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# Prayer in the Life and Teaching of Jesus.

**I**N a brief word of introduction I want to define the scope and the limits of this paper. Its Theme is the Theory and Practice of Prayer in the Life and Teaching of Jesus. Everything that is written here will come within the scope of that title and will not go beyond it.

## THE PRACTICE OF JESUS.

One of the very obvious facts revealed by the Gospels is that Jesus frequently prayed. That is a fact worth observing. For while we have few records of what Jesus actually said in prayer, the fact that He engaged in it is an indication of the value He attached to it. From some private points of view it is unfortunate that the Gospels are only a record of the memorabilia of Jesus, and not standard biographies. But we must work under such limitations.

It is interesting to notice the numerous occasions on which the Gospels declare that Jesus prayed. By collecting those references and re-arranging them it is possible to arrive at some conclusions about Christ's Practice of Prayer. The methods adopted by Jesus were infinitely varied as to time and place. He prayed early in the morning and late at night, sometimes continuing in prayer through all the watches of the night. At times He prayed in solitude on the mountains or in the wilderness; while at other times He prayed before His disciples. His methods were varied.

On several occasions His prayers took the form of public thanksgiving. Once he offered thanks because God had hidden His Truth from the wise and prudent and had revealed it to babes. There is no attempt to justify this fact. All He does is to render thanks for it and to say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." On another occasion just prior to His feeding of the five thousand we are told that Jesus took the loaves and gave thanks. And in the story of the Last Supper, which is recorded by all the synoptic writers, Jesus gave thanks for the bread and the cup. Thanksgiving was certainly part of His Prayer Life.

Moreover all the big moments of His life were associated with prayer. Thus, for example, we are told that He prayed at His Baptism and Transfiguration. He prayed at the grave of Lazarus before raising him from the dead, and on the occasion of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. He prayed in the

Garden of Gethsemane and at last when He found Himself upon the Cross. In the big moments He prayed.

Another fact made clear by the Gospels is that when virtue had gone out of Him Jesus prayed. We are told He did so after a strenuous evening spent in healing the sick; after cleansing the leper; after healing the man with the withered hand; and after feeding the five thousand. The performance of such tasks means the expenditure of spiritual forces and a consequent need for renewal. Jesus found that renewal of strength in prayer.

There were times when He prayed for special individuals. For Peter in his impending denial of the Master, and for the disciples that they might receive the Comforter. Evidently His prayers for individuals were highly valued and trusted. Something of that faith in the efficacy of His prayers was revealed by Martha just before He raised Lazarus from the dead.

But the most striking fact about the Gospel records is their comparative silence about the subject matter of Christ's prayers. There is a valuable deduction we can make from this. It is that in the life of Jesus, prayer was not necessarily His asking for something. The only feasible explanation of these morning solitudes and midnight watches—and surely they were more numerous than the records tell—is that to Jesus, prayer meant primarily an opportunity for communion with God. It brought a time of fellowship, and the fellowship may have been just as intimate in silence as in speech. Praise and thanksgiving and silent adoration constitute prayer just as much as actual petition does. If we have grasped this truth we have at least got rid of the idea that Prayer can be dispensed with. Prayer is communion with God. It is essential for soul culture. It is forced upon us by a great human instinct. The practice of Jesus will teach us that.

#### THE PRAYERS OF JESUS.

The recorded prayers of Jesus are few in number but of great importance. They cannot be ignored in any attempt to state the teaching of the Gospels about prayer. In the four Gospels the recorded prayers of Jesus are of four types.

(1) First of all there are the *Prayers of Thanksgiving*. The first is recorded in Matthew xi., and in Luke x. 21. Here is Jesus confronted by a mystery that meets us all. Somehow, according to the arrangements of Providence, spiritual Truth is more clearly discerned at times by those very people whom we should imagine lacked qualification. There is an inscrutable mystery about it all. Jesus recognizes that, but He gives thanks for the mysterious arrangements of an all wise Providence. It is an attitude of mind that is well worth cultivat-

ing towards most of the mysteries of this life. To Jesus even mystery affords an opportunity for the giving of thanks. The second recorded Prayer of Thanksgiving is in John xi. 41-42. Jesus is about to restore Lazarus from the dead, and, feeling that big issues are involved, He offers prayer. But, contrary to our expectation, it is a Prayer of Thanksgiving, not of petition. It is a prayer dictated by a triumphant faith, the faith that attempts big things and expects to see them done. Since this work is for the glory of God, why not be assured of it and give thanks in advance. If such a faith were ours it might conceivably alter the nature of many of our prayers. A mystery and a venture of faith prompt Christ to thanksgiving in prayer.

(2) Next we turn to Christ's *Prayers for His Disciples*, and here the Master's Prayers definitely assume the form of petition. There are three such prayers recorded in the Gospels.

The first is for Peter who will soon have to endure a severe trial. Jesus sees it coming and He prays for His disciple, that he may surmount the trial. There is no desire expressed that Peter may be delivered from the necessity of enduring the test. The prayer only desires that strength be given him for it. (Luke xxii. 32.) The second prayer is in John xiv. 16, 17. What Jesus is thinking of is the need of the disciples in their future service. His prayer has for its chief end the supplying of those needs.

The other petitions for the disciples are all found in John xvii. There Jesus prays that His followers may be kept from the world's evil and sanctified through the word of truth. He prays that all who believe may be one, that the world may believe; and that at last those who believe may be with Him to behold His glory. Behind all these petitions for the disciples lies a passion for the Kingdom of God. The needs of the disciples are related to the needs of the Kingdom; "That the world may believe"; "That they may behold My glory."

(3) In the Gospels there is one of Christ's *Prayers for His Enemies* (Luke xxiv. 34). When He was dying on the Cross, He even thought of the needs of those who were putting Him to death. He prayed that they might be forgiven. It is Christian Prayer at its best. There is no prostitution of prayer to selfish ends. It is again related to the Kingdom of God.

(4) Finally, there are Christ's *Prayers for Himself*. There is one prayer which Jesus refused to offer when He was at last taken prisoner. He could have prayed for legions of angels. But the prayer was never offered. Jesus refused to pray for a life of personal ease, void of suffering. Again it was the Kingdom of God that mattered. Even personal desires must be subjected to it. The first duty is to know the will of God.

There were two occasions when Jesus offered prayers which might challenge the Will of God. The first was when He made His entry to Jerusalem (John xii. 27). The second was in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew xxvii. 39). On both occasions He uttered a petition which might not be in keeping with God's will, but in the end confessed Himself ready for that will. Again the needs of the Kingdom became His chief concern. The same passion for the Kingdom reveals itself in the personal petitions recorded in John xvii. Everywhere in that prayer is the consciousness of the Kingdom and all its varied petitions have their definite relation to the Kingdom.

On the Cross it seemed that for one brief moment Jesus lost His consciousness of God, when in agony He cried, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But in the end the old conviction returned, that everything was in the hands of God, and once more peace returns to the spirit of Christ; "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

The only possible conclusion you can reach when you have studied the recorded prayers of Jesus, is that Christ prayed chiefly for the doing of God's will. He prayed that it might be done in and through Himself and His disciples. It is the highest level to which prayer can rise. When the prayers of Jesus passed from praise to petition they ended on this note, "Thy will be done."

#### THE TEACHING OF JESUS.

##### (A) THE SUBJECT MATTER OF OUR PRAYERS.

What Jesus taught His disciples to pray for is contained in The Pattern Prayer, commonly called "The Lords Prayer." Everything Jesus had to say on this subject is there. In such passages as Luke xxi. 36; Mark xiii. 33; Mark xiii. 18; Matthew xxix. 20, it would seem that the word "pray" is used in a purely conversational way. There are other passages such as Matthew ix. 38; Matthew v. 44; Mark xiv. 38, and their parallels in the other Gospels which can all be grouped under the petitions of The Pattern Prayer.

In the Lord's Prayer (Matthew vi. 9-13) there are seven definite requests, which though not exhaustive are intended to be our pattern. The first three requests are all concerned with God. They seek the hallowing of God's name, the coming of God's Kingdom, and the doing of God's will on earth.

The last four requests are concerned with ourselves, but each one is social. The Prayers for daily bread, and forgiveness, and the avoidance of temptation, and deliverance from evil, can only be understood in a social context. Therefore they are really prayers for the coming of God's Kingdom.

According to the Teaching of Jesus, the Kingdom should be the burden of our requests in prayer. There is no sanction for purely selfish desires, except where these are related to the Kingdom and its needs. Many such requests are bound to arise. We cannot avoid being personal in prayer. But detached desires and purely selfish motives are quite unauthorised. God makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and is kind to the unthankful also. To make the Kingdom the standard is to allow a sufficient latitude in prayer, even for foolishness. If earthly parents know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him. Your Father knoweth what things ye need have of. Individual desires may not be for the advancement of the Kingdom nor for our own good, and must end as the Master has taught us they should, "Not my will but Thine be done."

#### (B) THE SPIRIT OF OUR PRAYERS.

Jesus has a good deal to say about the spirit of our prayers. His teaching in this respect can be grouped with a fair degree of success and without doing violence to His teaching.

(1) The first great essential is sincerity. If any prayer is to be sincere there must be a sincere life behind it. When Jesus denounced the Pharisees for making long prayers and devouring widows' houses, He is condemning insincerity in prayer. These men love to pray at street corners and in synagogues, to be seen of men. Jesus would have His disciples pray in secret. When He cleansed the temple, He declared that you cannot run a House of Prayer and a Den of Robbers at the same time. If you pray for forgiveness you must also forgive. The insincerity of the Pharisee and the humility of the publican are the two possible attitudes, and we know which merited the approval of the Master. The rich man's prayer in Hell is unanswered because he failed to use opportunities that were given. All this leads us to understand that the underlying motive of a life creates the value of the prayer. Only if the living is sincere can the prayer be sincere. Therefore the inner ethic of prayer is just as severe as any that was ever enunciated by the great Teacher from the mountain top.

(2) The second essential is Persistence. The ministry of Prayer is a strenuous one. The very way in which Jesus united Prayer and Fasting indicates that. Your prayer like your fasting must cost you something. It must involve sacrifice. Prayer is not the easy thing that some of us imagine. In prayer Jesus sweat great drops of blood. Prayer will prevail because of its importunity. The parables of the Importunate Friend and the

Unjust Judge, emphasize that men ought always to pray and not to faint. The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force. Prayer is neither vain repetition nor much speaking. It is the expenditure of your life's blood. It creates a passion in life and demands from us in service and sacrifice, the very utmost we have to give.

(3) The third essential is Faith, which certainly does not mean that our little personal desires will be answered as we think they ought to be. Divorce some passages from their context or separate them from the whole of the teaching of Jesus, and they will seem to indicate that we can pray for anything. Such passages as John xiv. 13; xv. 7; xvi. 23: xvi. 26, have all conditional phrases. Everything we desire may not be for God's glory; nor may it be the product of our abiding in Christ; nor may it always be asked in Christ's name. Mark xi. 23-24, with its parallel in Matthew is a very difficult passage. But from what we already know of Jesus and His Teaching, we cannot understand that passage to mean that every little whim will be satisfied by a supernatural visitation that will remove mountains. It is but an illustration, an encouragement to have faith in prayer as Christ taught men to pray. Matthew xviii. and xix. is related to the passage where Christ speaks of the Church and her function. The Church exercises her function for the Kingdom. All Christ has to say about ordinary desires is that your Father knoweth ye have need of them. The injunction is to seek first the Kingdom and the other things are added. Faith in Christian prayer is a belief in the goodness of God and the final triumph of the cause of righteousness. It is when our faith is of that quality that we ask and receive. Jesus does not speak of an answer to prayer, He speaks of a Reward; and there is a difference.

#### A SUMMARY.

And now we must try to summarize the points we have made, so that some clear impression may be left upon our minds.

From our study of the Life of Jesus we have discovered that the frequency with which He prayed revealed the value He attached to Prayer as Communion with God. That conception of Prayer made it an essential for the human soul.

