; and also being grieved with the manner of their proceeding with them when they declared their dissatisfaction with their introducing that innovation." Thereon hangs a tale, of some length. As Dr. Whitley has shown, in his recent *History of British Baptists*, the honour of first introducing hymns into the regular worship of an English congregation, established or dissenting, belongs to Benjamin Keach, and his book of 300 hymns, called *Spiritual Melody*, and published in 1691, was the first hymn-book to be so used,

though he had published hymns for children to learn as early as 1664. None of his hymns have survived in common use, and had the leaders of the "split" from this church owing to their use argued that Keach's hymns were doggerel, instead of arguing against the general principle of hymn-singing, we might have sympathized with them. Here are one or two specimens:—

Our wounds do stink and are corrupt,
Hard swellings we do see;
We want a little ointment, Lord,
Let us more humble be. (p. 173)

Repentance like a bucket is
To pump the water out;
For leaky is our ship, alas,
Which makes us look about. (p. 254)

Here meets them now that worm that gnaws,
And plucks their bowels out;
The pit, too, on them shuts her jaws,
This dreadful is, no doubt. (p. 312)

But it was the principle of hymn-singing (as distinct from singing Scriptural psalms) that was at issue. Benjamin Keach's practice of hymn-singing, first introduced at the Communion Service, was spreading amongst Particular Baptist Churches, though vigorously attacked. In the same year as Keach published the first hymn-book, he issued an *apologia* for his practice, entitled, "The Breach Repaired in God's Worship," in which he elevates the practice to a "Sacred Truth of the Gospel" (p. 6), and couples its neglect, with that of the ministry, as the two chief causes of "our sad witherings." A favourite proof-text of his was Exodus xxxii. 18, "the noise of them that sing do I hear," and he argues quite reasonably that "one man's voice could not have made such a noise," therefore the singing must have been congregational, nor is he deterred by the fact which his opponents gleefully pointed out, that this congregation was singing to the praise of the Golden Calf. One of these opponents was Robert Steed, which explains why the group of malcontents with Keach sought refuge at the Bagnio Church. In 1691 Steed published "An Epistle . . . concerning Singing," denouncing the practice on the following grounds. Singing by a set, stinted form is an invention of man, being of the same quality as, if not worse, than common stinted set-form prayers, or even infant sprinkling. It is artificial, and therefore alien to the free motions of the Spirit of God. We should have the true and spontaneous song, if we had more of the Holy Spirit. As for arguments drawn from the music of the Old Testament, all

that is done away in Christ. Moreover, some cannot sing, not having tunable voices, and women ought anyhow to keep silence in the churches. I think we must admire Robert Steed's ingenuity, whilst we differ from his conclusions. But the most important point to notice in this ancient and long-settled controversy is that both sides seem to us wrong-headed in their arguments. To us, hymn-singing is neither a Gospel-ordinance to be neglected at our soul's peril, nor a wicked innovation, displaying the policy of Satan; it is of practical use in worship, and that settles the matter. We have moved away from the ground of Scriptural authority in such matters to the modern ground of the evidence of religious experience. It is these great changes, often unrecognized, that do settle most of the controversies, not the particular arguments employed. The dispute about hymn-singing, and every other bone of contention, lies forgotten; but it is worth while to hunt it out from the dark corner where it lies to remind us that some of our own issues may suffer the same fate, and be settled, not by our arguments, but by the inevitable course of things, and their intrinsic worth.

(3) The third point to be illustrated is a natural extension of what has been said—the perennial conflict between organization and spirit, between the body and the soul of a religious community. There must be a bodily organization where men agree to meet in fellowship; there must be system and order and compromise wherever two or three are met in the name of the Lord. But His Spirit is always seeking to say and do more than the bodily organization can express, either in the single life, or in the social group. There will always be a certain inconsistency between the essential spiritual life of such a community, and the forms of its expression and administration, themselves necessary, yet themselves perilous to its freedom and effective utterance. This problem is with us to-day, as it was with the seventeenth century, and the lesson of its permanence and difficulty is one that may be learnt from a study of denominational history.

The church before us was by no means a disorderly group of enthusiasts; that is far from being the truth about such Puritan separatists. Indeed, they were much more rigorous, within their own horizon, than we are to-day. Their regard for order is seen in the solemn handling of church affairs, the scrupulous adherence to Scriptural rule, such as the requiring two witnesses for a reported misdemeanour, the patient endeavour by continued discussion to get unanimity of decision in matters of dispute. But I will confine my illustration of this aspect of the life—its orderliness, to the ordination of ministers and other officers, formally consummated by

the laying on of hands. I quote verbatim the account of the ordination of John Skepp in 1714. It is preceded in the book by the minutes of a meeting in which each point of procedure is discussed and settled, leaders appointed, and elders from other churches chosen to assist, and a day fixed for fasting and prayer and the ordination:

> Sept. 7th., being the day appointed by the church for the solemn ordination of Brother Skepp into the pastoral office.
>
> The church being unanimously met they proceeded as follows:
>
> Br. Skinner and Br. Lampet being the Church's Elders and mouth for that day as by the church appointed, Mr. Skinner first began, and opening the occasion of their present meeting to the Elders (viz., Mr. Noble, Mr. Elliot, Mr. Wallen) and the rest of the spectators.
>
> He then applied his speech to the Church to know if they persisted in their determination and resolution to call Br. Skepp to the office of a pastor, and that they would now install him into the said office.
>
> If they did to signify the same by holding up the hand, upon which it was observed the members by that signal did unanimously agree.
>
> Then Br. Skinner in the name of the Church asked Br. Skepp if he did accept of the Church's call, and of being chose and ordained by them into the pastoral office this day, and if he did accept of the call and charge to signify it in a few words to the Church in the presence of this auditory. Upon which Br. Skepp stood up and did in words signify his compliance with the Church's call, and in the name of God and before many witnesses take upon him the office and charge to which he was chosen.
>
> Upon which Br. Lampet and Br. Skinner stood up, Br. Skepp being in the midst, and stretched the hands over his head, and signified thereby to the spectators that this Church did by them in this figure of the stretching forth of the hand over the head of Br. Skepp signify their joint choice and present installment of him into office, and then called upon God in prayer desiring a blessing upon their choice, first themselves by Br. Skinner, and then desired the Elders present to assist them in the further work of calling upon God and exhortation.
>
> Upon which Br. Elliot and Br. Wallen went up and prayed for a blessing, and Br. Noble spent time in speaking from a suitable text, giving suitable instructions and exhortations.
>
> This done Br. Skepp went up and concluding in prayer and thanksgiving dismissed the Assembly.

[This record is duly signed by nine members of the Church (perhaps all the male members present, for the Church, as we shall see, had recently passed through grave trouble), not by the visiting elders, who, it will be noticed, take no part in the laying on of hands. The pastor's authority comes wholly through the Church that calls him, not from any other body.

A similar service to this for the ordination of a pastoral elder was held for the ordination of deacons, it being expressly stated that the laying on of hands meant no more than the lifting up of hands.]

So much for the one side of the perennial problem, showing us that even so simply organized a society as this felt bound to observe due and proper forms to express its corporate acts. On the other side, no one could accuse it of having lost the consciousness that the real life of the community was in the divine Spirit animating it. The very existence of the society sprang from faith in the converting work of the Spirit, the unseen spiritual forces which created and directed the life of the individual member, and the life of the community. The man of whose ordination we have been speaking, John Skepp, wrote one book only, published posthumously, and its title was *Divine Energy, or the Efficacious Operations of the Spirit of God upon the Soul of Man*. In this book he says, "The whole work of the church, the government of the church, and the influence of the church are all under the Spirit of God. Take away the Spirit, and what is left but a carcass? A show of religion merely" (ed. 3, 1815, p. 299). Can we then assume that with such an aim, and with such methods of government, the happy compromise had been reached, and the living soul was equipped with its adequate and responsive body? The answer writ large on the history of the eighteenth century is clear enough. The breath of the Evangelical Revival was needed to rebuke and quicken the very organizations that theoretically stood for the working of the Spirit. But we may find our answer in some degree from the document before us, an answer which also serves to show the unstable religious equilibrium of the times. Richard Claridge (b. 1649), an Oxford man, who had ministered as an Anglican priest at Peopleton in Worcestershire from 1673 to 1691, resigned his position and became a Baptist. At the time of his baptism, something occurred which he had cause to remember; "as soon as he was come out of the water, and gone into an House, his wet Clothes being yet upon him, a certain Person came into the Room, and pulling off his Hat, accosted him thus, *You are Welcome, Sir, out of one Form into another*." (*Life*, p. 18). Claridge became a

Baptist preacher, denouncing, "Prelatical Episcopacy, Surplice, Infants sprinkling, Common-Prayer, Episcopal Ordination, Churches, Ministers and Ceremonies, as Scriptureless, Antichristian and Idolatrous" (p. 22). In 1622, duly authorized by the church at Bromsgrove, he became assistant to Robert Steed at the Bagnio. In a letter written at this time (p. 26), we may hear where the emphasis lay for him. "We may talk an Hour or two, but if Christ be not with us, by His Spirit, to dictate, bring to our remembrance, and open unto us the Scriptures, it is but an *useless, empty sound,* and an *unprofitable beating of the Air.*" He remained for two years with Steed and the Bagnio Church, and then a difference of conviction arose between the two ministers as to their relation with other churches; apparently he found insufficient freedom for his message and work. He left quite honourably, and refused the invitation sent by another London Baptist church. "They had some Discourse about *Elders,* and their *Call;* about *Ministers Maintenance,* and *Note-Preaching;* he told them his opinion that a *Church's Call* was not sufficient, and that *Bargain* and *Contract,* and *Note-Preaching* were contrary to the *Holy Scriptures*" (p. 28). Here we see a man bringing a fresh eye to the situation, and finding that the body was cramping the soul amongst the Baptists. For such a man there was but one natural religious home in those days—the fellowship of the Quakers, whom we find him joining in 1697, though remaining on terms of personal friendship with Baptist leaders. He remained a Quaker till his death in 1723. His spiritual pilgrimage, Anglican, Baptist and Quaker, is typical of the times, but its interest for our purpose is his passage through this particular church. Something was wanting, when its sphere could not satisfy so sincere and earnest a spirit as his; something always will be wanting in the inevitable attempt to reconcile the body and the soul of a Christian community. The problem which the past could not solve is still with us; and the failure of the past may remind us of the need for patience and for an open mind as to methods in the task of the present.