Petition, however, is bound to be an element of all true prayer. The end Jesus always had in view when He presented petitions was the doing of God's will and the coming of God's Kingdom.

His Teaching on the subject matter of the Disciples' Prayer, is that the validity of individual requests depends upon their rela-

tion to the needs of the Kingdom. And the essential characteristics of true prayer are sincerity and persistence and faith.

Prayer first involves Communion with God, and only afterwards Petition. With the teaching of Jesus before us we can be dogmatic about this; that petition is for the Kingdom of God, and only for personal desires as these affect the Kingdom. A study of this whole theme makes one feel that the disciples have great need to bow themselves in the Master's presence, asking Him again and again as the first disciples did, "Lord, teach us to pray."

R. GUY RAMSAY.

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THE OLNEY CHURCH is investigating its early history. It knows that John Gibbs was preaching there before 1669, that in 1672 a friend of Bunyan was preaching in the barn of William Henseman, that members of Rothwell church in Olney formed a Pedobaptist church in 1691 (the Lower Meeting), of which Henseman was Elder, that Gibbs formed in 1694 an open-membership church which built itself the Upper Meeting, that Matthias Maurice became its pastor in 1699, but the church split and he went next year to the Lower Meeting, then on to Rothwell. For the next fifty years the thread is lost, but there are these beads, which may have fallen off. In 1711 Joseph Palmer was preaching here, who four years later was at Road; in 1713 John Chater, formerly of Bradfield, attended hence at College Street; in 1716 there was dissension, no soul-food; in 1718 there were two sections, one headed by Williamson; in 1720 John Castor was buried here; perhaps Charles Rodgers, till at the end of 1721 he settled at Northampton Green; in 1733 he baptized Mary Allsop of Olney in her 89th year; in 1738 several members joined from Walgrave, and Moses Deacon re-formed them as a Strict church; in 1741 Francis Walker settled, from Prince's Risborough; in 1748 he died; another Rogers appears 1749-52, succeeded about 1754 by W. Walker, of Rushden or Northampton Green. Thenceforward there are documents. The church will appreciate any information as to the people named, or anything to elucidate the half-century.



## St. Francis—His Meaning for our Day.

FRANCIS of Assisi is not well used unless we regard him as a disturbing challenge to our day. The great basilica which encloses and towers above his much loved little church of St. Damian is a symbol of the habit we have of smothering the saints in adulation, and at the same time politely removing them from the sphere of practical affairs. A real saint is to be honoured as a path-finder, not as a relic. The saints, like their Master, see not only the realities which transcend our life, they see straighter and farther into life. The saints are the practical men and women of the world. They are as sensible as they are holy. Their peculiar position arises from the fact that they never lose sight of the truth that men can never be at home in the universe until they are perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect.

We make a moral world of our own which revolves, not without jolts and jars, around a dim sun of earth-born ideals, and when someone arrives whose life owns another centre, there is collision, and the intruder is regarded as a dangerous person. These collisions are the judgment of the world. Jesus and such disciples of His as Paul and Francis, and a host of lesser stars, have all been at war with the world and hopelessly misunderstood by it, because they had adjusted their lives to the central reality—they were moved by God, not by the world. Such men are either startlingly in the right or they are, at close quarters, dangerous, and at distance but interesting freaks. People read the "Little Flowers of St. Francis" in Florence in Savonarola's time as they lounged in the afternoon, and later in the day made nonsense of all his ideals in their orgies. The chief priests and scribes did Christ the honour of taking Him seriously. This was the honour Francis paid to Christ in another fashion. He could not rest in a diluted Christianity. His life is an abiding protest not only against evil things, but also against Christian civilization, splendid as are many of its achievements. Francis was a Fundamentalist in the noblest sense, since he accepted Christ's words literally, as far as he himself was concerned.

He was far too sensible to suppose that everybody could be a Franciscan, and so he founded the Third Order composed of people with family and business obligations who took the vow of simple living and lavish giving. A numerous Order on this basis would be a great boon in our day.

Francis points to the necessity for our world of some men and

women who are, shall we say, excessive in the grace of the renunciation. Francis and his friends denounced Property, Liberty, Love, that the world might be more truly prosperous; that men might taste real liberty; that the springs of human love might well up clear and fresh once more.

This passion of renunciation is as necessary a response to modern needs as it was in the 13th century, however different its actual expression.

There is a remarkable consent over a very wide and varied field that the little poor man of Assisi has a meaning for our day. The passing of seven centuries has left him a relevant and challenging figure.

His career, so fruitful in result, began in a radical conversion. Nothing makes God so real to us as to witness a complete change of direction in a human life.

After long travail Francis broke through the veil which hides the blessed life from men. It was with him as with Fox the Quaker, no man was able to minister to his condition. He was a true mystic in that no shadow of borrowed experience interfered in his lonely struggle with his Divine antagonist and confused the issue in his soul. His experience illustrates the truth that nothing of abiding value can be wrought in action which has not been first wrought by God in a man's own soul. He had a noble dread of being a purveyor of other men's goods. An echo he could not be, he must be a voice or not be heard at all.

He realised that the world could not be saved by mere activity. His lovely deeds, his daring ventures in compassion were born in his heart as he gazed on Christ and took counsel with Him in lonely mountain caves or in the quiet of an empty church. The only property he ever possessed was a solitary mountain given him by a discerning nobleman, and it was there he received the marks of the Lord Jesus branded in his spirit, and it may be on his body too. Nothing of real moment happens in society which has not first happened in the soul of a man.

Francis can only be explained by a conversion, complete, capable of being tested at every point, an experience of the reality of Jesus constantly renewed and growing in intensity to the end of his life. Has this no meaning for our day? Our reforming zeal can rise no higher in its ultimate result than the level of its original inspiration.

We enquire: What were the values which emerged from this conversion? What did Christ say to Francis? We should approach such an enquiry with awe, since it is rarely that such clear speech from heaven is heard by men.

We would say that Christ himself was ever the supreme value for Francis. He could not have loved erring men so well had he not loved the peerless Christ more. To reproduce Jesus was an aching hunger in his heart. There was one outward feature of the Saviour's life which stood out in such high relief as almost to assume the attributes of personality.

It was the Saviour's poverty. The Lady Poverty Francis spoke of as his pure and lovely Bride. She may seem to most of us a somewhat forbidding life companion. It is not easy to speak of this ideal of Francis and his friends and not fail to be unreal. But I suggest that in that choice of Poverty and the clear gains won from it, we hold a master key for our modern troubles. Francis would call down no blessings on the poverty which in our modern world strangles the best life in so many people. He went about trying to make the poor less poor. But for himself what we dread so much he embraced as a bride. This we must remember was his choice, not his fate. From the day that he turned his back on his old life of plenty and pleasure and clothing himself in a peasant's brown tunic tied around with an odd piece of rope, went out without even the certain prospect of a meal, he became a happy man. The rich young man who had sold all his possessions went away singing with his Bride. That was a turning point in human history, as Carlyle says of that hour when George Fox made for himself a suit of leather.

There can be no doubt that this voluntary poverty gave to Francis a pure happiness, a release of higher powers, a cleansing of the senses and a mighty leverage for service. His choice of poverty was a piece of inspired policy though, probably, not consciously conceived as such.

The world he and his friends were to serve must have nothing by which it could hold them. The servant must be free. Wealth and influence has its glories of service, as Francis recognised, but poverty has greater glories. We could not bear to think of Jesus as a man of property. He became poor and died poor. The happiness and usefulness of these inspired paupers shames the meagre returns of our money-bought joys.

Can we hope to solve the problems of our time while rich and poor alike hold it as their real working faith that well-being can be bought with money? No raising of the level here or depressing it there can bring peace while this faith holds the field.

Another new value Francis gained by his conversion was a passionate interest in the most hopeless and worthless of men. His pity had no boundaries. He extended the borders of compassion to a point that may appear dangerous. And yet his was

no weak pity. Within his own family of brothers he could be terribly severe. Against malice in speech, against the slightest hint of sensual desire; against any breach in the vow of poverty his anger was terrifying. But for the lost sheep he had nothing but compassion. He was not a denouncer of abuses—a very easy and often quite secure occupation. He lived too deep to attack symptoms and results, he was concerned with the roots of conduct. He is singularly free from the critical temper. The Church of his day offered a wide target to the critic, but he was very loyal to it. He was not, it is true, a great Churchman, he was too great a Christian to win that title, honourable as it may be. He never became a priest, and one feels no order of ministry to-day could contain him.

He made no attack on the rich as such. It was not in him to lead a campaign against any body of people. He was too humble for the denouncer's trade.

He had a peculiar fondness for lepers and robbers. Francis felt that nice people would not lack spiritual guides. The people who were not nice might not fare so well. One wonders what he would say about the retreat of our Baptist Churches to the suburbs. The most serious charge made against "Protestants" by our Anglo-Catholic friends is that they have deserted the poor. The new Francis gravitated toward the broken and wayward.

And then, Francis emerged from his conversion a real democrat, a rare type away from platforms and books. He was free from envy and scorn, and was entirely delivered from any sense of status. He discovered in Christ the secret of good manners, a most precious secret, since, as Mr. Chesterton points out, Christian democracy implies an equal civility to all. Francis respected everybody. He was courteous not only to men, but to all things, animate and inanimate. He had such a fine sense of the value of the individual that he could not think of people in crowds and would not lead a crowd. He gave up the leadership of the Brothers Minor in obedience to this instinct.

More of the trouble of our day than we know arises, one feels, from the lack of this sense of the value of the individual and the consequent lack of that respect and courtesy each man owes to his fellows.

Francis achieved democracy in his heart when he saw every man involved in a common tragedy and the heir of a common possibility.

There is much of which we can speak but in a word. His fear of learning, for example. He was afraid lest his men might become scholars. A strange fear, but not groundless. The world

has suffered much from its clever men as well as from its strong men.

He was anxious that the little Brothers should not win praise and honour by merely reciting the deeds and wisdom of other men. This daring prohibition was made in the interests of originality and humility.

His fear of a popular reputation was not less strong. He recoiled from the possibility of gaining a name for holiness or eloquence. He felt that no servant of Christ was quite safe who depended upon the approval of the public, even the Christian public. And so his friends were forbidden to build great churches or even to preach to great gatherings of the elect. They might sweep out these churches very usefully for the comfort of others, he suggested, but they must deny themselves the thrill of the preacher as he witnesses the throng of eager people hanging on his words. Let them preach to the unwilling, there would be no lack of men to preach to the willing. The Brothers Minor were forbidden to have a career, as we understand it. They must not present even a thread by which the world could hold them and say, "You are mine." The desire for influence, even holy influence, would present more than a thread, he felt.

These prohibitions of Francis should be earnestly considered by those of us who have adopted the most spiritually perilous of all callings.

To sum up and conclude. It seems that Francis thought of his life as a palimpsest, or a canvas upon which one portrait had been painted over another. Francis was the inferior manuscript, Francis was the upper portrait of slight worth, Christ was the perfect Truth, the perfect Beauty men needed so much to see and understand.

Until the inferior writing, the poor human form was removed, the Word and the Form of the Master was hidden from men.

"He that loseth his life shall save it," and many others with him.

HAROLD W. BATSTONE.

To defend London against Charles I. in the spring of 1643, a moat was run through the marshes from Lambeth to Deptford, and on the north "by digging very deepe Trenches and Ditches to be filled with waters from the New River and the River of Lee which runs by Bow, wherein the new Elect rebaptize themselves, and call it by the name of Jordan."

*Mercurius Aulicus*, 10 March, 1642/3.

## Baxter's Work.

RICHARD BAXTER was a Puritan, a puritan in the sense that he believed in private judgment in matters of religion, in individual responsibility, and in the absolute necessity for individual righteousness. Baxter's Kidderminster ministry gave him scope for the work of his puritan soul; here he did what he believed was most worth doing—he cared for souls. At Kidderminster Richard Baxter laboured for the conversion and for the all-round uplift of all who came under his care. He had the soul of a Quaker, although to have told him so would have made his hair stand on end. Nevertheless the fire which burned in Baxter's heart was the same that burned in the heart of Fox. But whereas Fox was *all* fiery soul, Baxter was fiery soul controlled by a very cool head.

Richard Baxter loved the church; he was deeply impressed by the idea of *continuity* in the Church, and did not like to feel that he was cut off from the main stream of Church life. He was very impatient with his Independent and Anabaptist brethren, who could not see the need for the Church and Church government as he saw it. Yet he could not accept Presbyterianism; "odious name," he said. He saw the likelihood of Presbyterianism becoming another Infallible, and he hated Infallibilities; not seeing that he had one of his own to offer. Baxter tried to do what we have not yet succeeded in doing—he tried to pour the puritan spirit into one mould. He had cast off the Roman Church, but he could not cast off the English Church, he ardently believed in it; he believed in it as he believed in Monarchy. And yet he was to become a great non-conformist; and his life work was to stand with the Parliament against the King.

Richard Baxter wanted a Primitive Episcopacy, with a bishop in every parish, organised on Presbyterian lines. His chief reason against diocesan episcopacy was that no one should be responsible for the discipline of more than one parish and the serving of one congregation. Discipline was to be the beginning and the end of his system of Church government. He did not see that the laity might be more priest-ridden than ever with a bishop in every parish. Nor did he see how contrary it was to the English character.

Here tulips grow as they are told;  
Unkempt about those hedges blows  
An English unofficial rose.

Charles and Laud were forcing the situation for the divine right of kings, and the supremacy of the Church of England in

religion. Charles and Laud would have created another Infallible. England, however, had got rid of the Roman Church, and was not in a mind for any other Infallible: Laudian, Presbyterian, or Baxterian. The unthinking mass of the people still loved the old forms of the Roman worship, and while content that Rome should lose her power, was desirous that she should continue her performances. The attempts from the time of Edward VI to Elizabeth, by Acts of Conformity, to make all people obey one system of Church government and one form of Church worship, had failed. The "First-hand Experience" of God, which is the contribution to religious thought of both the Old Testament and the New, which comes through Church History always clearly to be traced, which kept an anti-sacerdotal witness in Europe through the Waldenses in the 12th century, the Brotherhood Groups in the 13th century, the Friends of God in the 14th century, and in England through Wycliff, and the Lollards, and the Anabaptists; culminated in the 17th century in almost a riot of private judgment and at the same time in an outburst of a great religious temper that fought for and won the rights of civil and religious freedom.

Baron Von Hügel begins one of his lectures by saying that "Protestantism, as such, has always been fissiparous—a spirit or principle or doctrine prolific, among other things, of divisions down almost to so many individual minds." It seems to me that it is not Protestantism only, but Christianity that is "fissiparous." The right appreciation of Christian truth will break up every attempt to impose one single system upon the life of the soul, and its final grandeur is that it makes the individual mind independent—it sets men free. The Roman Church achieved its world supremacy only to find itself incapable of satisfying the inner, spiritual life; and only saved its own life by becoming "fissiparous." The acute Machiavelli, in his discourse on Livy, says, "all religions must be again and again rejuvenated by a return to their original principle. Christianity would have become entirely extinct had not St. Francis and St. Dominic renewed its life and kindled it afresh in the hearts of men by their imitation of Jesus Christ. They saved religion, but they destroyed the Church."

Baxter, with the soul of a Quaker, had the mind of an ecclesiastic; and he badly wanted a system that would fit all. Baxter never found ecclesiastical rest, nor can anyone else with such livingness of soul as Baxter possessed. Ecclesiastical rest can only come to those who are absolutely certain that they have found the last word in Church government, or to those who either sleep or are at the beginning of sleep; and Richard Baxter was ever wide awake, and certainly could not rest his soul in the

assurance that ultimate perfection had been reached in the matter of Church government. Baxter kept his puritanism, and so manifested the power of the puritan soul that it abides with us to-day; but he entirely failed either to create a form of Church government, or a form of worship that was acceptable to all.

Baxter the disciplinarian, who fought side by side with his "fissiparous" brethren of the spirit, was a nonconformist because he would not consent to have imposed upon himself another's form of government and worship. Whether he would have refused to impose upon others the system in which he believed is not known. His Anabaptist brethren would have refused, his Independent brethren would have said "partly yes and partly no," while his Presbyterian brethren would have imposed their will with thoroughness.

Baxter was a mystic with a too fond use of the reason. He was deeply religious, and he sorely desired to conform to the Church all his days, but his intelligence would not let him. He was an intellectualist with his soul bathed in heaven. No one fought more valiantly for the puritan faith, or more faithfully followed the light that was in him; which was sometimes darkness. After the Savoy Conference, in which Baxter was the champion against the Bishops, there followed bitter humiliation and suffering, in which Baxter was always a great-souled Christian.

In 1662, the operation of the "Act of Uniformity" shut the doors of the Church of England against all who would not accept its doctrine, its liturgy, and its worship; and from that day Puritanism became Nonconformity. Baxter failed nobly, although he did not always see that the true Church is the invisible host whose faces are turned Godwards in the faith and love of Jesus Christ the Lord. With a vision wider than of any one party, he yet found it difficult to accept those who had no place in some settled scheme. Baxter was finely Catholic in his sympathies, and at times he saw in distant vision the Church as wide as Christianity. He failed, however, because no human hands can fashion the one complete wine-skin that would hold the exceeding rich and abundant wine that flows from the heavenly vineyard.

Richard Baxter was a great minister of the Gospel. His ministry at Kidderminster lifted up a standard of faithful pastoral labours that has never been excelled. Kidderminster was his parish, and within the bounds of his town every concern of his people was his own.

"Besides all this I was forced five or six years, by the people's necessity to practise physic. A common pleurisy



happened one year, and no physician being near, I was forced to advise them, and to save their lives; and I could not afterwards avoid the importunity of the town and country round about. And because I never once took a penny of anyone, I was crowded with patients, so that almost twenty would be at my door at once; and though God, by more success than I expected, so long encouraged me, yet at last I could endure it no longer, partly because it hindered my other studies, and partly because the very fear of miscarrying and doing anyone harm did make it an intolerable burden to me. So that after some years' practice I procured a godly, diligent physician to come and live in the town, and bound myself by promise to practise no more (unless in consultation with him in case of any seeming necessity). And so with that answer I turned them all off and never meddled with it more."

Baxter possessed a fine prudence and a steady patience in practical affairs, combined with a burning zeal that never died down. His own bodily weakness was no hindrance to what seemed to be super-human labours, and served to reflect more brightly the splendid sympathy and constant love of his labours. This was the work he most loved. He writes: "Thus was I brought by the gracious providence of God to that place which had the chiefest of my labours, and yielded me the greatest fruits of comfort." It was a source of satisfaction to Baxter that his people were not a sermon-proof people. The abandoned folk all around were much more likely to respond than "if they had been hardened under a powerful ministry."

Baxter's catalogue of advantages in his ministry makes interesting reading. We should expect "unity and concord" to be an advantage, and can enjoy the minister's relish in his united church. "We had not pastor against pastor, nor church against church, nor sect against sect, nor Christian against Christian. We were all of one mind and mouth, and way. Not a Separatist, Anabaptist, Antinomian in the town." He found it an advantage that his neighbours "were of such a trade as allowed them time enough to read or talk of holy things." Then he was pleased to say that his people were not rich. "Another help to my success was that my people were not rich." The very "quality of the sinners" turned out to his advantage, for they made the sin of drunkenness so "bestly and ridiculous" as to make the sin the more abhorred. He knew the advantages of a long ministry in one place. "And it furthered my success that I stayed still in this one place (near two years before the wars and above fourteen years after)."

Richard Baxter was a great brother-minister in the Gospel.

He formed an association of ministers in his own neighbourhood, for the discussion of religious questions and for the promoting of mutual understanding and goodwill. His books are burdened with anxiety for the fulfilling of the ministry.

"Do not think that all your work is in your studies, and in the pulpit. I confess that it is great; but, alas! it is but a small part of your task. You are shepherds, and you must know every sheep, and what is their disease, and mark their straying, and help to cure them, and fetch them home."

"O be not asleep while the wolf is waking! Let your eye be quick in observing the dangers and strayings of your people. If jealousies, heart-burning, or contentions arise among them, quench them before they break out into raging, irresistible flames."

An oft-repeated exhortation needed in every generation is :

"Surely, brethren we have a great cause to take heed what we do, as well as what we say. A practical doctrine must be practically preached. We must study as hard how to live well as how to preach well."

I am one of those ministers who very much dislike to hear the altogether too-common condemnation of deacons at our ministers' meetings, and would gladly know that it was ended. It would be far more profitable to deal faithfully with our own faults; and *weakness* is a common ministerial fault.

"In order to preserve the Church, it is desirous that the minister be so far superior to the people as to be able to teach them, and to keep them in awe; and manifest their weakness to themselves and to others. The truth is, a truth which cannot be hid, it is much owing to the weakness of ministers that our poor people run into so many factions. When a proud seducer has a nimble tongue, and a minister is so dull or ignorant as to be confounded in his company, it brings him into contempt."

We need to heed such words as the following :

"If ministers would faithfully and humbly lay themselves for Christ and His Church without thinking of titles and reputation, they would have honour whether they would or not; whereas by gaping after it they lose it. Consider that you have many privileges belonging to your office. It is no small thing that you are maintained by other men's labours. This is for your work, that you may not be taken from it—either do the work, or take not the maintenance."

Baxter has always something good to say to the preacher :

“Noise without seriousness and pertinent matter, is like gunpowder without bullets, that causeth sound, and no execution. And the weightiest matter without clear explication and lively application, is like bullets without powder. If you will throw cannon bullets at the enemy with your hands, they will sooner fall on your feet than on them.”

“A sermon full of mere words, how neatly soever it is composed, while there is wanting the light of evidence, and the life of zeal, is but an image, or a well-dressed carcass. In preaching, there is intended a communion of souls, and a communication of something from ours unto theirs. As we and they have understandings, and wills, and affections, so must the best of our endeavours be to communicate the fullest light of evidence from our understandings unto theirs; and to warm their hearts by kindling them in holy affections, as by a communication to theirs. The great things which we have to commend to our hearers have reason enough on our side, and lie plain before them in the Word of God. We should therefore be so furnished with all store of evidence, as to come as with a torrent upon their understandings, and bear down all before us, and with our dilemmas and expostulations to bring them to a non-plus, and pour our shame upon all their vain objections, that they may be forced to yield to the power of Truth, and see that it is great, and will prevail.”

Lest those who are young in the ministry should think that all the advantage is with the “splendid young days,” it might correct to read a few of Baxter’s words on advantages in being no longer young. He says of himself when he was young :

“I was more vigorous—my style was extempore and lax; but by a moving voice and utterance, my preaching had more effect. But I was raw, there were passages that would not bear trial of accurate judgment—there was less substance and less judgment. My understanding was then quicker; since it has become better furnished. Then I had the faculty of knowing, but I did not actually know. When I peruse the writing which I wrote in my younger years, I can find the footsteps of my unfurnished mind.”

Mr. Lloyd Thomas, in the Introduction to his book *The Autobiography of Richard Baxter*, provides me with words with which I may fittingly close. “The writer of this Introduction may be indulged the expression of his own judgment that he is the most vital and significant witness of his own age to ours, and that he has not yet, though there are many signs of awaking interest, come to his own.”