(4) But there is a justification of the study of denominational history which goes deepest of all, and is wide enough to include all other interests. Such study shows us what human nature is, by showing us its actions and reaction under the power of great emotions and intense convictions. It does not usually make striking contributions to theology, for theology as a science will ignore all denominational barriers. But anthropology is studied best in particular examples, nor does it matter what limitations of prejudice obscure the judgment, what narrowness of arena seems to

limit the life. Stoke Poges Churchyard raises the enduring interests of human nature by its mute, inglorious Miltons just as well as Westminster Abbey—provided we can get our data. The one essential here is reality. Let the ancient record show us the man as he lived and moved, and it is always worth studying. Indeed, I think there is always something wrong with the historian, whatever his special interest, if he does not keep alive in himself, and sometimes show in his work, this ultimate interest in human nature. The reasons that make a man a Baptist or a Quaker or a Plymouth Brother need not greatly concern me, unless I am one of these myself. But I am bound to be interested in the man as a man, in his behaviour in the never-ceasing drama of human life, where I tread the boards with him. That interest underlies all these ancient records, where they are faithful and full enough, and the student of denominational history is often rewarded for the pains of research by the discovery of some forgotten story of human life. The particular example to be found in this old church-book is a painful one, and some of its details could not be made public. It is the story of the downfall of David Crosley, of which this is the only full record. He and his cousin William Mitchell had done a great evangelistic work in Yorkshire and Lancashire, and the Baptist churches that ultimately sprang from their joint labours were many. He came into prominence in the south through a sermon preached at a Presbyterian Church, when he was twenty-two. He had been staying in the house of John Strudwick (where Bunyan had died three years before), and opposite him as he sat at the dinner-table was a tapestry depicting Samson in combat with the lion he slew. This seized his imagination, and led to the sermon called "Samson a type of Christ," in the manner of the allegorical preaching of the time. A bookseller who heard it, there and then proposed to print it, and a thousand copies were sold in six months. After the death of Robert Steed in 1700, he was invited to succeed him, and was ordained at the Bagnio in January 1702-3, being then about thirty-three. His ministry was eminently successful, as we might have expected from his record. But from about 1707, rumours were in circulation that the popular minister was drinking too freely, even for that tolerant age, and that his behaviour towards women gave rise to grave suspicions. For a long time the rumours were discredited by most, who felt, as is said, that "he could not if guilty be so helped in his ministry." It is the story of Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* over again, though on a lower and coarser level. At length the church was bound to deal with it. I have been greatly impressed by the thorough

and just manner in which the leaders of the church dealt with this painful scandal. The affidavits of the witnesses are given in full; their evidence was carefully tested, and full opportunity was given to David Crosley to defend himself. He acknowledged drunkenness, and was convicted of lying in the course of the very deliberate proceedings; but he maintained to the end his innocence on the gravest features of the case. There can be little doubt however, in the mind of anyone who reads the documents, and follows the course of events, that David Crosley was guilty of immoral conduct, and that the church was fully justified in its ultimate act of excommunication, in which there was full unanimity. After prayer, there was a careful statement of the charges proved by "the Brother that was the mouth of the Church," with references to the Scriptures that bore on each point. The brother then proceeded:—

> "You, the Church of Jesus Christ, having judged him guilty of these gross sins, and having also judged it not for the glory of God, nor for the honour of this Church that such a one should be continued in the communion of this Church, and after silence the Brother appointed, expressed the sentence in these words.
>
> Therefore, we do in the name of our Lord Jesus, and in the name and authority of this Church, withdraw from our Brother David Crosley, for his disorderly walking, and we put him out of union, and Communion, of this Church, until the Lord give him repentance to the satisfaction of the Church.

The church at Tottlebank, Lancashire, of which Crosley had been minister for nine years before coming to London, refused to believe him guilty, but then they never had the evidence before them. If we needed confirmation, it would lie in the fact that similar charges were brought against him in the north again in 1719, and he was virtually excommunicated in the following year. Yet his powers as a preacher remained, and at the age of 72, he could hold an open-air audience of four thousand people. He died in 1744, bequeathing us one of those perplexing problems of human inconsistency—or human frailty. As I turn over these pages of his story, I seem to see a man temperamentally weak by the very qualities that made him effective as a popular preacher, poised in unstable moral equilibrium, and the more able to understand the struggles of other men,—till the habituation of evil thought made evil act easy, and the finer edge of moral judgment was blunted. As an older man, when the passions of youth were left behind, he seems to have won and kept the respect of others, and George Whitefield writes

a preface to the republication of his famous sermon on "Samson a type of Christ." How sharply it all reminds us that underneath all our creeds and even our convictions, there is the ultimate fact of the heart itself! Had the young man but known it, Strudwick's tapestry was a prophetic foreshadowing of his own life, for David Crosley was something of a Samson in his strength and in his weakness.

Other values of denominational history which might be illustrated from this old book I must not dwell upon—the correction of sweeping generalizations, repeated from book to book, the illumination of the general historical background of the age, the way in which some incident of the past becomes a symbol and apt expression of permanent truth, like John Robinson's famous word about the more light and truth from the Bible. But I think that the responsibility lies on all who are concerned for the study of our denominational history to convince men of the value of that study by their own use of it, in something more than a merely antiquarian interest.

H. WHEELER ROBINSON.

The Poet as Interpreter

IN the cinder heaps which the war has left behind are to be found many nuggets of precious gold by the earnest seeker. Though the book trade may have suffered, English literature has profited by the Renaissance of English poetry.

For a few years before the war there had been noticable a quickened interest in poetry, and even though no one had arisen to rank with Tennyson and Browning, there had evidently sprung up a school of writers who were not to be the idle singers of an empty day, but voices heralding the dawn of a new day; sometimes pleading for the rights and recognition of a class of the neglected, or singing of the experiences, when men pass from darkness to light. Perhaps Masefield at times puts into narrative poetry what might well have been told in prose, and some of the moods of Patrick Macgill may unfit him for reaching the grandest heights of song; but where the music is sacrificed the intense passion becomes both arresting and magnetic, and as we listen to this navvy poet, singing out the true epic of labour,

we realize that in his soul there burns some of the fire of "the Immortals." In Middleton we have less passion, but more music. But without drawing any comparison, one recognized even before the war, a new and promising school of English poets.

For a few years we have had a poetry society and a *Poetry Review*, whose object has been and is to cultivate the imagination and encourage those with the gift of song. The share taken in these enterprises by Mr. Stephen Phillips, must have won the admiration of all lovers of poetry, and some of the poems and studies of poets and criticisms have been worthy of a permanent place in our English literature. This work has no doubt widened the interest in poetry, especially on its artistic side, and moved many to express themselves in that way. As for creative powers, the war put all these efforts in the shade, but as soon as the souls of men were stirred to their depths, and men were brought face to face with danger and death, and hearts were pierced with great sorrows, and filled with great hopes and purposes, expression for all these was sought, in the form in which men have ever expressed the deepest and highest within. Little volumes of verse began to appear on our bookstalls, and though some of these at times revealed crude literary craftsmanship, they also often revealed a spark of the quenchless fire of the soul, for we know that while mortals speak many tongues, the Immortals speak but one, and this we heard.

About many of these little books there is something of pathos and tragedy, for ere we had come to read their songs, some had become members of

> The choir invisible
> Of the immortal dead.

The late Alexander Maclaren once said to a few of us who were theological students—"Read the poets, the great poets, get saturated with them. I have got more from the poets than the theologians." At the time I was much surprised at the remark, but the surprise has diminished with the passing years. At the time I thought that great master of language was acknowledging a debt he owed to the poets for the way in which they had helped him in the gift of expression, but I can see now that he was acknowledging a far greater debt, and while my mind was wandering in the outer courts of the temple of truth, he was there in the Holy of Holies, with the great masters who had given to him intensity of soul, removed the scales from his eyes, so that he could see the things invisible to countless numbers, and then express in glowing eloquence what many felt but could not express. The office of the poet is not that of a decorator in

the realm of literature, but of one who is an interpreter in the realm of history and the house of life.

No doubt there are some who would question this, who have always thought of the poet as remote from life, not only as one far from the madding crowd, but uninterested in the problems and studies which agitate the crowd, and sometimes drive them to the verge of madness. But the man who declared that poetry was but a convenient way of talking nonsense, declared at the same time that the spirit of the muses had never warmed and illumined the chambers of his soul.

Such an idea, however, is not at all uncommon. To a great many the Poet is a dreamer and idler, walking through this practical world with his head in the air, and while to the great toiling mass "life is real and life is earnest," to him it is but a day dream, with neither reality nor earnestness in it. It is to such people that poetry is but an ornament of literature.

A distinguished writer has told us to take a good dose of history if we get into the dumps, but a good dose of history will banish all the superficial ideas regarding poets and poetry, and reveal to us the fact that the truly great poet has touched life at the springs, and the influence has been cleansing and quickening. There have been exceptional periods when they have been the very soul of their age, and the very power and glory of kings and assemblies have paled before the presence and power of the poet, whose name has grown more luminous with the passing years, while the names of princes and monarchs have been as the stars of the night, which the dawn has wiped out one by one.