W. H. HADEN.

# The Centenary of the Baptist Building Fund.

## VII. DR. NEWMAN'S LOAN FUND.

WAS the new scheme original? Did it have its source in the mind of William Bowser? Or, did he adapt and popularize an earlier abortive plan? The latter is possible, as a somewhat similar proposal was placed before the Baptist Union at its Annual Assembly held in Carter Lane Church, at eight o'clock in the morning on Thursday, 26th June, 1817. The proposal was contained in a letter, which recommended:—

“That a Loan Fund be raised for the purpose of assisting any congregation to build, enlarge or repair places of worship, who can comply with the conditions which will be indispensable: these are presumed to be, that 5 per cent. per annum interest be paid by the borrowers, and that 10 per cent. of the capital be returned annually; that security be given by the borrowers to the trustees of the fund, and that all expenses attending giving such security be paid by the borrowers.”

In language strangely similar to that used thirty years later, the writer went on to say:

“Should this plan be well received by our ministers, by our congregations, and by opulent individuals among us, this fund would soon become a stream, that, necessarily widening in its course, would cheer and invigorate the denomination throughout the country.”

The Assembly resolved:

“That the subject recommended in the said letter be referred to the consideration of a Committee consisting of Messrs. Barber, Penny, Napier and Marshall, with power to add to their number, and to take such steps as they may think proper to forward the object proposed.”

The four met without delay. John Marshall was appointed to the dual office of Chairman and Treasurer, and fourteen others were co-opted to serve with the four. One of the fourteen, Jonathan Dawson, was appointed Secretary. Within a few weeks, the Loan Fund Committee, as it was named, issued an Address “to all who are concerned for the extension of the

Redeemer's Kingdom, in the churches and congregations of the Baptist Denomination throughout the United Kingdom," in which the proposed scheme was further adumbrated.<sup>1</sup> In the following February, the Committee reported that it was "patiently persevering," that it had "obtained some respectable annual subscriptions," and that "pressing applications from Churches" had arrived. Three months later, in another report, the Committee stated that the number of applications from needy Churches had increased, that it had issued an appeal for subscriptions and collections, and that it had decided that "10 per cent. of the sum borrowed shall be returned yearly with interest at 3½ per cent." The necessary capital, however, could not be secured, and ultimately the proposed fund was abandoned and the Committee discharged.

The points of similarity between the proposals of 1817 and those of 1845 are evident and need not be stressed. William Bowser was thirty-seven years of age at the time of the first effort. The literature issued by him in advocacy of the loan fund reveals a student, a master of detail, a man thorough in all he undertook. It is hardly likely that he was ignorant of the earlier proposals. It may be, indeed, that he was the writer of the letter to the Baptist Union. Some of the men who served on the 1817 Committee were still living. Two of their number, John Penny and John Walkden, were members of the Building Fund Committee in 1845, and a third, Jonathan Phillips, was a generous subscriber. Doubtless they were called into consultation in the elaboration of the scheme, and gave counsel based on their 1817 experiences.

Nevertheless, William Bowser was the one to make "Dr. Newman's Loan Fund" a living reality. He had the vision of what could be achieved, and it inspired others. He possessed the persistence and personality to overcome opposition, and his reasoning powers convinced the doubter. Moreover, with a touch of genius, he introduced into his scheme the one all-important new feature—*without interest*. Once the scheme was understood and its benefits experienced, it secured immediate and lasting popularity. Not only did it give instant relief from interest bearing debt, but it stimulated concentration on capital repayments. The average rate of interest on Church debts was about five per cent. per annum. A Church which obtained a loan of one hundred pounds from the Building Fund therefore saved twenty-six pounds, five shillings interest in the course of the loan period of ten years. But in practice the saving was greater. Private mortgagees were not in the habit of accepting repayment of their

<sup>1</sup> *Baptist Magazine*, August, 1817.

mortgages by yearly or half yearly instalments. With few exceptions they required the whole or none. Usually, therefore, interest was payable on the whole debt for the full period of ten years. In such cases the Building Fund loan of one hundred pounds saved fifty pounds interest.

The regulations for the administration of the Fund provided that applications were to be dealt with in numerical order as received, and that repayments of one-twentieth part of the loans were to be made on 1st January and 1st July in each year for ten years. Other important regulations were :

“ That the sum lent to every Church shall be secured by the joint and separate note of hand of four persons, to be approved by the Committee; such note to be payable on demand to the order of the treasurer for the time then being, and expressed to be for value received in a loan to the Baptist chapel at—.”

“ That no pastor, and not more than two of the Deacons of any Church, shall be parties to such notes of hand.”

“ That the following questions shall be printed, sent to, and answered by every applicant for loans:—the situation of the Church applying;—its doctrinal views;—the name of its Pastor;—the names and occupations of the Deacons;—the number of members;—the number of the congregation;—the amount of the original outlay;—when the debt was contracted;—how much has been raised by the Church and congregation;—what sum has been obtained by other means, and how collected;—what is the present debt;—the general tenure, if in trust;—and if the Deed has been examined by our Solicitor;—and also the names, residences and occupations of the persons proposed as security, saying if they are Deacons, members, or otherwise.”

Joseph Fletcher, the Treasurer, was probably a man after William Bowser's own heart, for he was out-and-out in his support of the loan fund. At the end of twelve months, when seventy-seven years of age, he issued an eloquent and stirring appeal for support. It is too long to quote in full, but one paragraph illustrates its flowing periods:—

“ This plan is clear and simple; it needs no machinery; it incurs no expense; it involves not any secular, speculative, future, personal advantage; all is tangible and real. It contains nothing derogatory nor contrary to the pure principles of religion; it offers no deceptive prospect of benefiting the subscribers by compound interest nor accumulation; it invites your assistance solely in accordance with the divine

command, 'Give, good measure, pressed down, running over,' and it shall be returned to you in *blessings*, when you witness the effect upon the poor of *His* flock who committed them to the charge of His disciples for ever."

With some amount of trembling, for "trifling defalcations in repayments" were feared, the Committee voted the first loans. The Churches to which they were granted were:—

Staines, Middlesex	...	£100	Dorchester	...	...	£100
South Molton, Devon	...	100	Merthyr Tydvil	...	...	100
Hereford	...	...	Airdrie, Scotland	...	...	100
Southampton	...	...	Cambridge (Zion)	...	...	100
Shiffnall, Salop	...	...				100

Each Church faithfully paid its instalments as they became due. At the end of the initial ten years, when the first loans had all been redeemed, the Chairman of the Annual Meeting was able to say: "Many fears were expressed respecting the safety of the plan, and it was supposed the Churches would not return the amounts borrowed by them. The experience of ten years has changed those fears into the fullest confidence in the honour of the Churches and the excellence of the system." The capital of the fund grew steadily, although the number and amount of the annual subscriptions continued to decline. With noble exceptions, the Londoners of those days were not strikingly generous. A lethargic spirit was in the Churches. Ministers and people were smugly complacent. All seemed well, and men found it easy to keep their pockets sealed. It needed an Essex lad, one Charles Haddon Spurgeon, to disturb their equanimity. He descended on the city in 1854.

Occasional legacies helped to swell the Fund. These included one of five hundred pounds, free of duty, from Joseph Fletcher, who passed away at the ripe age of eighty-two. Of him the Committee recorded that he had "for seventeen years zealously and faithfully discharged the duties of Treasurer," that his "character combined the sternest integrity with firmness of purpose and tenderness of heart," and that he had "through his unusually long life maintained an answering adherence to the principles he professed." At the end of the first decade, the capital had reached £5,000, and the Committee had voted ninety-five loans amounting in all to £9,680. About that time, the subtitle, "Dr. Newman's Loan Fund" was discontinued. With the practical cessation of grants, there was no need for distinction in the accounts.

On Lord Mayor's Day, 1847, the Committee passed the interesting resolution, "That tea be provided at half past five

o'clock for those members of the Committee who are then in attendance." So that the somewhat plain and frugal tea now served at Committee Meetings presumably has an honoured tradition of nearly eighty years!

Trust Deeds continued to give the Committee much trouble, and applications for assistance were declined with regularity—"deeds unsatisfactory." The Fund existed for the assistance of "Particular or Calvinistic Baptist Churches," and the Committee's interpretation was inflexible. Finally, in January, 1850, the Solicitor was asked to prepare a Model Trust Deed. After much discussion and several alterations, the deed was adopted in the following May, and, for some years, was printed in the Annual Report. The deed almost became the recognized standard form of the denomination. It is somewhat restrictive and has not proved an unmixed blessing. The attitude of the age to youth is reflected in the clause which gives permission to hold a Sunday School if it were "thought necessary or expedient," and then only if two-thirds of the members assembled at a Church Meeting approved.

#### VIII. THE BAPTIST METROPOLITAN CHAPEL BUILDING SOCIETY.

Notwithstanding the deletion of "London" from the title in 1835, the Fund remained in essence and government a London fund. By an unwritten rule of the Committee, London Churches were precluded from receiving assistance. Not until 1854 was the justice of this exclusion questioned. Bermondsey then made application, and the Committee Minutes of 14th February, 1854, record:—

"An application for a loan having been made by a Church in Bermondsey, it was considered by the Committee that as the Fund was originated for the relief of country Churches, and no others from its commencement having been assisted by it, such application be deemed ineligible."

The Bermondsey Church did not accept this as final. It advanced its claims a second time, and on the 14th October, 1856, the Committee reversed its previous decision, and resolved:

"That as there is no rule to exclude London Churches from the benefits of the Fund, that the necessary form be sent."

No great enthusiasm was displayed by the Committee in the passing of the resolution. Its members rejoiced in the assistance



given to country Churches. It was financial home missionary work, and they deemed it the necessary corollary of the evangelistic work of the Home Missionary Society. As one Annual Report of the Fund expressed it, in speaking of the need for Baptist extension in towns and villages, "The Home Missionary Society is employed in gathering sinners to the Saviour, and in the formation of new Churches; while the Baptist Building Fund assists the people to obtain chapels, in which they may assemble to worship God." Some members of the Committee were so perturbed by the October resolution that they reopened the question, and it was not until the 10th February, 1857, that it was settled finally by the adoption of a resolution:

"That the first rule be understood to include the Metropolis and its Suburbs."

This resolution has been of far-reaching importance. One hundred and fifty London Churches have received a loan in the sixty-eight years which have followed, and in the centenary year, London Churches were indebted to the Fund to the extent of over £15,000. The resolution had, however, a more immediate and unexpected outcome. Within two years, in 1858, it "led to the union with the Baptist Building Fund, of the gentlemen who formed the Metropolitan Baptist Chapel Building Society, and was the means of increasing the list of subscribers."<sup>2</sup> This now forgotten Metropolitan Society merits some attention. Its story has not previously been written. In 1851, various London men became deeply concerned at the absence of church extension in the metropolis. Visitors from all parts had flocked to the city for the exhibition in Hyde Park. The resident population was rapidly increasing. Open spaces in the inner ring were yielding place to the tall basement houses of the mid-Victorian period. New districts were springing up. Holloway in the north and Brixton in the south were becoming popular residential suburbs. Religious life, however, was at an ebb. The recent census returns had caused grave anxiety to all church leaders. Baptists pondered much on their significance. They had adequate occasion for their pondering. The "London Association of Particular Baptist Churches" was not far removed from a moribund condition. The leaders of the Building Fund, in their commendable zeal for chapel extension in the country, overlooked their own Jerusalem. Baptist chapel building in the metropolis was at a standstill. Foremost among the ministers who realised the

<sup>2</sup> Baptist Building Fund, 35th Report, 1860. The title of the Society is incorrectly given in the Report.

seriousness of this situation were William Brock, of Bloomsbury, William Garrett Lewis, of Westbourne Grove, and Baptist Wriothlesley Noel, of John Street; and, among the laymen, William Brodie Gurney, who is already known to us for his connection with the Building Fund, George T. Kemp, who was highly respected as Treasurer of Stepney College, to which he rendered "greatly valued and generous service," and Samuel Morton Peto, to whom it will be needful to refer in more detail. They and others formed a provisional committee to consider "the propriety and importance of some steps being taken in connexion with chapel extension." It held several meetings in the autumn of 1851. A general meeting of sympathisers followed at the Mission House in Moorgate on the 19th January, 1852. The minutes record that "between sixty and seventy Ministers and Gentlemen connected with the various Churches in London" were present. After the report of the provisional committee had been presented, it was resolved:

"That having considered the vast and increasing population of London, and the strong claims thereby made upon us to increase the number of Chapels in connexion with the Baptist denomination, it is the opinion of this meeting that a Society should be now formed to accomplish this object, and that it be called 'The Society for the erection of Chapels in and near London in connexion with the Baptist denomination.'"