For an illustration of this we need not travel away to Italy, where Dante reigns as king. We need go no further than our own Commonwealth period, and that great Puritan prince among men, John Milton. Both Dante and Milton are the best illuminators of the ages in which they lived. If you link Savonarola with Dante, you have the poet and the preacher, the two most mighty personalities connected with that wonderful city of Florence. They were not merely the ornaments of the city, but were the moulders of its life, the shapers of its constitution, and the fountain of its noblest impulses and efforts for freedom. Who will deny that the richest possession of that fair city at the present time is the memory of these two great sons of God, whose names are so great and so renowned? And while there is much in the great poem of Dante which belongs to humanity, there is very much that belongs to the tangled web of Tuscan history.

These remarks apply just as much or even more to John Milton and English Puritanism. In studying that period

of our history, it is somewhat difficult to separate the religious and political, some may see in them the relation of cause and effect. But whether considering their ideals of freedom from the religious or political standpoint, we find that the language in use is the language of the Bible. It was the handbook of the people, it was the pearl of great price in their home and life.

Not only was it the language of the people, but it was a Revelation of the sphere in which the minds and spirits of the people moved. A Bible reading people were naturally interested in those questions of God and the soul, of sin and redemption, which are at the very foundation of "the old Book." Their idea of inspiration may not be ours, much of their theology we may reject, but the thing supreme with them was that which the earnest souls of all the ages have been in quest. Now John Milton the Poet was the truest incarnation of the spirit of the Puritan and Commonwealth period, with all its intensity and its limitations. It is to be feared that for some generations many of the religious teachers and writers went to John Milton instead of going to their Bibles and their experience, and English theology became more Miltonian than Biblical.

Mr. Garrod, the new Professor of Poetry at Oxford, has told us in his inaugural address "that the race of long-haired poets is dead.

Trimmed are all our poets' tresses,
'Fallen beneath the barber's art—
Gone the day when such excesses
  Marked the bards as men apart.
How unlike the older stager,
  They avoid the mane or mop,
And the fiercest sergeant-major
  Would approve their present crop.

And another thing has vanished—
  Rhyme, that served the old brigade,
Many bards have lately banished
  From the poet's stock-in-trade;
Odder still, the lilt that trembles
  In the songs they now compose,
And the lyric oft resembles
  Quaintly punctuated prose.

Not that I would have them muzzle
  Genius on an ancient plan,
But they bring an awkward puzzle
  For the plain and common man:

Rhyme they seldom, rarely run to,
Hair is gone beyond recall—
How on earth, I ask, is one to
Recognize the bard at all.

("Lucio," in *Manchester Guardian.*)

When Mr. Garrod has had his say, there are, however, two elements or facts in all true poetry which have to be carefully considered, and one of these is very difficult to lay hold of. These are (1) the poet's own personality, and (2) the spirit of the age in which the poet lived. The personality may be plain to a sensitive and sympathetic reader from the first, but not so with the second, for the spirit of an age is hardly even definable to the age itself. To see and understand some things we must stand apart. We may be sure of the personal quality of A. E. Houseman and John Masefield, and be able to point out why those qualities are personal, and contribute something to the record of the human spirit, but just yet it would be more difficult to say clearly where these men find the special point of kinship to the new school of English poetry which has arisen in our midst.

In the above verses by Lucio, that writer comments on the absence of rhyme in our modern poetry.

And the lyric oft resembles
Quaintly punctuated prose.

Rhyme is not absolutely essential to great poetry. It is an aid to memory, and poetry will very often express itself in that form. Rhythm is much more essential, and is quite natural in times of intense feeling and passion. Language gains a certain rhythmic movement in all intense hours, and corresponds to the movements of the soul. Intense anger and love give a certain eloquence to almost every man. So while rhyme and rhythm usually accompany poetry, they do not constitute it, nor are they essential to it. Poetry is the fittest human expression of the highest and strongest, and the deepest thoughts and feelings of which we are capable. Wordsworth calls it "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." Coleridge says "it is the blossom and fragrancy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language." Another has defined it, "the fine wine that is served at the banquet of life." All true poetry is truth dressed in her wedding garments. Theodore Watts Dunton, than whom there is no higher authority on this subject, says, "Absolute poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human mind in emotional and rhythmical language."

If that be the nature of poetry, how sensitive must be the mind and soul of the poet. Of all men he will be the

one most responsive to all that is going on around, of all men he will be the one who cannot get away from the spirit of his age; and in reading his work we shall be looking into a magic mirror, in which we can see the comedy and tragedy which are being played on the great stage.

J. R. Seeley, in his *Expansion of England*, criticized the method of past historians in their divisions of history. He thought that too much had been made of the accessions and deaths of kings and queens. The real dividing lines he thought should be the beginnings of great movements, or great national efforts for the gaining of certain great ends. Many of these lines of demarcation are oftentimes very faint and difficult to discover, and a similar difficulty besets one in finding a period with which to deal with the poets as interpreters of their age. For the sake of convenience, and to keep within limits fairly familiar, we perhaps cannot do better than take the Victorian era, but in doing this it will be needful to get some view of the historic background, and the influences at work leading up to that period. In doing this we shall be able to see what these influences helped to produce in the conditions and lives of the people, making manifest to us the close kinship there is between Poetry and Life.

Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, but to understand the England of that period it is needful to take a backward look. When the century opened the great struggle with France had been going on for seven years, and this continued until 1815. But in the period from 1793 to 1815, not only was there the struggle with France going on, but there was a spirit of revolution abroad. From the fall of Napoleon to the great Reform Bill of 1832, we have another stage of English history. We then move on from 1832—1853, from the passing of the Reform Bill to the Crimean War. There is no need to come further at this point. "When we survey the 19th century from the closing years, the one fact that strikes us is, that its earlier half was a time of much more rapid and sweeping change than its second. . . . The most cursory glance is enough to show us that the difference between the England of 1852 and the England of 1899, is far less than that between the England of 1801 and that of 1852. Almost all the great movements, social, economic, and political, which have given the century its character, were all well developed before the Crimean War. It is much the same with literature. The great writers of the century had started on their career before that date. . . . The England of 1801 knew not the steamboat and the railway, the electric telegraph and illuminating power of gas. The England of

1852 was habitually employing all these, though it had much to learn in perfecting their use."

"The greatest change of all, the transformation of the United Kingdom from a state mainly dependent on agriculture to an essentially manufacturing community, is also the work of the first half of the nineteenth century," and this was a change pregnant with great issues, affecting both literature and religion.

That revolutionary spirit which ruled so widely in the early part of the nineteenth century, was largely brought about by new ideas concerning man which we now call democratic. They gave the impulse to the poetry of Byron and Shelley, but after their death, there was a period of exhaustion in English poetry. There was no passion for or against these ideas left in the nation, and England, thus deprived for a time of these animating conceptions concerning man, sank into a dreary commonplace. When the passion revived, it took the form of political agitation and struggle. For many years there had been a general movement toward a reform of administration, and making the welfare of the people a a matter of more vital concern, but this spirit had been more felt on the continent than in this country, and particularly in France. There was abroad the notion of the infinite perfectibility of human nature. There was the passion for freedom, finding an eloquent voice in Rousseau. There was abroad the belief in the unlimited power and right of the sovereign people. Now all this, and the subsequent work of the Revolution in France, showed itself to a conservative mind like Burke's, only on its destructive side. "Man is born free," ran Rousseau's famous motto, "and everywhere he is in chains." If this be so the breaking of chains must be the preliminary of any free movement, but the chains of Rousseau are to Burke the sacred and indispensable traditions which hold society together.

If we compare the state of England and France in 1815 when the revolutionary fires had somewhat died down, there can be no doubt that, in spite of revolutionary exhaustion, and her final defeat under Napolean, the civilization of France had been in many points advanced beyond our own. Her population was awakened, as ours was to be in a milder form by the chartist agitation.

But alongside this revolutionary spirit there was growing up in our land an industrial system which was to have far-reaching effects. This of course had only become possible through the many discoveries and inventions which were filling the minds of men with wonder. England had grown strong at sea, and was becoming rich as a nation of shopkeepers. Her

condition by weathering the storm of the Revolution, had gained fresh lustre and added strength. At home factories were springing up on every hand, there were fresh possessions and expanding trade abroad. These confirmed the nation in its policy of isolation and internal strength. There was much poverty and degradation of the manual workers. They had crowded into the towns, their wages were at the lowest point, and the remedial legislation of the nineteenth century had not yet begun, scarcely contemplated. So many were busy fortune hunting, and others so much concerned about making a living, that the people were losing the art of living, while the nation was fast becoming materialized.

Though perhaps growing into a nation of shopkeepers, there was also growing up in our midst a great hunger for knowledge, and knowledge in that ordered and connected form which we call science. In certain branches of physical science much advance was made, and much exact knowledge was gained. The interest in these subjects became absorbing to many men, the results of their study gave to them a self-consciousness of power and a sense of self-sufficiency, which became disastrous to religious faith. This advance of the physical sciences so drained the interests of men from other things, that the flowers of faith began to wither because of neglect, and many began to think that the springs of life were within themselves. The development of industry and the growth of knowledge in that ordered form we call science, were two of the most important factors affecting the life and character of England in the nineteenth century. Along with the growth of these had grown that spirit of criticism or that critical school which felt that it had a mission to criticize everything from the foundation of faith to the sewerage system of every town and city in the land. No wonder that we entered upon a period of doubt and mental conflict such as had disastrous results, both in the individual lives and the lives of communities.