A speaker desiring to wax eloquent in support of the Society, was likely to have some difficulty with this cumbersome title of seventeen words. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that speedily it was altered to the more convenient one of "The Baptist Metropolitan Chapel Building Society." The Society was ambitious. Its declared object was "to erect and aid in the erection of commodious Chapels seating not fewer than six hundred persons each." Its horizon, also, was extensive. Afar off it visualised the future immense growth of this "queen of cities, this leviathan of towns," and was prepared to consider the erection of buildings in any "eligible situation within eight miles of the General Post Office."

Influential officers were elected, including Samuel Morton Peto and Joseph Tritton (Treasurer of the Missionary Society for twenty years), as Trustees; George William Fishbourne (Secretary of Regent's Park College for forty-five years), as Secretary; and Richard Cartwright as Chairman of the General Committee. Of these men, Sir Samuel Morton Peto, Bart, M.P., to give him the title later conferred on him, had been the leading

spirit in the formation of the Society. For two decades, from the forties to the sixties, he was a commanding figure in the Baptist life of London. A big business man himself, Christian work planned on a like scale made a particular appeal to him. Thus in 1848, desiring a Baptist Chapel in the centre of London worthy of the denomination, he persuaded an unsympathetic Government Department to grant a lease of land in Bloomsbury. The complaint of the departmental chief that the usual Baptist Chapel was a plain, barnlike structure, lacking a spire, was answered: "My lord, we shall have two spires."<sup>3</sup> And for nearly eighty years the two spires have adorned the Bloomsbury Central Church. Equally bold was his transformation of the Regent's Park Diorama into the Regent's Park Chapel in 1855. Thirty years earlier this building had cost ten thousand pounds. A year later, he was the prime mover in securing for Stepney College the magnificent mansion known as Holford House, Regent's Park. The erection of the Metropolitan Tabernacle filled him with joy. He laid the foundation stone, and was one of the most generous donors. His gifts to smaller Baptist Churches were on an equally princely scale. Two thousand pounds to Chelsea is an example. He served on the Committee of the Building Fund for five years, and during those years gave generous subscriptions. Obviously, therefore, he was the man to make the new Metropolitan Society a success, and forthwith he promised to it five hundred pounds per annum for three years. Unfortunately, he could give little or no time to the inspiration and direction of policy, or the Society's subsequent history might have been different.

In April, three months after the inaugural meeting, the Committee resolved that it was "advisable to erect forthwith a commodious model Chapel and School rooms." Two and a half years elapsed before, on Tuesday, 3rd October, 1854, the first, and as events proved, the only, chapel built under its auspices, was opened, namely, that at Camden Road.<sup>4</sup> The land on which this was erected was leased for ninety-five years at the heavy ground rent of forty-six pounds per annum. The building and furnishing cost £5,340. In the meantime, serious difficulties had been encountered. These were two-fold, and concerned sites and finances. Consideration was given to sites at Kilburn, St. John's Wood, Peckham, Paddington, Knightsbridge, Tottenham, and

<sup>3</sup> *William Brock*, by G. W. M'Cree.

<sup>4</sup> The Minute Books of the Society were not available when Dr. Whitley wrote *A History of British Baptists*. The present detailed research into the Society's work reveals that the statement on page 286 that the Society "within eight years had erected eighteen houses of worship" needs modification.

elsewhere. Obstacles arose, however, when the prospective purchasers were disclosed. The Society was up against the land-owning spirit of the day. Freeholders were rudely disturbed when they learned that "dissenters" aspired to purchase freehold sites in prominent positions. Their spirit is illustrated by the action of the governors of a famous institution, who imposed an emphatic veto on the Society's proposal "to erect a dissenting chapel" on land in which they had an interest.

Two other leasehold sites were secured, the first at Islington and the second at St. John's Wood. But the financial resources of the Society had not received sufficient consideration. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick," and possible supporters were lost as the months sped by without much tangible result from the Committee's activities. At the end of two years, Morton Peto had subscribed £1,000, the remaining Officers and members of the Committee £500, and £300 had been obtained from other sources. A total of £1,800—and the erection of the Camden Road Chapel was in progress, and the Committee had undertaken to build substantial chapels on the other sites! Something needed to be done. The Committee turned hopefully to Morton Peto. Evidently, however, he considered the Committee should have achieved greater success, for he merely recommended that the Camden Road Chapel be mortgaged for £2,500, and that the other sites be relinquished on the best terms obtainable. Both recommendations were adopted, penalties of £150 and £200 being paid to the respective freeholders for the cancellation of the Islington and St. John's Wood Agreements.

The Society lingered for three years, more or less in a "state of collapse and suspended animation." It did, indeed, enter into prolonged negotiations to purchase a Congregational Chapel in Hornton Street, Kensington. These proved futile, although, at a later date, the chapel was opened under Baptist auspices. On the 8th June, 1858, the Committee approached the Building Fund with proposals for amalgamation. The Building Fund Committee declined to contribute a suggested sum of one hundred pounds towards liquidating the liabilities of the Society, but welcomed the proposed co-operation. At the forthcoming Annual Meeting of the Fund, seven representatives of the Metropolitan Society were added to the Committee. Thus, the Metropolitan Society ceased to function. Its achievements were far short of the expectations of 1852, and the few who had laboured hard were keenly disappointed. Nevertheless, the effort was worth making. Camden Road Church was for many years one of the strongest in London, and to-day it still bears a brave witness in a vastly changed neighbourhood. Further, in the end,

two advantages accrued to the Building Fund: it received a considerable accession of subscribers, and the addition to the Committee of the best of those who previously had served the Society gave added value and influence to its deliberations.

### IX. COUNTRY AUXILIARIES.

The Committee entered on the second decade of the loan fund with expectancy, as the success of the loan principle had aroused much interest in the country, where personal application for "eleemosynary aid" remained an unpleasant feature of church life. Moreover, the earlier hope of greatly extended usefulness through the agency of the provincial Associations was still cherished. The Committee, therefore, gladly welcomed the formation of the Liverpool Auxiliary in May, 1857. This followed a missionary visit to the north by the treasurer, Joseph Howse Allen. A strong local Committee was elected, with those pulpit giants, Charles Mitchell Birrell of Pembroke and Hugh Stowell Brown of Myrtle Street, as Presidents. Thomas Robinson, Jun., was the Treasurer, and Samuel B. Jackson the Secretary. Four simple rules defined the relations of the Fund and an Auxiliary, viz:—

1. That the contributors to an Auxiliary appoint a Committee, with Treasurer and Secretary, through whom communications may be made.
2. That the Annual Contributions of an Auxiliary be not less than £50, which shall be transmitted to the Treasurer of the Fund, with an account of the contributions received in each year.
3. That an Auxiliary Committee have power to nominate cases for assistance by the Fund, which cases shall take precedence of other cases before the Committee, so far as the Funds contributed by the Auxiliary are available.
4. That any Churches seeking the aid of the Fund through an Auxiliary be required to fill the usual form of application, and otherwise to comply with the regulations of the Fund.

It was further understood that the London Committee would conduct all correspondence in connection with Auxiliary loans, including the collection of the various instalments as they became due. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that generous London agreed to do this without expense to the capital of the Auxiliary concerned.

Some years later, in an effort to promote further Auxiliaries, the regulations were amended. The reference in the second to Fifty Pounds was deleted; the third was omitted; the fourth became the third; and the following was added as the new fourth regulation :—

That an Auxiliary Committee must elect on which of the following plans (a or b) their relations with the Fund shall be conducted, and shall then have power to nominate cases for assistance by the Fund, which cases shall take precedence of other cases before the Committee, so far as the funds contributed through the Auxiliary are available.

- a. That the amount of Funds for nomination by an Auxiliary shall consist of the Annual Contributions and of the repayments made by Churches which have had Loans in former years on the nomination of the Auxiliary, but without the power to nominate for a larger sum :

or

- b. That the amount of Funds for nomination by an Auxiliary shall be the amount of their contributions not having been already the subject of nomination, to which the Committee will double the amount; but the repayment of former Loans will not be included.

Under inspiring leadership, the Liverpool Auxiliary soon acquired strength. Within a few years the subscribers numbered over one hundred and fifty, and at the end of ten years the capital had reached nearly one thousand pounds. In the years which have followed a succession of able, earnest men have given time and money to the Auxiliary, with the happy result that by the centenary of the Building Fund, the capital had increased to £6,250, and the loans granted on the nomination of the Auxiliary totalled £45,560. Anticipations that other provincial centres would emulate this example were destined to be unrealised. Gateshead, Newport and Tiverton made enquiries early in 1862, but Auxiliaries did not eventuate. Meetings, at which a Northern Auxiliary was constituted, were held at Newcastle in the autumn of the same year, and the sum of £7 15s. 9d. was sent to London. This, however, proved to be the only contribution, and the Auxiliary soon disappeared. Much was hoped of the Manchester and Salford Auxiliary, which was established in 1877. It was sponsored by influential leaders, including Alexander

McLaren, whose signature headed the local appeal issued 20th January, 1877. The Treasurer was Hugh Stevenson, later Treasurer of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association. C. Nickson was Secretary. The Auxiliary started well. Its first contribution was £79 7s. 6d., but the local enthusiasm was not maintained. At the end of ten years, the capital had not reached three hundred pounds, and the local Committee was quiescent. Some of the subscribers continued their subscriptions for a few years, but the Auxiliary passed into oblivion and the capital was transferred to the general funds of the Building Fund. Almost forty years elapsed before, in October, 1916, the Devon and Cornwall Auxiliary was constituted. The circumstances attending the formation of this Auxiliary were special as the initial capital of £321 represented the net proceeds of sale of a small Baptist chapel at Newquay in 1910. The subsequent capital additions have been negligible.

From this review it will be apparent that the endeavours of successive Committees to inaugurate Auxiliaries throughout the country have met with little success. At the centenary, two only were in existence. The reason for the comparative failure is not far to seek. Other districts have not been less desirous to help in debt extinction and chapel extension. Their leaders, however, have preferred to retain locally the actual handling, as well as the allocation, of the capital. Building Funds so administered but otherwise based on the London model, have been established in many districts. The Chapel Loan Fund of the Yorkshire Association, inaugurated in 1852, the Baptist Building Fund for Wales dating from 1862, the Birmingham and West Midland Baptist Building Fund formed in 1867, and the Loan and Building Fund of the Baptist Union of Scotland started in 1878 are four outstanding examples.

## X. PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY.

The thirty years from 1860 to 1890 are notable for their ceaseless activity and the enlightened policy that characterised them. They covered an important period. By 1860 the loan fund was firmly established on secure foundations but the glamour attaching to early years had passed. The annual subscriptions, including those of the Liverpool Auxiliary, amounted to £419 2s. 0d. only, from two hundred and one subscribers. Apart from thirty-two in Liverpool, the subscribers were resident in London. The time was ripe for a bold forward movement. The Society rose to the occasion well. It did so, primarily because

of the consecrated zeal of two laymen—James Benham and Alfred Thomas Bowser—who held office for almost the whole of the three decades.