There is one other feature that must be noticed before we begin to note the relationship between those phases of of English life and character and the poets and poetry of that age. The rapid development of our industrial system led to the rapid growth of our town and cities. People flocked from the country to the town, and thus aggravated some of the worst features of town and city life. In seeking to cope with housing problems, the idea of beauty was left out in the cold. Town planning was unknown. So long as the place of business, whether factory, forge or foundry was making profit, it mattered not whether the streams were polluted, or the atmosphere, and multitudes lived absolutely

out of touch with beauty and with nature with all their uplifting and healing power, and while men were making gold the fine gold in the kingdom of life was slipping away, and the souls of men were shrinking. It was the recognition of this fact which led George Cadbury at a somewhat later date, to transfer the Cadbury works from the city to the country, and found Bournville, the garden city. That great philanthropist saw that men could not live amidst ugliness and squalor without being affected by it. The legacy of all these things is not yet all spent.

From that very imperfect sketch of some factors and features of our English life in the nineteenth century, and especially the part of it we speak of as the Victorian era, let us turn to a few of the men who were the singers of those crowded days. When Victoria came to the throne in 1837 Shelley, Byron, and Keats were dead. Wordsworth's most important work was finished. Tennyson, Browning, and Elizabeth Barrett had made their first appearance in print. Matthew Arnold was at school, and Arthur Hugh Clough entered Balliol College that year. The Rossettis were children, while Wm. Morris and Swinburne had only just come on the scene.

Though the greater part of Wordsworth's work was done, his influence was steadily growing. The eighteenth century is often spoken of as the age of reason. An age, cold and intellectual, and soul-less. Occasionally we hear the romantic note, but only occasionally. Many no doubt claim Blake and Gray as the pioneers of the Romantic revival in English poetry, but Wordsworth had the pre-eminence and his influence is immeasurable. He and Coleridge more than any others brought back the soul to English poetry. You feel as you read one like Pope that there is an artificiality about him, his flowers have no fragrance about them, they have not been grown out in the open; they have been made by some clever hands. Such poetry had no real throb of life in it, it was written to win the approval of a literary clique more than anything else. Wordsworth declared and acted on this principle, that there was not one language for books only, and another for the affairs of everyday life. He believed and declared that it was time the poets returned to nature, to natural and simple themes, and to clothe them in the plain language of the common people. He asserted the dignity of common life, and the sacredness of the natural affections. His work was a protest against the diseased sentiment, the faithless cynicism, which had corrupted the life of English poetry. He claimed for poetry a religious mission, and invested it with the sanctity of a Divine calling.

How contrary is all this to the sensational cynicism of Byron. Here is his idea of a poet and a portrait of Wordsworth himself.

> But who is this with modest looks,
> And clad in sober russet gown?
> He murmurs by the running brooks
> A music sweeter than their own:
> He is retired as noontide dew,
> Or fountain in a noontide grove.

Now comes the question, how does such a character as Wordsworth, a great high priest of nature, come to be writing poetry, which brings to us serenity, and whose message is simplicity, at a time when the spirit of revolution is on every hand, as though living at the heart of a cyclone in a chamber named Peace. We do not go to him to be excited, but to be strengthened. Wm. Watson, in one of his glorious poems, says:

> Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave,
> When thou wast born, what birthgift hadst thou then?
> To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave—
> The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men?
> Not Milton's keen translunar music thine,
> Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless, human view,
> Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine,
> Not yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.
>
> What hadst thou that could make so large amends
> For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed—
> Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?
> Thou hadst for weary feet the gift of rest.

Men can only give what they possess. How came Wordsworth to possess this gift? We follow this lad from Cockermouth to the grammar school at Hawkshead, and there, often at nightfall when a storm was coming on, he would stand in the shelter of a rock and hear

> Notes that are
> The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
> Or make their dim abode in distant winds.

At such times he was aware of the coming down upon him of "the visionary power" which is such an essential part of the poet's equipment. In October 1787, at the age of eighteen, he goes to St. John's College, Cambridge. During one of the long vacations we see him with a Welsh college friend, Jones, staff in hand, out on a fourteen weeks' tramp through France, Switzerland, and the North of Italy. All through France they saw a people rising with gladness to

welcome the dawn of what they believed a new era for mankind. But these two youths were not merely onlookers; they were sympathizers in the intoxication of the time. For a while Wordsworth was filled with the revolutionary spirit. He had seen the Revolution while it still wore its earliest auroral hues, when the people were mad with joy as at the dawn of a regenerated earth. As he saw it later, in all its ghastly horror, Wordsworth owns that "he threw himself headlong into the questions filling the minds of many, without the needful preparations, knowing little of the past history of France, and of her institutions, and wholly unversed in political philosophy. He only saw that the best ought to rule, and they don't." The excesses of the Revolutionists alienated his sympathies, and the "Reign of Terror" caused his return to his native land. Now comes a rebound from Democracy, and from this time onward Wordsworth subordinates man to nature.

Great things are done when man and mountain meet.

This line of Blake's was illustrated in a remarkable way in Wordsworth, and his rich gift was an indirect outcome of the revolutionary spirit which spread over Europe in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Now we turn from the revolutionary period and its influence on English poetry to the effects, the materializing effects of the industrial developments. Mechanical science and inventions did a great deal to lift England to the supreme place among the nations of the nineteenth century. For a time her place in the industrial world was unchallenged. Her growing wealth brought many blessings in its train, and they were shared in by the people as a whole, but with the gold there was much alloy. A materialistic philosophy sprang up, life came to be too much considered from that view point; it began to regulate the scale of values too much in the everyday life. Men began to talk as though they could live by bread alone.

Into this age, smitten by the materializing influences, came a few great souls, whose eagle eyes pierced the mist and the gloom, who saw the eternal behind the shifting things of the day, and whose life's mission became the making real to their day and generation the things unseen but yet eternal. They picked no quarrel with the men who said, "To-day is the day of science, of knowing." They said, "Science must widen her field of investigation, and go from nature to man, and then peer upward from man to God. The whence and whither of man, the individual and the race, are and have always been, the subjects of tireless investigation, and the

work must go on when the material scientist and logician have reached their limits." James Martineau played a noble part in this great struggle, and helped many back to a spiritual conception and interpretation of life. But the two most distinguished guests in the "House of the Interpreter" were Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson. There was a wonderful intellectual strength about these two men, and especially Browning, but there was also the mystical element, and there is nothing unscientific in the mysticism of even the great mystics, for they simply claim to know without the intermediary of a logical process, and to know more. Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, brought us back at a bound to the realities of nature, and to the "thoughts too deep for tears," lying within those realities. Browning and Tennyson took us further in some, indeed, in many ways; brought the mass of things in relation to a Central Idea of love and goodness. God became once more the dominant note in literature—the invisible shone through the visible.

These men were equipped for their task by their own mighty faith in things spiritual. From Tennyson's work it is evident that he did not come to this high estate at a bound, but passed through his season of doubt and anxiety, we hear a good deal of the—may we—and miss the note and ring of certainty, but he fought his doubts and gathered strength, and sang then of his faith with a music sweet as the harping of many harpers. Browning had a much smaller audience. His style repelled many, then in addition to that the music was missing. He had many admirers, and his students were drawn from many circles, but they were circles not very large, and only thinly peopled. We know that the lofty mountains are often shrouded with the mists. Many thought thus of Browning. But the difficulty with Browning is not in his style and language, but in this, that he is the poet of the soul, and has therefore to do with all the problems of faith. The inner life is the subject of his study, for he realized that the outer life was fast becoming almost everything to men. Now his supreme interest became the redemption and development of the soul. In the "Florentine Artist" he says:

> Your business is to paint the souls of men;
> Give us no more of body than shows soul.

He lifted up his voice like a trumpet, and cried to men, "Have faith in God," "Ye must be born again," "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned." He showed to men that Faith and Hope and Love were the makers of character, that growth was the evidence of the soul's vitality. That imperfection was a suggestion of Immortality, for

> Progress is man's distinguishing mark alone;
> Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,
> Man partly is, and wholly hopes to be.

Browning was a great warrior for the spiritual faith. The spring of his contagious optimism was his own faith in the personal Christ, the Son of God.

> I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ
> Accepted by the reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it.

Yet to-day we have suggestions of Browning's religious scepticism. Where do we find a nobler faith and optimism?

> My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
> That after last returns the first,
> Though a wide compass round be fetched;
> That what began best can't end worst,
> Nor what God blest once prove accurst.

If there is not the same intellectual grappling spirit in Tennyson as in Browning when he deals with the unspiritual side of the life of his age, his intuition enables him to see what to many has been the unseen, and with his lyric gift he so sings of these unseen things that they finally become the grand realities in the lives of his readers. Browning battles against the materializing influences which are destroying the faith of men, and so enables the spiritual faith to have an opportunity of growth. Tennyson leads men and women straight for the Mount of Transfiguration, where they get their vision of "Jesus only," all heedless of those who are blocking the way.

It is hard for us to realize the unrest which came to fill the minds and hearts of men, as scientific study for a time advanced. The conquests of science in certain physical realms were very remarkable. Many old beliefs were undermined, and that sense of security which for some time had prevailed, especially among the middle classes, in the early Victorian era, was very much interfered with. First came questionings, then grave doubts, and then the painful drifting from the old moorings. There is something truly pathetic in the confession of Professor J. G. Romanes in the conclusion of his *Candid Examination of Theism*. "And forasmuch as I am far from being able to agree with those who affirm, that the twilight doctrine of this new faith is a desirable substitute for the waning splendour of the old, I am not ashamed to confess that with this virtual negation of God, the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness; and although from hence-

forth the precept—to work while it is day will doubtless gain an intensified force, from the terribly intensified meaning of the words that—the night cometh when no man can work,—yet, when at times I think, as think at times I must of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed, which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it, at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pangs of what my nature is susceptible."

That period of doubt which one like Romanes felt so keenly, was felt even more so by Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold. They had no gleam that they could follow wholeheartedly; for them there seemed to be nothing but broken lights, and some of these misleading. They at last came to themselves, but found they were in a far country, and began to be in want. They could not live in spiritual bankruptcy, and were determined to arise and find the way home. In their poems there was sincerity, but sadness, and no wonder. Arnold described himself as

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born.

Much of Arnold's poetry was the poetry of opposition. He could not disentangle himself from the pressure of his age, and he hated that pressure. He was, however, a revelation of the experience through which many were then passing. He was a child of that age. Only at intervals the clouds lifted for him, and He saw through the mists the flush of dawn, but he had not the heart enough to follow that gleam. He had settled down to stoic sadness as his own faith waned and unillumined by humour. Occasionally he forgets himself, as in the poem, "Rugby Chapel," when he thinks of his father and his father's character, then he begins to mount as with wings of an eagle, and he thinks of man travailing through his foes toward the city of God, and then sounds the note of triumph:

> On to the bound of the waste,
> On to the city of God.

Though Clough was as much a child of his age, and finally a mirror of it as Arnold, there was not the sad undertone in his work. He was a true literary artist, but his art is mainly valuable, not for its own sake, but for its transparency as a medium of large, self-revelation. He finds himself in the midst of a conflict, many call it of "science and religion." He, however, has one clear aim—that of getting out of the storm, if possible, into some bright light and quiet air." But he will only do this honestly and truthfully. That truth is, he believes, and he sets himself to work his way to it, through the confusions of his day, and the tangled forest of life. He was one of many of that day.

> It fortifies my soul to know,
> That though I perish, truth is so,
> That howsoe'er I stray and range,
> Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change;
> I steadier step when I recall
> That if I slip Thou dost not fall.

Such men come to their season of clear shining. Clough not only thought but lived. He was a full-blooded man as well as an eager questioner. Though the poet of intellectual suspense, and would have none of the hypocricies of faith, neither would he have any of the hypocrises of scepticism. He it is who sings of the higher courage. He feels that honest struggle is never vain.

> Say not the struggle naught availeth,
> The labour and the wounds are vain;
> The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
> And as things have been they remain.

There are many in our land whose national pride gathers about our industrial development and material prosperity, but do not realize that gold may be bought too dearly. Some in our land with great souls, some of our poets, looked upon our industrial development with some misgiving, as they saw the countrysides being deserted, and saw our industrial towns developing without any idea of beauty or comfort. They saw ugly towns springing up, and many fair landscapes blighted. John Ruskin raged about it, but all to no purpose. There are minds and souls to whom beauty is as the heavenly manna, and while our industrialism was growing by leaps and bounds, and so many things made subservient to it, these people looked on with pain in their hearts, knowing that along that pathway, lasting peace and joy were not to be found. Some who cried like Keats, "My world is disenchanted. When shall I find loveliness? Where does beauty sleep? *There* is the healing of humanity; there is truth."

Among these was Wm. Morris among the poets. It was what Morris saw around him, and saw also what we had lost in our scramble for gold and industrial supremacy that drove him to the past to find themes for his songs. He refused to live in all this ugliness and decay of beauty. Figuratively he closed his eyes to it. He had too much vitality within him, to endure the exhaustion of passion and beauty which characterized much of the society of his day. He became sick of the theological and political squabbles, felt little or no sympathy with the critical or revolutionary movements of his time—not even with 1848—flung off his shoulders, and drove from him with a laugh, the whole atmosphere of the time, and went as it were

round the corner, to live and move and have his being in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Some might say, "Wm. Morris, then, could be no interpreter of his age, when he left it and took others trooping away with him, some artists and some poets." But think a little, and what a light his action throws on the England of that day. It means that some of the finer elements of life were suffering for lack of sustenance, some of the finer souls could find no bread in a land of material plenty. There was something missing in those bustling days, and this man, and others like him, went out in search of the lost treasures, but only that they might bring them back again. Poetry was only one of the gifts Wm. Morris gave to the people of England. There is scarcely a room in the Palace Beautiful he has not decorated. He was not content to live wholly in the past, "He came to live in the faith and hope of a better future; and in that most imaginative of books, *News from Nowhere*, he painted what England might become a century or two hence under a new régime, the foundation of which was the universal prevalence among the people, of intelligent joy in the work of their hands." He sang beautifully of these things as well as worked, and set others working. For a while it seemed as though he laboured in vain, but at last he was recognized by those with seeing eyes, that he was an interpreter of the needs of his age, and an enricher of its Faith and Hope and Love.

Much of the structure of modern poetry it is difficult to understand, but in the poetry itself you have the spirit of revolt and adventure which characterize modern life. Rhyme has almost gone and alas, much of the noble rhythm, but much of this, like jazz music, reminds one of Jonah's gourd, which "came up in a night and perished in a night." The horrors of the war and the succeeding years of chaos, may have shattered many of the old ideals of beauty, and all our mechanical developements have dimmed our vision to the recognition of human energy; but the struggles of life have gained a new interest, the hopes and aspirations of the humble have become the themes of the singers of to-day. Every new age has its new poetry, has its own music. Great social events, great changes in the life of society such as are now taking place, affect the life in all its branches, and literature, is no exception. Social and literary changes go together, but the poet will still be the interpreter, and "poetry will resume her sacred office of prophecy, and the poets of the present time, groping for some new form, will act as forerunners of a future poet, to restore the beauty of harmony."

MORTON GLEDHILL.

Public Prayer.

WORSHIP is a reciprocal activity, the speech and action of man towards God as well as of God towards man. Man addresses God in two ways, in praise and in prayer, and these, so far as they are public, have one characteristic in common; each must be at once personal and peculiar, special to each individual worshipper, and general and catholic, the act of the congregation as a whole. The person must be fused in the society; he must cease to be an individual and merge his being in the larger unity, and yet at the same time he must find the satisfaction of his deepest needs. Prayer is a more complex act than praise, for while it is as broadly congregational it ought to be more deeply personal, and it is this that makes it so difficult for the group. Every one who reflects must feel perplexity and humiliation regarding public prayers. The things man most needs from God he can least bear to ask in the hearing of men: the things the whole congregation needs may meet the case of no single man. Much has been written regarding individual and private prayer, but sufficient consideration has not been given to the difficulties of corporate and collective prayer. Possibly because of this and because only a few men have the power of regularly and helpfully expressing the thought and aspiration of a group, too many have been content to see this side of public worship sink to the level of the "preliminaries," so that we have to confess that if there were no sermon, poor as this very often is, it would hardly be worth while having public worship. Most ministers have to learn to pray just as they have to learn to preach. They have to learn by private prayer, by hard thinking about the whole subject, and by thorough preparation for that part of the service.

Public and private prayer is often divided into Confession, Thanksgiving, and Intercession, but this is not an exhaustive classification. If we accept William James's definition that prayer is "every kind of inward communion or conversation with the power recognized as divine," we shall have to add Meditation. How are these divisions recognized in our worship? In Nonconformist services, at different times and in different places, public worship is made to include seven different prayers, or eight if the Lord's Prayer be considered

by itself. There is:—(1) Invocation, (2) Adoration, Thanksgiving and Confession—often known as the "long" prayer. (3) Intercession, (4) after the Offertory, (5) after the Announcements, (6) before the Sermon—the "Prayer for Illumination, (7) after the Sermon. Baptists usually combine (2) and (3) into what has become too often a subdued devotional oration, which forms perhaps the most difficult and the weakest part of our service. There seems need that we distinguish more than we do the four kinds of prayer already enumerated; we need to make the acts of worship "distinct, comprehensive, and progressive." Our practical difficulties are great. There are always people coming into the services after they have commenced, and since we do not think it it irreverent for them to walk in during a hymn we have several at short intervals in the early part of the service, and place what we know as the "long" prayer in the middle. It has been urged by some that at the beginning, after the Invocation and Preface of the service, is the place for the Confession of Sins. "The congregation having placed itself consciously in the presence of God, the instinct of every devout heart is to recall in that presence its own uncleanness and unworthiness. Hence the service proper opens *most* fittingly with a General Confession of Sin and a Petition for Divine Forgiveness." (J. O. Dykes: *The Christian Minister and His Duties*, p. 131). However desirable this may be, it is doubtful whether the average congregation is, at the beginning of public worship, ready to confess; it is, however, in the mood to give thanks. Later on it may be led to the more intimate and self-revealing act, but it must be led with care. Modern psychology has emphasized the folly of merely negative suggestions. If we start with our minds chiefly occupied with the suggestion of our sin and weakness, we are inviting the assaults of evil. The cringing and wailing attitude of many prayers of confession is hardly Christian. As a recent writer has said:—"Consider for a moment what sort of home life that would be in which the children were for ever cowering down before their father and saying: 'O most merciful Lord, be kind to me: I acknowledge I am but a worm: I cannot hope that I am worthy to have my breakfast: indeed, I deserve to starve. I can only hope for my breakfast because of your extreme mercy; but still I dare to hope. You have given me my breakfast before: You have given others their breakfasts: You have a great name for mercy: You will surely not fall below it: if You give it me I will spend the rest of the day praising your undeserved goodness.'" Jesus did not teach men so to pray. The object of the life of prayer is to keep the gate of the mind open to

and to make our own all those suggestions which come from God—suggestions of His Kingdom, His power and His glory. As Baudouin puts it, "Veni Creator" is a far more potent exorcism than "Retro Satanas."

Of the other prayers only a word can be said. It must be admitted at once that few men can satisfactorily compose a General Intercession, which shall adequately express the needs of the congregation, in the pulpit. Accurate knowledge, sympathy and understanding are essential, and success can only be achieved after careful preparation. Prayer before and after the sermon needs careful handling. Dykes says that "it is well to swathe the Word in prayer" (op. cit. p. 146), but it depends on "the Word" and on the prayers. There is room for far more use than is usually made of periods of silence, not simply that individuals may offer up the prayers, which are in their hearts and which the minister has not voiced, but that there may be meditation and communion, a waiting upon God. That this can be appreciated, in time, at any rate, not simply by Quakers and the well-educated, but by ordinary folk and even by children, has been proved by those who have put it to the test. Instead of the spoken prayer after the sermon, a period of silence would often be far more effective and helpful.