The early sixties witnessed the retirement or passing of most of the veterans. For twenty-five years Christopher Woollacott of Wild Street wrought strenuously for the Fund. Appointed Collector in 1836, he held that office for eighteen years, and the records reveal that his "poundage" was well and truly earned. On the position of Secretary becoming vacant in 1854 he "cheerfully consented" to amalgamate the two offices, at a small salary in lieu of poundage. When he retired in 1861, at the age of seventy-two, the Committee recorded the high sense which they entertained "of the *lengthened, assiduous, and efficient services*, so *constantly* rendered by their venerable friend." In January, 1864, owing to ill health, Joseph Howse Allen resigned the treasurership. For eleven years he had laboured devotedly, holding the position with credit to himself and greatly to the advantage of the Fund. William Bowser passed to his reward early in 1865 at the good old age of eighty-four. As the author of the loan principle, he was "the saviour of the fund." However long may be the period during which it exercises its bountiful ministry and whatever may be the monetary heights to which future generations may raise it, the name of William Bowser deserves to be held in affectionate memory. William Henry Watson succeeded William Paxon as "Gratuitous Solicitor" in 1845, and for twenty-three years "by liberal support, wise counsels and, above all, by gratuitous professional labours," rendered valuable services both to the Fund and to individual Churches.

Alfred Thomas Bowser, son of William Bowser, was elected Honorary Secretary in December, 1861, and retained the office until 1885, when he became Treasurer. His service to the Fund probably exceeds that of any other man. Prior to his election as Secretary, he was widely known and held in high regard. He had joined the Committee in 1846, shortly after the adoption of his father's scheme, and in 1851 his own Church at Prescott Street had elected him one of its Deacons. Later he transferred to Mare Street, which called him to the diaconate in 1867, a position he held for twenty-three years, until his death. He was one of the founders of the Liberation Society, his name being the first enrolled on the Society's list. For over twenty years he served on the Council of the Baptist Union, and the Committee of the Missionary Society. The London Association found in him an earnest supporter; and of the Psalms and Hymns Trust he was Treasurer. After his death, one of his friends wrote of him: "He believed intensely in what he professed. He had no



special love to be on a large number of Committees. He took honourable positions only to render earnest service. Absence from meetings which he was officially called upon to attend, he regarded as a breach of covenant."

James Benham became joint Secretary in January, 1862, but he relinquished the position on being appointed Treasurer in February, 1864. He joined Bloomsbury at its opening, and for thirty-seven years served it as a Deacon. He was also an active worker for the London Association, and for many years a member of the Missionary Committee. "His interest in the Missionary Society was profound. He never lost sight of a missionary he had once seen, but followed his career . . . with unflinching and friendly interest." He was "greatly valued in connection with almost all our denominational societies and institutions, as well as in connection with general religious and philanthropic work." He and the Secretary were devoted colleagues, each gladly supplementing the efforts of the other, and throughout they received the ungrudging support of the Committee.

One of our senior ministers has communicated to the writer his recollections of their service:—

"My memory is very clear of *many* Annual Meetings of the Baptist Building Fund in the Library of the Baptist Mission House, when the President-elect of the Baptist Union was in the Chair, and was supported on his left hand by the Treasurer, Mr. Benham, and on his right hand by the Secretary, Mr. Bowser. The Treasurer and the Secretary presented to my eyes a spectacle of simple but devoted co-operation on the part of Laymen, which for length and disinterestedness of *united* service has seldom, if ever, been equalled in our more recent Denominational history. Mr. Benham and Mr. Bowser found in the Building Fund only *one* of many forms of service and spheres of gracious influence in the life of the Baptist Churches."

On their appointment, the two Officers initiated a policy of advance. They appreciated the value of publicity. Not only was the Fund advertised in religious periodicals, but in 1864, the Secretary addressed the Spring Assembly of the Baptist Union on "Chapel Building Finance," and either he or the Treasurer visited many of the provincial Associations in advocacy of the Fund. The services of Collectors, both paid and honorary, were enlisted. The Fund ceased to be one mainly subscribed in the Metropolis: contributions came from all parts of the country. For seven years in succession, the subscriptions exceeded one

thousand pounds, obtained from over seven hundred annual subscribers. Persistent exposition of the benefits of the Fund induced many to leave legacies to it. Upwards of nine thousand pounds was bequeathed to the Fund in the course of the thirty years. Others gave substantial capital sums, subject to the payment of interest to themselves for life. The following table shows the capital of the Fund at the decennial periods :—

1860—£7,500	on loan to	68	Churches.
1870—15,456	”	”	131
1880—27,867	”	”	189
1890—40,983	”	”	217

In the early years, the loans were usually for one hundred pounds, with occasionally one of a larger amount, but as the Fund expanded, the average increased. The Committee held firmly to the practice of helping many with comparatively small loans. The first loan of £500 was granted in 1862. Fifteen years elapsed before the first of £750 was voted in 1877, and another four years before the first of £1,000 was voted in 1881. The Committee never had sufficient capital at its disposal to enable it to meet all the needs, and a long waiting list was always extant. As far back as 1863, the Annual Report stated :—

“ That the Baptist Denomination in England requires, to cover its present necessities and to provide efficient assistance towards building new Chapels, a Loan Fund of ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND POUNDS.”

The urgent need for new buildings was frequently considered by the Committee. The Fund claimed to be a *Building* Fund, but in reality it was a *Loan* Fund only. It had done nothing directly to stimulate the erection of new Chapels. Its operations “ had been confined to the assistance of churches involved in debt.” Here, then, was a field for further service, and at the Annual Meeting in 1861, it was resolved “ that an effort be made to raise within the next five years the sum of ten thousand pounds, that the Committee may be enabled more efficiently to assist in the erection of Chapels in the Metropolis, and other great towns, where the rapidly increasing population renders such erections especially desirable.” This resolution remained dormant for nearly eighteen months, until the appointment of the new Officers. They conducted a vigorous campaign for five years, and although the full sum was not raised, the effort met with considerable success. It did much to accelerate the formation of new causes. In 1867 the Committee recorded its “ earnest wish to lend about one third of the entire cost of new buildings.” Frequently the

Building Fund Treasurer attended the opening ceremony for the purpose of passing over the cheque for the loan that had been granted. The principle then established of promising a conditional loan, to be paid immediately on the opening of a new Church, has remained in force; and in more recent years, much of the Fund has been devoted to the assistance of such new causes. The Committee was not content merely to give financial assistance. It expected plans and elevations of the proposed buildings, the architect's estimate and draft of the proposed contract, to be submitted for examination and approval. The professional members of the Committee gladly and gratuitously gave much valued advice.

A further method of stimulating chapel building was in the collection of statistics of Chapel debts and Chapel building. For over twenty years, commencing in 1863, the Secretary made exhaustive enquiries, and the statistics so obtained were an important and instructive feature of the Annual Reports. The statistics given in the forty-third Report are illuminating:—

In the year	No. of new chapels opened.	Total Expenditure on new chapels and improvements.	Additional sittings provided.	Debt.
1863	24	£55,450	10,025	£15,392
1864	37	75,959	12,895	20,954
1865	44	84,732	13,936	31,158
1866	33	71,787	15,202	28,794
1867	19	41,820	6,612	16,244

The enquiries revealed the interesting information that, exclusive of enlargements and the purchase price of land, the average cost per sitting of building new Chapels was £3 7s. 0d. in 1863; £3 2s. 6d. in 1864; £6 in 1875, and £9 in 1880.<sup>5</sup> Church Officers now had some regard for architecture. The plainness of the former dissenting chapel no longer completely satisfied. All the Building Fund men, however, were not ardent followers of the aesthetic school, for in 1884, the Committee pointed out, with some regret, that "the figures clearly indicate a desire for more ornate buildings," thus ministering to "the personal comfort, convenience or luxury of the hearers." They further asked the question, "Is it wise to spend so much money on places of worship instead of being content with less expensive buildings, and make more economical use of what is spent?"

<sup>5</sup> The cost in the centenary year was nearer £15 per sitting.

In 1871, the Society decided to render a further important service to the Churches by undertaking "the custody of Title Deeds, and other documents relating to any Place of Worship, School, College, or other property held in trust for any purposes of the Denomination." The fresh task was not accepted lightly, for the Committee "feeling that such a charge would be one of very grave responsibility consulted eminent counsel, both as to the power of the Society to undertake the work, and the regulations to be adopted." This gratuitous provision of a strong room was of inestimable value before the erection of the Baptist Church House. In those days the deeds of more than two hundred and fifty Churches were thus safely preserved. Now, fewer than one hundred parcels are lodged with the Building Fund, the denominational headquarters having largely superseded it in this connection.

The ever-growing success of the Fund was watched with interest, not only by other denominations at home, but also by Baptists abroad. Numerous enquiries were received and dealt with. The following paragraph from the forty-ninth Annual Report issued in 1874 deals with this aspect of the work :—

"It is very gratifying to learn that the plans of this Society have been adopted not only by other denominations but they are also extending to British Colonies. Some years ago, the Baptists of Canada formed a Building Fund on the same principles, and more recently a Fund was commenced in South Australia, and during the past year a Fund has been begun in Sweden. In all these cases, the Committee have had pleasure in supplying every practical information and forms in use for the guidance of the promoters of these several Funds."

The honoured Treasurer presided at the Diamond Jubilee Meeting on the 23rd April, 1885, and at the Committee Meetings on the 12th May and 9th June. Less than a week elapsed before, on the 15th, he entered into rest. Literally he died in harness, for on the preceding evening he had attended the prayer meeting at Bloomsbury. His connection with the Fund lasted thirty-three years. Throughout he was a generous subscriber. During his tenure of the treasurership, upwards of six hundred loans were granted. Over ten thousand repayments passed through his hands, and all duties were "faithfully and exactly performed with courtesy and discretion." Five years later, his colleague, Alfred Thomas Bowser, joined him in the greater service of the beyond. In the course of a long memorial resolution, the Committee recorded :

“It would be impossible to overrate the importance of Mr. Bowser’s services to the Fund for almost half a century. He was throughout distinguished by his tact, urbanity, zeal and energy, tempered by Christian courtesy. The rapid increase in the operations of the Society and its consequent usefulness, are largely owing to his untiring and self-denying activity.”

The splendour of their service abides: time has not dimmed its lustre.

SEYMOUR J. PRICE.

## A Pilgrimage to Bessell’s Green.

IN the seventeenth century a Baptist Meeting was commenced at Bradbourne, by Riverhead, in Kent, and a Mr. Reeve became one of the first ministers, then called elders.

When persecution arose in Charles II. reign, the Sevenoaks magistrates sent constables one Sunday, who arrested the men of the congregation, and carried them to Sevenoaks jail. Next morning, after being admonished by the Bench, they were all dismissed, and hastening back with joy and wonder, found the meeting still going on—the women having kept continuously in ministry and prayer since the previous day’s disturbance.

The cause was soon after moved to Bessell’s Green, about half a mile away; worship was still carried on in private houses until 1716, when the present Old Meeting House was built.

The Arian trend of the eighteenth century caused unrest. Eventually a number of the orthodox members, headed by John Stanger, withdrew and built a new meeting-house, 1770, the present Baptist Chapel by the Green, and when the New Connexion of the General Baptists was inaugurated this second Bessell’s Green Church joined for a time.

One calm July day, 1926, along the pleasant roads and lanes of West Kent, through old villages—Limpsfield, Westerham, Sundridge, Brasted,—once secluded but now accessible, the motor ’bus halted at the hamlet of Bessells Green. Facing or close by the small triangular Common that gives the name, are a few private houses and cottages, two Chapels, an Inn and some recent buildings in progress.

By the corner of the lane to Ide Hill, standing back from the road in a large graveyard, is the old General Baptist Meeting House, now called "The Free Christian Church," "Unitarian," with a dwelling house, "The Old Manse," under the same roof.

The entrance is at the side into a room used as a library, a feature in many of the old General Baptist causes. Out of this is the chapel, quiet and plain, seated for about a hundred people. Sunday services are carried on, and the pulpit supplied by a rota of preachers planned for various places in West Kent.

The Register of Births, &c., 1650 to 1837 (a thick octavo volume now in Somerset House), has several historical notes.