The Lord's Prayer should find a place at least once in a service. In theory it should certainly not be sung, but if by the use of a simple chant more of the congregation are drawn to take part than would otherwise be the case, then its singing seems to be justified. It needs to be kept in mind, however, that it is a prayer, and not a mere addition to the musical part of the service.

An additional reason for keeping Confession, Thanksgiving, Intercession, and Meditation as distinct as possible, having a number of shorter prayers with definite objects rather than one long one, is that whether for kneeling or sitting with bowed heads, pews are not the most suitable nor comfortable of places; attention inevitably wanders, and if some are inattentive or restive, prayer has ceased to be a congregational act. Five or seven minutes seems the longest period that should be spent at one time during a service in prayer. The language which may be used troubles some, and the style in which prayers should be cast. There are four things to be avoided:—(1) archaic and meaningless phrases. Dr. Dale writes: "Phrases which, when they were fresh were very beautiful but from which the delicate bloom has long ago been quite rubbed off: heterogeneous fragments of ill-remembered and ill-applied sentences from the Psalms of David, prophecies of Isaiah, and the hymns of Watts and Wesley—these to a man who is offering prayer may seem to express his own

devotional feeling, but they do not really express it, and they make it very difficult for many who are listening to him to maintain a devotional temper." (*Lectures on Preaching*, p. 171.) (2) Too formal speech. Some prayers are too like an address to royalty. (3) Familiar speech, which is in danger of becoming profanity. (4) Eloquence or preaching in prayer. In forming a vocabulary for prayer nothing is more helpful than a knowledge of the Bible and of the devotional literature of the Church, not that it may be slavishly copied, but that it may teach us how to express the deepest things of the heart. "I quote others," said Montaigne, "only in order the better to express myself." Dr. Dale suggests that "it might be well to determine in prayer to use those words only which are found in the Authorized Version of the Bible" (op. cit. 174), but few would to-day feel satisfied with such a restriction.

The old question of the relative value of extempore and liturgical prayer is still more of an issue among Baptists than among some other Nonconformists. There are many churches, large as well as small, where a minister who ventures to read his prayers is regarded with undisguised suspicion. It is urged on behalf of free or extempore prayer that it encourages the grace of prayer, that it gives life and freshness, that it enables particular and comforting reference, and that it allows a tenderness of heart and nearness to God impossible under any set form. It is commended by Dr. Dale for its "simplicity, directness, pathos, reverence, fervour." On the other hand the supporters of a liturgy point out its stateliness of thought and charm of style, and suggest that it lifts us above sectarian and provincial ideas of religion, expresses ordinary wants of all kinds and conditions of men, makes worshippers more independent of the minister, binds together the congregation, is suitable for the old, the weary and the young, and can be taught to children. A compromise is necessary; opportunity for extempore prayers, in addition to those prepared and read. Freedom and spontaneity must be maintained, and the evils and abuses of both types realized. The growth of culture in the last century has made people increasingly susceptible to those little things which make the difference between the man with a gift for public prayer and the ordinary minister. As Dr. John Watson once said:—"People will not endure that a coarse man should harangue the Almighty at the pitch of his voice or a weak man go maundering into His presence in their name." Even those who, like Dr. Dale, oppose liturgical prayers, are forced to recognize the need for careful preparation for public prayer, not simply of subjects and order of thought, but also of the actual words. Reading a prayer does not seem any less reverent than

repeating it from memory. Extempore prayer is the ideal in a small group, and in a large one if there be real unity of spirit and fellowship, and if he who leads is able to interpret adequately the needs and aspirations of the rest; but too often these conditions are not fulfilled, and then an ordered form of service seems less likely to give offence, and more likely to prove helpful. It has the further advantage that if a form of Litany is used the congregation themselves realize that their worship is a corporate act.

It is recorded in the life of Dr. Dale by his son that an old woman who attended the services in Birmingham used to say: "I can't understand his sermons, but his prayers do me so much good that I always *come*." We cannot all be Dales, but we can realize our own weaknesses and give to the prayers their due place in our worship and the attention they require.

ERNEST A. PAYNE.

George Fox and Roger Williams.

A Battle of Giants.

IN the years 1671-73 George Fox, visiting the American colonies, accomplished what Dr. Rufus M. Jones calls "a piece of colonial missionary labour, which, so far as I know, no visitor to America in colonial times paralleled." In the course of this wonderful missionary journey* the Quaker pioneer came to Rhode Island, and there he narrowly (and to a certain extent unaccountably) missed a Homeric encounter with the redoubtable Roger Williams. Fox arrived at Newport on 30th May, 1672. The "yearly meeting," held soon afterwards, was a memorable occasion. Both the Governor (Nicholas Easton) and his deputy sat in the sessions, and people flocked in from all parts of the island and the country round about.

Roger Williams (says Dr. Jones) "though heroically devoted to liberty of thought and speech, was by mental constitution and temperament impervious to the message of the Friends. He was by natural bent of mind unmystical, and he had no sympathy with the idea of inward personal revela-

* See article upon "George Fox's Missionary Labours in America," by Henry J. Cowell, in the *Holborn Review* for July, 1924.

tion. He was as ready as any of the great theologians of Massachusetts to give a reason for the hope that was in him, and he stood possessed of a very definite set of doctrines and practices which were to his mind essential to a right conception of Christianity."†

The fame of Fox's preaching powerfully stirred Williams. He was now an old man, but the fire of his youthful days rekindled in him when he heard how the Quakers were spreading their doctrines among the people, and now the multitude were flocking after the apostle of Inward Light. Twice at the yearly meeting of 1671 he had endeavoured to have some public discussion with Friends, but on each occasion he had been stopped by the "sudden falling to prayer" of a member of the assembly.

When Fox was holding his great meetings in Providence, Williams kept away, for "having once tried to get public speech in the assemblies of Friends," he was resolved "to try another way, and to offer a full and fair dispute." Accordingly he drew up fourteen propositions, which he sent to the Deputy Governor, John Cranston, for him to deliver to George Fox.

For some unknown reason the Deputy Governor kept these propositions in his possession until 26th July, when it was found that George Fox had left Newport. Roger Williams claimed that this delay was made by collusion with Fox. "He knew that I was furnished with artillery out of his own writings. He saw what consequences would roll down the mountains upon him . . . and therefore this old Fox thought it best to run for it." Fox declares, however, "I neither saw nor ever heard of any propositions from Roger Williams, nor did I go away in fear of him or them."

The Quaker leader having departed, his friends went forward with the arrangements for the great debate. The date fixed for the opening was 9th August, 1672, and it was arranged to have seven propositions debated in Newport and seven in Providence. The champion against the Quakers, now more than threescore years and ten, rowed by boat more than thirty miles to meet his opponents. "God graciously helped me," he says, "in rowing all day with my old bones, so that I got to Newport toward the midnight before the morning appointed."

Governor Easton attended the debate and "maintained the civil peace" (although the wordy strife was so acute that "civil" tongues were out of the question!). Williams characterizes his chief opponent, William Edmundson, as "a pragmatical and insulting soul," and, moreover, speaks of him

† *Quakerism in the American Colonies.*

as having "a flush of wit, a face of brass, and a tongue set on fire from the hell of lies and fury."

On the other hand Edmundson (as will be seen later) does not mince his words when referring to Williams. This William Edmundson was no bad substitute for George Fox himself—in fact, he was one of the Quaker leader's own personal converts. Born in Westmorland in 1627, he fought under Cromwell in the Civil Wars. In 1652 he settled in Ireland for purposes of trade. While on a business trip to England, he heard Fox, was "convinced" and "seized upon by the Lord's power," and from that time he became one of the foremost exponents of the new faith, first in Ireland and afterwards in Virginia and North Carolina.

When the debate was commenced at Newport, there were three Quakers opposed to the one doughty old man, who felt himself quite equal, however, to the apparently unequal contest. Williams had at least the advantage of being allowed to choose his own ground for argument. It will be noted that three days were devoted to dealing (at Newport) with the first seven propositions, and that on the second occasion (at Providence) Edmundson limited the discussion to one day. The only way to do justice to the propositions is to set them out in full:

"I. The People called Quakers are not true *Quakers* according to the Holy Scriptures.

"II. The Jesus Christ they profess is not the true Jesus Christ.

"III. The spirit by which they are *acted* is not the Spirit of God.

"IV. They doe not own the Holy Scriptures.

"V. Their Principles and Professions are full of contradictions and hypocrises.

"VI. Their Religion is not only an Heresy in matters of worship, but also in the Doctrines of Repentance, Faith, etc.

"VII. The Quakers' Religion is but a confused mixture of Popery, Armineanisme, Socineanisme, Judaisme, etc.

"VIII. The People called Quakers (in effect) hold no God, no Christ, no Spirit, no Angel, no Devil, no Resurrection no Judgment, no Heaven, no Hell, but what is in man.

"IX. All that their Religion requires (externall and internall) to make converts and proselites amounts to no more than what a Reprobate may easily attain unto and perform.

"X. The Popes of Rome doe not swell with and exercise a greater Pride than the Quaker spirit hath expresst and doth aspire unto, although many truly humble souls may be captivated amongst them, as may be in other religions.

"XI. The Quakers' Religion is more obstructive and

destructive to the conversion and Salvation of the Souls of People than most of the religions this day extant in the world.

"XII. The sufferings of the Quakers are no true evidence of the Truth of their religion.

"XIII. Their many Books and writings are extremely Poor, Lame, Naked, and sweld up with high Titles and words of Boasting and Vapour.

"XIV. The Spirit of their Religion tends mainly (1) to reduce Persons from Civility to Barbarisme; (2) to an arbitrary Government and the Dictates and Decrees of that *sudden spirit* that acts them; (3) to a sudden cutting off of People, yea of Kings and Princes, opposing them; (4) to as fiery Persecutions for matters of Religion and Conscience as hath been or can be practised by any Hunters or Persecutors in the world."

Having done Williams the justice of showing exactly what the challenge was that he threw down to the Quakers, it will be interesting to turn to his chief antagonist's version of the four days' debate, remembering that the Quaker's description is no more to be swallowed *holus-bolus* than Williams's propositions. Edmundson writes:

"One Roger Williams, an old priest and an enemy of truth, had put forth fourteen propositions (as he called them), which he would maintain against any of the Quakers that came from Old England, and challenged a dispute of seven of them at Newport and the other seven at Providence.

"I joined with Friends in the challenge. A great concourse of people of all sorts gathered. When those propositions came to be discoursed of they were all but slanders and accusations against the Quakers. The bitter old man could make nothing out, but on the contrary they were turned back upon himself; he was baffled, and the people saw his weakness, folly and envy against the truth and the Friends. There were many prejudiced Baptists would fain have helped the old priest against Friends, but they durst not undertake his charge against us, for they saw it was false and weak. So the testimony of truth in the power of God was set over all his false charges.

"When this meeting was ended, which lasted three days, John Stubbs and I went to Providence to hear the other seven propositions, which lasted one day. There was a very great gathering of people of both Presbyterians, Baptists and Ranters. Roger Williams being there, I stood up and told him in public we had spent so many days at Newport, where he could make out nothing agreeable to his challenge, but on the contrary manifested his clamour, rash and false accusations,

which he could not prove against us, that I was not willing to spend much time in hearing his clamour and false accusations, having other service for the Lord, therefore would only spend that day. So he went on as he had done at Newport. We answered to all his charges against Friends, and disproved them. The meeting, which proved a seasonable opportunity to open many things to the people appertaining to the Kingdom of God and way of eternal life and salvation, concluded in prayer to Almighty God, and the people went away satisfied and loving."

Needless to say, neither party convinced the other. Dr. Rufus Jones (influenced, possibly, by fraternal feeling) says the debate "seems to have won many new adherents to the Quaker faith; it certainly was felt to be a triumph by those already of the Quaker persuasion. Yet he is constrained to confess that "looked at calmly and critically from the point of view of our century it appears on both sides to be a tilting against windmills."

The two chief protagonists, although they just missed coming face to face, fought it out afterwards in print. Roger Williams published at Boston in 1676 a scathing attack upon the Quaker leader entitled, *George Fox digged out of his Burrowes*. This book, which Fox refers to as "a very envious and wicked book which Roger Williams, a priest of New England (or some colony thereabout) had written against truth and Friends," moved the Quaker prophet's soul in such a way that, while dwelling at Swarthmoor, he had to liberate his spirit by penning *A New England Firebrand Quenched*.

Dr. Thomas Hodgkin points out, in his *Life of Fox*, that "in Rhode Island the toleration conceded to the Friends was due to the wise counsel of that noble man who more than any other man deserves to be called the Apostle of Toleration." To Fox, says Dr. Hodgkin, Williams's book "probably seemed a very unscrupulous attack, and one that absolutely required a reply, but he could hardly have been aware how much the cause of religious freedom owed to Roger Williams and his Colony of Rhode Island, otherwise he would have spoken more respectfully of his antagonist."

The two books which record the "spiritual battle," comments Dr. Rufus Jones, "are full of antiquarian interest, but they are a melancholy monument of the bitterness of these seventeenth-century theological wars, and there is pitifully little in them—and apparently as little in the debate—which raises into permanent view the grace of saintiliness, the beauty of holiness, or the persuasive sweetness of the Divine Light in man."

HENRY J. COWELL.

Baptists in East Kent.

(*Continued from page* 92.)

At Hythe and Saltwood, Richard Hatton was teaching; at Folkestone [ ] Arthur,* with John Cheesman and Thomas Tunbridge. At Dover Richard Hobbs preached in a room at the south end of Samuel Taverner's house; also [ ] Milford * taught at Lawrence Knott's. Hobbs taught also at Guston and Lower Deal, where Joan Colemar offered her house; while Edmund Prescot used the houses of Thomas Partridge and Richard Barrow at Guston. Sandwich had a conventicle largely attended, and Minster a small one. Away to the west, George Howson's house at Herne was a centre, and to the south James Henry of Preston by Wingham had many adherents; perhaps he was the teacher at John Russell's house in Chislett. The Canterbury reports are mis-copied; it is certain that the meeting-place was on St. Mary, Northgate, and that Alexander Tritton taught there in 1669, Matthew Saunders in his own house in 1672, though this was then entered as "Norgame"; it is also certain that widow Sanders opened her house at Boughton Monchelsea over the hill; it is probable that the John Knott reported at the city in 1669 was a Baptist. At Chilham, George Nash was teacher. Wye had 50 or 60 meeting regularly in 1669, and they were in three groups by 1672, Thomas Glover, Norton Munden and John Jarman being teachers, at the houses of John Searles, George Hadlow and Michael Hadlow. They also had two houses at Ashford, belonging to George Hadlow and Agnes Young, where Benjamin Bowyer and [ ] Smallwood had been teaching in 1669.

We have equally detailed information about those on the Chatham road, on the Maidstone road, and round Cranbrook; but these formed other groups not closely connected with those of East Kent. As far as we can tell, nearly all the people and causes named above were General Baptists; the only doubtful case is the Canterbury group and Northgate, where we know the Particular Baptists met in 1715.

* From Baptist sources the name is spelt Auther. A late respected Messenger of Assembly had as his second Christian name Aurthur. This might be cleared up by inspection of parish registers.

† Probably another misreading; Fulford.

Sheldon was so dissatisfied with the actual administration of the new Conventicle act, that he instituted fresh enquiries in 1676, asking this time how many adult dissenters there were in each parish. The larger returns showed 25 at Hythe, 40 at Folkestone, 101 and 200 at Dover, 10 at Deal, 121 and 147 at Sandwich, 12 at Eythorn, 800 at Northgate in Canterbury, and 324 in Westgate. These of course were not all Baptists.

Persecution was renewed, and fresh leaders appear. George Hammon, who had worked further west, is now heard of from Canterbury, as holding meetings in the woods and making fun or making converts of the informers.*

In a second lull, Taverner carried out an organization into better-defined groups.† On the coast he arranged three churches: the group round Hythe and Folkestone looked to [ ] Auther and one of the Hadlows: he himself Richard Cannon and Thomas Partridge saw to Dover: those near Deal and Sandwich chose Henry Brown and Richard Slaughter [of Northbourne]‡ as Elders. The whole community agreed on an annual May meeting, which lasted till 1732.

The example was speedily followed by those a little further inland, and they grouped as Stelling, Eythorn, Wingham, Isle of Thanet. And at Canterbury Daniel Saffery and Thomas Beacham were ordained Elders, with Vincent Marsh, William Huggett and John Knott as Deacons.

Thus before 1681 closed, there were eight churches of the same faith, organized on the same lines that were now standard with General Baptists. All officers were unpaid, and there was a preference for two joint-Elders to watch over each church.

II. CONTACT WITH DENOMINATIONAL LIFE.

The General Baptists had elaborated a system whereby churches grouped in order to maintain evangelists, who were called, from 2 Corinthians viii. 23, "Messengers" of the churches. All the groups met annually, if possible, to consult their plans for the next year, and to deal with any matters which had arisen of general interest. At the end of Queen Anne's reign, a man of Kent named James Richardson had the happy idea of gathering up scattered records of such meetings, both for his own county and for the kingdom. The books he compiled were then handed over to the relevant bodies, and were continued as current minute-books in each case. They give us inner information for the next period.

* Ivimey; II., 221. † Taylor; I., 278.

‡ Cong. Hist. Soc. *Trans.*, V. 127.

In 1691 Canterbury was strong enough to spare one of her members, Nathanael Foxwell, to help the aged Grantham at Norwich: Francis Eastwicke of Hythe was at the meeting that arranged this. He was accompanied next year by Taverner, who registered the south end of his dwelling-house for the worship of his congregation.*

But in a year or two grave trouble arose owing to the views held by Matthew Caffin of Horsham as to the Trinity, and the peculiar person of Christ. Joseph Wright of Maidstone opposed him, and the atmosphere became so heated that most of the Kentish churches preferred to abstain from the meetings. There was a disruption in 1696, and Ashford was the only local church which took sides. To those who were clear as to the Deity of Christ, it sent its two elders, George Ellis and Henry Longley, with John Searles. And finding that one of its own members, Norton Jarman, held anti-Trinitarian views, it disowned him. Canterbury held aloof, but to its Elder, Daniel Saffery, it added as officers Samuel Ongley and Searles Jarman; the last-named evidently had something of Norton Jarman's views.

It will be observed that in these circles, a Christian name was often taken from another family. It is worth noticing that Sampson Pearce was another member at Ashford, and tracing the filiation of his name. Another Sampson Pearce was at Dover a century later, and Priscilla Peirce later still immortalized her name and her church and her denomination by her bequests for charity. Meanwhile Sampsons had been all over the district.

In 1704 peace was made between the rival conventions in London. The terms were signed by Joseph Green and William Spilstead for Hythe, Christopher Fulford for Deal, William* Knott and John Bush for Eythorn, Samuel Ongley for Canterbury; Parsons and Bush were also present from Faversham, with another Fulford and Daniel Hammon from Canterbury. But within five years there was a second disruption, when again the Kentish churches were divided. Most, however, adopted the laxer view, and after Eythorn, Canterbury, Dover, Boughton, and Hythe had once more sent to London, they ceased to attend at all, but found what they needed by organizing on 16 May, 1717, an Association for East Kent.

Meantime enquiries had been made by a Presbyterian minister in London as to the political strength of dissent, with

*Taylor; I. 350.