"The Meeting House at Bessell's Green was built in ye parish of Chevening in ye County of Kent 1716. The first Meeting held there ye first Lords day in Dec. 1716 was conducted by Mr. James Richardson and Mr. Nat Foxwell. James Snow came to live at ye Meeting House ye March following.

The clock was put up in ye Meeting house March 26, 1718. The addition to ye dwelling house, two room in a floor, built 1725.

The Meeting house new rept [*sic*] and tiled 1732.

The baptistry made June 1733, and first used July 1733.

The pipes laid in Dec. 23. 1735.

The burying place at Bessell's Green let out Jan. 8. 1738-9.

Mr. Calverley's seat put up Aug. 13. 1746.

A party went off upon their own request Jan. 22. 1747/8. (Probably founders of present Baptist Chapel, Sevenoaks.)

Jan. 1747/8. Meeting at Ash laid down, as no convenient house could be had.

April 1745. Meeting at Tandridge began at Browns.

May 1745. Brother Bly began meetings at his house at Froghold.

The galery built at ye Meeting house Aug. 1749 cost £18 12s.

Thomas Harrison and Sam Bengé ordained July 15 1748.

The evening lectures began Mar. 6 1753/4, to be continued every first and third Wednesday in ye month at 6½ clock.

The new pales and gates put up June 1753.

Fir trees planted, 6 silver firs from Coom bank 1757 and 38 from Squire Polhill Nov. 1758 and 12 more April 1759.

The house new rept north and east, ye rest mended 1761."

"Rept," an old building word, means stripping off, and seems to indicate defective tiles or unsound work.

The list of ministers after John Reeve, 1640, enumerates William Jeffery, born at Penhurst, 1666, and his son John.

Joseph Brown	...	...	...	1690
James Calverley	...	...	...	1706
James Calverley (nephew)	...	...	...	1714
Thomas Harrison	...	...	...	1748
Stephen Colgate (assistant)	...	...	...	1761
Samuel Bengé	...	...	...	1766
John Stanger (assistant)	...	...	...	1766
<i>The Disruption</i>	...	...	...	1769
Edward Merrall	...	...	...	1773-1777
— Steward	...	...	...	18—
M. Harding	...	...	...	1819
John Briggs	...	...	...	1822
John Atkinson Brigg	...	...	...	1851
Edward Hammond	...	...	...	1862
Henry Green	...	...	...	1876
John Joseph Martin	...	...	...	1879
William Edward Millone	...	...	...	1885
Robert Maxwell King	...	...	...	1894

Plate 2 pewter cups—plain.

2 patens, plain.

After the disruption, some of the older beliefs and rites lingered on. Washing of feet, based on a literal view of John xiii. 14, was "performed at Bro. Palmers, Oxted; and Bro. Austin of Bessells Green preached on the occasion," as late as 1785. A later record says, "More liberal theological views further broadened at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the influence of a Protestant French tutor at Earl Stanhopes, Chevening Park, who worshipped at this old Meeting House." This was Jeremiah Joyce, afterwards Unitarian minister at Hampstead, and well known as author of *Joyce's Scientific Dialogues*.

In the graveyard are numerous tombs and headstones, some in family groups recording the generations of those who for over two hundred years worshipped here, walking or driving in many cases from distant villages.

The inscriptions on most of the gravestones, many of which are difficult to decipher, give only names and dates, but here and there an epitaph reveals the experiences, the hopes, or the sorrows of those, now forgotten, who in former days were associated with this sanctuary and helped to maintain a witness for God.

The Sale tomb records the death of Robert Sale of Limpsfield, May 1803, aged 63. He left an endowment to the Turners Hill and Horley General Baptist Church, which after the extinction of that cause was made over to Billingshurst Free Christian Church. His sister also left an endowment to this chapel.

In one corner of the cemetery are graves of the Harrisons of Ightham, six miles distant. Benjamin Harrison, the village grocer of Ightham (1837-1921) is noted for his discoveries of Eoliths and other antiquities.

One headstone is to "Thomas Harrison died 1766, aged 72. Many years a pastor of this church and likewise a Messenger of the Churches of Jesus Christ, which office he faithfully discharged with great prudence and care, and adorned the whole with a truly pious and Christian life."

"Johnson Dobell died 1798 aged 71," was possibly a son of Daniel Dobell of Cranbrook, a Messenger, and friend of the above who writes in 1772 to Gilbert Boyce, "Are you my Dear Brother in the practice of washing feet, agreeable to John 13. Our deceased Brother Harrison was one with me herein, but alas he is gone and for ought I know I am alone as a Messenger on this point."

On the reverse of a large faded headstone to the Cronk family (one died 1840, aged 84), is this inscription:

"What hath God wrought,  
Bless O my soul the God of grace."

"In remembrance of the great condescending goodness of our glorious God who about 80 years ago directed and enabled John and Susana Cronk his wife, to fit up a large room for the purpose of preaching the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the town of Sevenoaks, which must be considered the greatest blessing he ever sent into any neighbourhood or among any people."

A pathetic epitaph to John Thorp reads: "After a long series of afflictions he resigned his soul in the hands of his Saviour on the evening of a Lord's Day, thus ending in heaven the Sabbath he commenced on earth."

Another is to Edward Hammond, pastor of the General Baptist Church, died 1867, aged 49. His last words were, "I die in perfect peace realised through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and in the one living and true God."

One lonely tomb records the death, 1841, of Jane, daughter of Rev. J. Briggs, minister of this chapel. Another is to "John Thorp, died 1835, 42 years a useful member of the New Connexion of General Baptists."

On the south-west side are graves and carved headstones of the Colgate family, generations of whom were prominent in this cause. One was a minister, and his epitaph reads:

"Here lyeth the body of Stephen Colgate, who departed this life 3 day of Jan. 1765, aged 61 years. A worthy Minister



of the Gospel, kind husband, kind and tender father. He filled every station in life well as adorns a Christian."

One is to Daniel Colgate of Orpington, who died 1806, aged 71. Another to "John Colgate, who died June 18, 18—, in his 92nd year, and in the grave adjoining Maria Colgate, sister of the above, who died May 1838, in her 89th year."

I am indebted to Dr. Whitley for calling attention to the association of some of this family with Colgate University, U.S.A. The following note is due to Mr. Jas. C. Colgate, now president of the Board of Trustees :

"The first Colgate of that family who came to this country lived at Shoreham, near Seven Oaks, in Kent. He had a farm known as Philston Farm, and I remember visiting the old place sometime about 1904. He was radical in his views, and was told by his friend, Mr. Pitt, that he headed a list of seven, and it was advisable for him to leave the country as soon as possible. He came to this country, with his family, about 1795, settling near Baltimore, Maryland. He purchased a farm there, but after some time a defect in the title was found and he lost it, and then went to Delhi, N.Y., or near there, where he died.

"His eldest son, William Colgate, who came to this country with him, went to New York City and secured employment there, and in 1806 started the business which is now carried on by Colgate & Co., manufacturers of soaps and perfumes.

"Colgate University was founded in 1819 as a school for the 'education of pious young men for the ministry.' Shortly afterward it became financially embarrassed, and William Colgate was called upon to assist in carrying it on. It was then incorporated as the Madison University. William Colgate was a member of the first Board of Trustees, and continued interested in it until the time of his death in 1857.

"His sons, James B. Colgate and Samuel Colgate, continued the interest which he had shown. In 1890 the name of the institution was changed to Colgate University, in recognition of the assistance and interest given at a time of need by William Colgate. James B. Colgate was president of the Board of Trustees until his death in 1904. His son is now president."

About one hundred yards from the old Meeting House, on land once belonging to it and close to the main road, is the open-air baptistry, dating from 1733, now in the front garden of a modern villa once called Baptistry Cottage. It is a rectangular pool, thirteen feet by six feet six inches, with about three feet of water, and approached by rustic stone steps, the whole beautifully situate in a sylvan glen surrounded by ferns and flowers.

Its position was doubtless chosen to ensure a natural supply of water. "Park Point," the house at the corner of the road adjoining the burial ground, was built in 1824, on a piece of common land granted by court leet. It was used awhile as a minister's residence.

The disruption at Bessell's Green was the local outcome of influences that had long been at work in many of the General Baptist Churches, especially those in Kent and Sussex.

For many years vague speculations on deep doctrinal points had been set forth by some of their teachers. The hearers generally were perplexed or indifferent, and even the General Assembly at London was loath to take any action. The result in some of the southern Churches led to slow decadence and extinction, but at Bessell's Green the coming of John Stanger in 1766, a young man from Northamptonshire, brought about a sudden issue.

Born in 1742, the son of parents who on both sides belonged to families who had maintained Baptist principles since the days of Caroline persecution, he, after an arduous upbringing, was led by a serious conversion and call to enter the ministry at Moulton. The next year he was invited to preach here with the view of becoming assistant minister (or "elder"). He preached five sermons and received a hearty call, moved from his distant home, married and settled in the village, and opened a school to help out his small stipend.

Before long dissatisfaction was shown. His definite teaching, his desire to introduce hymns and open communion, his ability, energy, and success, gave offence to some who were averse to any change from their local methods and rather suspicious of "foreigners." At a special Church meeting, the Messenger (as the old General Baptist Superintendent was called) who presided, asked the reason of the dislike to John Stanger. Mr. Bengé, the senior elder, replied, "He says that all men are sinners before conversion." "Who denies that?" queried the Messenger. "I deny it, for one," replied Mr. Bengé. The outcome was that there arose what the old record truly calls "unseemly strife," even to the extent of a law-suit for ejectment and personal unkindness.

The General Baptist churches in East Kent, concerned at the rupture, sent to both parties letters advising arbitration, but as the parties could not agree as to who should arbitrate, this peaceable effort failed.

Followed by the majority of the congregation, Stanger was impelled to continue in that village. Meetings were held in a private house till "an opulent gentleman in the neighbourhood, who knew their difficulties and felt interested in their success,

kindly offered them at this juncture a piece of ground as the site of a new place of worship," so in 1770 the New Meeting House, the present Baptist Chapel, was built and opened.

It stands in a small graveyard by the south-west corner of the Green, a quaint, old-world building. Through a gabled porch the chapel is entered sideways; a rostrum at the right end and a small gallery on the left. Beyond is a vestry and a large schoolroom.

Over the door, inside, is this inscription :

" This Tablet is erected by the Church and Congregation to perpetuate the memory of the Rev. John Stanger who departed this life on the 13th of April 1823. Aged 80 years.

" He was the founder of this Church, amongst whom and in many of the towns and villages adjacent his ministerial labours were arduous and eminently useful upwards of 54 years.

" He was a profound Divine, a correct Preacher, zealous and affectionate. Through grace he enjoyed the earnest of Heaven. Free grace, the grand subject of Revelation His voice proclaimed to thousands, many of whom are now his joy and crown of rejoicing. He was favoured with the smiles of his beloved Master, and while reposing on His bosom, his soul bade adieu to all that is corruptible.

" Reader! The body of this venerable pastor is confined in the grave, but it shall soon hear a voice irresistible, ' Arise and put on incorruption.' "

Another inscription reads, "buried beneath this floor," and in the graveyard are memorials of some of his descendants.

#### MINISTERS OF BESSELL'S GREEN BAPTIST CHAPEL.

John Stanger	- - -	from 1770 to 1823.
D. Davies, of Lincoln	- - -	September 1824 to April 1826.
William Broady, of Ashford	- - -	December 1826 to 1837.
William Payne, of Eythorne	- - -	January 1838 to October 1844.
James Stanger	- - -	September 1845 to July 1846.
William Glanville	- - -	1847 to 1856.
George Haigh	- - -	1858 to about 1866.
J. E. Dovey, of Edinburgh	- - -	1867—no entry as to his resignation, but probably about 1869.
William Fredray	- - -	January 1871 to 1876.
James Cattell	- - -	October 1876 to October 1906.
G. H. Harris	- - -	April 1912 to February 1917.

H. J. Eaton - - - April 1918 to November 1918, when he was called Home at an early age, to the great grief of the Church, for he had begun to make his ministry a power for good in the neighbourhood.

Mr. G. A. Eaton (father of the late pastor) from 1919 to 1922, "acted as Pastor and is now one of our most honoured Deacons."

Rev. M. H. Marshall - - 1923—

(List supplied by Mr. Ernest Greenway.)

One tomb in the little graveyard is that of "James Cattell who died 13 November 1907, aged 87; thirty years pastor of this Church." He was a man of ministerial gift and gracious personality. At one time a farmer, he afterwards devoted himself entirely to the ministry and was held in much esteem as an anniversary preacher among the Free Churches of West Kent, where I sometimes met him.

There are other headstones of interest, and some now difficult to decipher. One tomb is to John Epps, died April 1835, who for many years resided at the large house adjoining the Chapel, of which he was a prominent and devoted member. Some notes in the diary of his famous son, Dr. John Epps (1805-1869) refer to him thus:

"My father always retained a love for his native county, Kent; thus it is not surprising that he should fix his habitation there. He chose one of the most delightful parts of that charming district. I consider that the selection he made indicated his great natural taste. To and from Bessell's Green and London—a distance of twenty miles—he used to travel either on horseback or by gig."

"We attended on Sundays the chapel at Bessels Green. The minister there was a man much respected, and, I suppose, for a country place, he was a fair preacher. Such he was considered to be. His views were much the same as my father's, and not such as to be attractive to a child. His style was, to me, heavy and dull in the extreme. No wonder, then, if drowsiness overcame me; older people, I noticed, were not unfrequently affected in a similar manner. I do not know that my father went to sleep during the service; I suppose he did not, as his eyes were always very vigilant over me. I was sure to get a knock or a shake now and then; and often, on our return home, a lecture."

The following clause mentions a Kentish man who became a prominent religious leader :

“ My father was a strong admirer of William Huntington, who used to add to his names the initials S. S., meaning ‘ Sinner Saved.’ When by staying in town he had the opportunity of hearing him, if I also was in town (as during my after apprenticeship was the case), he used to take me with him ; and as I was then old enough to think seriously, and Mr. Huntington’s was not preaching to go to sleep over, my mind ran very much on subjects which I could not possibly understand.”

Another curious episode is mentioned :

“ Our house was at a long distance from the stables, and my father devised a plan for connecting them together without the necessity for going up the lane or round the grounds, as at night might not be pleasant. To establish such communication it was necessary to dig under the burial-ground belonging to the chapel, thus making the burial-ground part of the tunnel which was to be formed. My father set the unemployed villagers to work to make this tunnel from the scullery to the stables. It must have cost him a good sum of money. The result verified the old saying that ‘ One man may lead a horse to water, but twenty cannot make him drink.’ The superstitious fear that the ghosts of those buried above the tunnel might make their appearance to those walking through it, rendered the new pathway perfectly useless. The tunnel became a repository for rubbish. Perhaps in another century, when, by the powerful influence of knowledge superstition will have (it is hoped) disappeared, this tunnel may be made use of somewhat as intended by my father, who being himself free from superstition judged other minds by his own.”

This disused passage still exists under the front part of the graveyard and manse garden.

An elderly man, long attached to the cause, and whose ancestors rest in the little graveyard, gave many interesting particulars from his life-long knowledge of the place which still continues to maintain the holy fire and to show forth the light of truth.

Returning in the afternoon to Godstone, where Dr. Ewing was preaching the anniversary sermon, we realised that the same spirit leads earnest souls to carry the witness into present-day centres of population.

T. R. HOOPER.

## A Baptist Soldier—William Allen.

ONE of many services rendered by Dr. Whitley's *A History of British Baptists*, is to have brought out the great place taken by Baptists in Cromwell's "New Model Army." A typical figure amongst them, about which we are exceedingly well informed, is that of William Allen, whose name appears more than once in Carlyle's *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*. To Carlyle, Adjutant-General Allen was "a most authentic, earnest man . . . a strenuous Anabaptist . . . a rugged, true-hearted, not easily governable man; given to Fifth Monarchy and other notions, though with a strong head to control them." This impression is confirmed when we identify him with the Trooper Allen (as Carlyle wrongly refused to do), who brought the letter of the soldiers to Major-General Skippon in 1647.<sup>1</sup> Allen stated then, in his examination, that he was a Warwickshire man who had been a felt-maker by trade in Southwark. He had served in Essex's Army under Colonel Holles, till he was taken a prisoner at Brentford. After seven days of captivity he was condemned with seventeen others to be hanged; then every tenth man was drawn out to be hanged; finally he was dismissed with the others. He was wounded at the first battle of Newbury, and again at Henley, when Skippon rewarded him with five shillings. If only Allen had written for us a few "letters from the front," the historian would have been more grateful to him than for what he did write—with the one exception of the account of the famous "Windsor prayer meeting." Carlyle's pages have made us familiar with that gathering of army leaders, meeting for three days of prayer in the *impasse* to which an impractical Parliament and a shifty king had brought them, retracing their steps to the point at which they had exchanged straightforward action for political scheming, and led at last to the historic conclusion, "That it was our duty, if ever the Lord brought us back again in peace, to call Charles Stuart, that man of blood, to an account for that blood he had shed and mischief he had done to his utmost, against the Lord's Cause and People in these poor Nations."

Military movements brought William Allen and John Vernon into Devonshire, where they married sisters of the name of Huish,<sup>2</sup> their father being James Huish of Sidbury. The names

<sup>1</sup> See *The Clarke Papers*, ed. Firth, I., 432.

<sup>2</sup> Not Doily, as Dr. Whitley conjectured in the *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society*, IV. 3, p. 131.

of Allen and Vernon stand on the church-roll of Dalwood in Dorset, and often recur together in later records and books, as in the prefaces they both contribute to the religious autobiography of Deborah Huish, their sister-in-law. This is entitled *The Captive taken from the Strong*, and was taken down from her lips by William Allen. But this was in later days of sorrowful leisure, after Allen had been so disappointed in his leader. His first disillusionment with Cromwell appears in an intercepted letter of his of 1654, written soon after the Protectorate began, in which he says: "As to the person in chief place, I confess I love and honour him, for the honour God hath put upon him, and I trust will yet continue; I mean that of uprightheartedness to the Lord, though this last change with his atendencyes hath more stumbled me than ever any did; and I have still many thoughts of heart concerning it." He was, in fact, coming to think of the Lord Protector as Labour thinks of its leaders—they need watching, to say the least. Yet at the same time he will not resign his commission, and argues against a friend who has done so, on the ground of more effective influence where he is: "I trust I shall not, upon the account of honourable or other worldly respects, stay a day longer in employment than I judge I may do more good in than out." Allen was then in Dublin, whither he had gone as "Adjutant-General of the Horse" in 1651, and he also appears as a commissioner for the settlement of Ulster.<sup>8</sup> But it was not long before his dissatisfaction with Cromwell led to an open collision. They had an interview in London, which, according to Allen, made the Protector very angry, though Allen complains that he was not allowed to say as much as he wanted to, since the Protector did most of the talking. Allen came down to Devonshire, where his movements and talk aroused suspicion that he was plotting. Finally, he was dramatically arrested when in bed at his father-in-law's house, by several soldiers armed with sword and pistol. Allen writes in defence of himself, and in protest against such treatment after thirteen years of faithful service. His defence was hardly likely to smoothe the ruffled plumage of his old commander, for he says:

"You are also pleased to tax me with having as light an esteem of you as of C.S. [Charles Stuart], though neither did any word in my letter, nor any action of mine ever give you ground for such a surmise. What my esteem hath been of you in some verticall forsaking days I believe you

<sup>8</sup> Allen's services in Ireland were very great, as may be seen in Dunlop's *Ireland under the Commonwealth*. He was also one of the thinkers and organisers who suggested grouping all Baptist Churches into Associations; see Appendix to Rippon, IV. (Whitley).

can remember; and I can truly say, if I have erred, it hath been, I fear, in esteeming too highly of you. The different esteem I yet have of your Lordship, from the other in part is this; I could freely engage against the other as formerly, but I durst not lift a hand against you, nor join with or advise the doing of it."

Cromwell's own view of the situation is given in the letter to his Exeter agent: "Adjutant-General Allen doth very ill offices by multiplying dissatisfaction in the minds of men to the present Government." Nevertheless, Allen was permitted to return to his post in Ireland, though difficulties were not ended—how could they be for two such men? In 1657, we hear of Allen's resignation to Henry Cromwell, who records the impression Allen made on him:

"Subtile and grave Mr. Allen brought up the rear and was more ingenuous than the rest in declaring that the ground of his dissatisfaction took its rise from the first charge of the government, foreseeing that they should be no way able to answer the end for which they were first engaged; and being now more fully convinced of it, and looking upon himself as formerly discharged by his highness, he thought it best for him to draw to a more retired position."

We hear of Allen and Vernon again in Devonshire just after the death of the Protector. Sir John Coplestone has his eye upon them, as the late Protector had commanded, for they are men who need watching: "Certainly they are persons of as much venom and revenge as any whatever and will not spare to adventure on anything that may give them the least hope of success." Allen's displacements from military service, like the repeated banishments of Athanasius, reflected the vicissitudes of the time, for he was made a colonel of horse by the restored Long Parliament in 1659, only to be displaced by Monk in 1660. Soon after this, he was imprisoned for "endeavouring to debauch some of the soldiers from their obedience, and likewise suspected of being dangerous to the State." In the following year he and John Vernon were sent into exile, and the last we hear of Allen is an elegy over his brother-in-law's death in 1666. Some of its lines surely express the writer's own disappointment with the times:

His soul did mourn in secret for such pride  
 He found with many long before he died:  
 To see a worldly, formal, selfish spirit  
 'Mongst men professing Heaven to inherit.

But the fullest account of his attitude is to be found in his *Word to the Army*, a pamphlet of twenty pages issued in 1660.



In this, as in his *Faithful Memorial* of the preceding year (which gives the account of the Windsor prayer meeting), he reviews the decline of the true cause, and speaks of Cromwell in his virtual kingship as "a ghost from the grave" of the Stuarts. The army has been guilty of "King-craft and worse than Bishop-like trapannings." He sees a grim meaning in the taking away of the Protector on the very anniversary of his victories at Dunbar and Worcester. The only true way to a Magna Charta is to acknowledge God.

We may sympathise with this Baptist condemnation of Oliver as a "worldly politician" (the phrase is S. R. Gardiner's), without for one minute thinking that he could have succeeded where Oliver failed, even though he had been Oliver. There are situations in which events demonstrate their power over men,<sup>4</sup> and the situation becomes too big for them, as we know to our cost to-day from the Great War and the present industrial strife. There is no short cut to a kingdom of the saints, and the Parliament supposed to be made of them was at least as ineffective as any other. But through human failure, as well as human success, such as it is, the vision of great aims, conscientiously and courageously pursued as they were by William Allen, is something of which to be proud. Both for him and for his fellows we may claim an interest that is of eternity as well as of time. As S. R. Gardiner remarks, "It was because the spear of Parliamentarism was tipped with Puritanism that the strife appeals to all who are attracted by the spectacle of unselfish human emotion resolving itself into action."

#### H. WHEELER ROBINSON.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Lord Grey, *Twenty-five Years*, p. 51. "There is in great affairs so much more, as a rule, in the minds of the events (if such an expression may be used) than in the minds of the chief actors."

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AN EXCESSIVELY RARE "First Baptist Collection of Hymns," was offered for sale in October at four guineas. The advertiser gave a doubly misleading description. The book was compiled by a Dublin Presbyterian, who in one hymn on baptism takes it as granted that baptism is by immersion; if that constituted a man a Baptist, we might count many Brethren, all the Disciples, the Second Adventists, and all the Orthodox Churches of the East, including Russians. The book was published in 1693, but Keach had published 300 hymns in 1691, Powell's hymns had come out in 1671, Katherine Sutton's in 1663.