**William;* probably the son of Henry and Elizabeth, christened 20 October, 1642. There is no sign of any John Knott at this time. These names are on a broadside discovered by the Rev. A. S. Langley, F.R.Hist.S.

a view to the repeal of the penal laws. The information that filtered through from East Kent in 1715 showed as to the Baptists:—[William] Kennett of Folkestone, John and David Simpson of Dover, [ ] Fulford and [Stephen] Lacy of Deal, [James] Knott of Sandwich, Richard Godfrey of Thanet, Samuel Ongley, and Searles Jarman of Canterbury, [George] Ellis and Henry Longley of Ashford. There were also Samuel Newman and [ ] Linacre at North Gate, Canterbury, who represent the Particular Baptists, and therefore raise the question whether the North Gate group of 1669 and 1672 were of that type.

As church books become available now for both Eythorn and Thanet, we can trace separately the various streams into which the whole was parting.

III. THE CANTERBURY CHURCH.

In 1711 William Browning emerges as a representative of this church at a London assembly. His family was long identified with this cause, and from it eventually sprang the poet, Robert Browning. John Hobbs was another man of mark. Searles Jarman in 1721 was ordained Messenger, to superintend the work in Kent generally; but already the instinct to evangelize was dying fast, and Messengers were prone to continue in residence at one place, to compose difficulties in existing churches, to preside at meetings, to ordain Elders. Especially at Canterbury was it easy for the example of an Archbishop to infect the Messengers, and a protest rather later on that very line did not check the tendency.

Samuel Ongley bequeathed £300 to buy premises for a meeting-house, and another gift of £100 facilitated the scheme. Hitherto the church had evidently met in the private houses of its members. Now in 1236 the Dominicans had built a Friary, whose refectory bordered on the Stour. The buildings had been converted to other uses under Henry VIII, and in 1658 this block was acquired by one of the large Huguenot colony, Peter de la Pierre, a doctor. The Baptists purchased the premises, including a little garth, in 1732, and converted them into a meeting-house and burial-ground.

Then there came an important gathering in 1734 when Richard Drinkwater came from Chichester and Robert Mercer from Warbleton to preside as Messengers over a general reorganization. William Browning and Stephen Philpot were the local representatives, there being no Elder of Canterbury at the time. Hythe and Folkestone apparently did not send; we are aware of serious trouble there, disruption on doctrinal

grounds, and the rise of a Particular Baptist church. Dover sent its Elder, Robert Pyall, with John Prescott and John Sanders. Deal sent Stephen Lacy with Stephen Broadley. Thanet sent John Bush and Richard Chilton. Distant Tong sent John Pantry. Wingham sent Elder John Kingsford and John Ladd. Stelling sent Elder George Ash and William Mackney. Eythorn sent James Knott, restored as a member, but not Elder, for the meeting arranged that Eythorn should be supplied by John Kingsford and John Sanders.

After this display of energy, Canterbury seems to have fallen asleep. Except for two isolated mentions at Associations, it withdrew within itself. Richard Huggate went to Assembly in 1754, where Stephen Philpot joined him four years later. And the Philpot family proved to have plenty of vitality; Stephen himself took charge successively of Stelling, Dover, and Saffron Walden for more than fifty years; others ministered to various places in East Kent.

A turning point came in 1770, when once again a clear evangelical note was sounded, and all who believed in the gospel and in a vigorous preaching of the gospel, drew off from the old Assembly. Among them were James Fenn of Deal and Elder John Knott of Eythorn, the latter being one of a deputation to take formal leave. Canterbury however held by the organization, which declined to budge from the principle of General Redemption coupled with the Six Principles of Hebrews vi. Next year a young man of twenty-one was sent for the first time, Sampson Kingsford of Sturry. His family had been prominent at Wingham for a generation; and was destined to uphold the churches with money, men, and advice.

(*To be continued.*)

Eythorne: the Story of a Village Baptist Church, by Pastor A. C. Miller, 80 pages, 2s., Kingsgate Press.

This little work tells the story of a sturdy church which has been true to the gospel for 270 years, but has been in a variety of ecclesiastical relations. The writing of her history has prompted the article on the neighbouring churches in East Kent, elsewhere in our pages; for Eythorne is the mother or the grandmother of every live church around, while she is still vigorous and alive to changing needs.

On page 56 the last sentence about Charles W. Skemp should read:—He did excellent work in Iowa for 46 years, dying at Vinton in 1912.

"A White Life."

THERE are certain books which ought to find their way into every Baptist home: to the number of these we must now add Sir James Marchant's *Life of Dr. Clifford*. This biography has the conspicuous merit of relying on the actual sources, letters and diaries, and in this is clearly in line with the practice of Dr. Clifford himself. We remember how he amassed sheaves of information on every conceivable subject, ammunition for that spiritual warfare which he was ever conducting. "Be sure of your facts," he used to say, and in the spirit of that remark he displayed a never-failing interest in the work of the Baptist Historical Society. When the Baptist Union meetings were held in Leicester in 1922, he entered with youthful gaiety into the Society's excursion to the neighbouring Baptist churches of historic interest, and the present writer will never forget how, at place after place, Dr. Clifford drew upon his own first-hand knowledge of the Baptist movement. And because the best way to secure a clear knowledge of Baptist principles is by becoming familiar with Baptist history, we can confidently recommend this book to all who believe in freedom of expression and spiritual conviction.

Dr. Clifford lived through a very exciting and formative period of Baptist life. Most of us who form the younger battalions of the Baptist regiment began with the Baptist Church House as an acknowledged fact: to us, the Down grade controversy was a remote historic event: denominational organization as revealed in blessings like the Sustentation Fund was a welcome fact. And it is not easy for us to realize the spirit of the times, and the vigour of the men, who preceded our own day. Here, in Marchant's work, we have the story of the growth of our Baptist work. Dr. Clifford incorporated into himself those great nineteenth-century movements which have revolutionized our English life. The passion for social reform, the extension of the rights of the individual citizen, the progress of Biblical scholarship, the consolidation of our scattered forces; these, and many others, he represented, and it would be difficult for a Baptist to gain a better introduction to the period than is found in the study of Clifford's life. We venture to recom-

mend this use of Marchant's book. We believe that if such a book were to become the basis for study circles among our young people the effect would be most pronounced in a stronger emphasis on Baptist principles and in a full-voiced evangelicalism.

We have not space here to consider the numerous points of value which arise in the study of such a life, but reference may be made to one or two which appear to have a real bearing on life in our churches to-day. May we mention, to begin with, the dedication of the volume. "Dedicated to Westbourne Park Church, his first love and his last." The days of long ministries seem to be no longer with us. There are still in our denomination men whose work has been a life work, but, for the most part, the long pastorate seems to be the exception nowadays. Our age is more restless, we have caught the spirit of the Athenians of Paul's day, the spirit that is ever on the look-out for something new. The recrudescence of old cults, seen in our modern examples of spiritism and theosophy and Christian Science, is very significant, and indicates a certain temper which many of our congregations, and many of our ministers, have not escaped. On account of the changed conditions of modern life, we cannot lay down the old rule in regard to long pastorates: but we may at least point out the methods which made a long pastorate possible in Clifford's case. When Clifford commenced his ministry, he did not pitch his books into a corner, nor did he have the conscientious objection to examinations that we sometimes find to-day. He set out with the intention of keeping his armour bright, and he did not make the mistake of wearing a polished breastplate and leaving his *head* uncovered. Once more, long spells in the study did not keep Dr. Clifford out of the homes of his people. His people he knew by their names, children as well, and that is one reason, so his people say, why respect for "the Doctor" was combined with love. We might do far worse than ponder over this. In our denomination we have erected many altars called Committees, and many are the things that are sacrificed thereon.

There is, again, the vexed question of politics. This appears to be a matter that divides our ministers to-day. "Follow out the social implications of the Gospel wherever they lead," say some. "Avoid the parties," say others. Dr. Clifford always took his stand on high principles, and did not hesitate to declare his adherence to that party which, in his view, most completely expressed those principles. The question is a thorny one, and, say what we may, men will continue to mark out their course according to their predilec-

tions. But it is very significant that towards the end of his days Dr. Clifford set out upon the campaign of Personal Evangelism. He did not see, we may feel sure, any inherent conflict between such a campaign and what is commonly referred to as "the preaching of the social Gospel." But after a long life, spent for the most part in the heat and dust of the conflict, he was convinced that personal work, by the whole church, was the greatest need of all. There are some of us who regard this as his most valuable word to ourselves. There is, doubtless, a glamour about the ringing battles of the platform: there is a thrill about the fight in the open arena of politics: but for the work of the ministry, let us have the quiet personal work among the people whom we meet. For this, we have the highest precedent of all, that of Christ Himself.

It is not surprising that this note should be the last that Dr. Clifford sounded. Spirituality abounded in his ministry from first to last, and Sir James Marchant has made this clear: witness this extract from the diary: "Seventy years ago to-"day I was baptized. This is one of the great days of my "life. Every time it comes round my heart is filled with "gratitude for the grace that led me to the act of dedication. "It was a day when I accepted definitely a high ideal—the "highest possible—that of a white life. How abundant the "mercy of God to me in upholding me in that ideal through "all these years! How overflowing is His love! How full "His pardons! How comforting the assurance of His presence "to the end!"

"A white life." That was his ideal, and those who knew him best know how far the ideal was made actual. If Sir James Marchant had called his great work *The Book of a White Life* he would have summed up his subject without exaggeration. It is this that makes the book so suitable for our young men, both ministers and laymen. It is a work that is well done, excellently printed right down to its exhaustive index, and we hope that for many years to come young people may find in it a great inspiration. The next best thing to knowing Dr. Clifford is to read about him in this book.

PUBLIC PRAYER was the theme of an article in our pages by Mr. William Olney. It has been reprinted by Mr. Alexander McCay of Claremont Villa, Northland Road, Londonderry. Those who wish for a copy should send him twopence.