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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Evangelical Religion at Oxford in the Later Sixties.

BY THE REV. A. C. DOWNER, D.D.

IN the later years of the seventh decade of the nineteenth century Evangelical religion had no easy task to maintain itself in Oxford. It was then only some thirty years since the publication of the "Tracts for the Times," and the "Essays and Reviews" were still recent. These had almost divided Oxford religious life between them, and there was a strong anti-religious movement. The works of John Stuart Mill were the centre round which unbelieving speculative thought chiefly moved.

At that time none of the senior members of the University came forward as leaders of Evangelical Churchmanship. There were, indeed, men of this type who exerted an influence on University life, such as the saintly Cotton, Provost of Worcester, and Symons, Warden of Wadham. Dr. Payne Smith was the Regius Professor of Divinity, and Dr. Heurtley the Margaret Professor. C. P. Golightly was residing in Holywell Street, and doing good in his own quaint way; and there were other men with similar sympathies. But though their example told powerfully, none of these could be described as a leader. On the other hand, there were Dr. Liddon and Dr. Pusey, Dr. Bright and Dr. King, all of whom were keen leaders on a different side of Church thought. Dr. Burgon was a power for good in a place of his own apart from these, but he could not be ranked among Evangelical men.

Nor were there any institutions to which the Evangelical feeling of Oxford might attach itself. There was no Wycliffe Hall, nor Hannington Hall; no Oxford Pastorate, nor even the Inter-Collegiate Christian Union. It seemed that Evangelical religion was destined to be crowded out of the University.

Under these circumstances the men who saved the situation were parochial clergy. In the absence of those who could have brought the weight of University dignity and position to the

cause, a few men, diverse in gifts, and acting for the most part individually, but strong in faith and in devotion to Christ, set up a banner in Oxford, which rallied many and kept them true to the principles they had received elsewhere, and carried an influence into the very heart of the University, especially among the undergraduates, that is being felt to-day. How splendidly they came to the rescue, and how great the effect of their work was, my best endeavours will fail to convey. These clergymen were the Rev. Henry Linton, Rector of St. Peter-le-Bailey, and formerly Fellow of Magdalen; the Rev. Alfred M. W. Christopher, Rector of St. Aldate's; and the Rev. Edward Penrose Hathaway, Rector of St. Ebbe's; ably assisted by their curates, especially the Rev. George Tonge at St. Peter's, and the Rev. T. A. Nash at St. Aldate's. Later, the Rev. Sydney Linton, son of Henry Linton, became Vicar of Holy Trinity; while Dr. French and Dr. Barlow successively took up the work at St. Ebbe's. Apart from all these, but exercising an influence of his own, was the Rev. Joseph West, Vicar of Holy Trinity, and Chaplain of New College—a most singular preacher, of the old Puritan type. I must not omit to mention the strong individuality of H. C. B. Bazely, of Brasenose, who at the time of which I write was a young B.A., not yet ordained.

It was round these men that the Evangelical feeling of the undergraduates gathered; and as, after the manner of Evangelicals, they acted together only to a very limited extent, each of them had a separate following of his own of those who, from temperament, training, or accident, found themselves attached to one leader or the other.

These clergy were not authors, but men of prayer and action. They live for us, not in their written works, which were few and of little weight, but in their saintly lives, their spirit of prayer, their constant zeal, their untiring efforts for the spiritual welfare of the undergraduates, their generous hospitality, their fervent support of foreign missions, their constant maintenance of the simplicity of worship, and the brightness and

loving warmth of their teaching and of the Gospel which they proclaimed. Beside their efforts, there were movements indigenous to the undergraduate life. One of these had arisen some few years before the period of which I write. It began in Wadham through the efforts of W. Hay M. H. Aitken, and another undergraduate named Freeman. During one of their vacations they had taken part in some revival work, in which the father of the former, the Evangelist, Robert Aitken, of Pendeen, had, I believe, been the leader. On returning to Oxford they resolved to speak to every man in the College about his soul. This effort met with extraordinary success. A number of Wadham men dated the beginning of their conscious religious life from that time. Prayer-meetings were held in the College, Evangelistic effort was set on foot, and a movement began which vibrated throughout the University.

At the time of which I write, this movement, though still remembered, had spent its force. There were only two agencies left representing the independent Evangelical energy of the undergraduates. One was a prayer-meeting, held twice a week, in the afternoon, in the famous "Upper Chamber" of the old Rectory House of St. Aldate's, No. 40, Pembroke Street; and the other, which found a home in the same room, the Oxford University Tract Distribution Society, the members of which visited defined districts in the villages around Oxford, with the consent of the parochial clergy, lending and exchanging tracts amongst the parishioners. There is not much to be said about these two institutions, except that, while undoubtedly of good tendency, they were somewhat dry and formal. I remember seeing the conductor of the prayer-meeting go round the room inviting each of the few men present to offer prayer, and being refused by all of them in turn. In the Tract Distribution Society there was a fair amount of activity, but a morbid fear seemed to obsess some of the members lest their tracts should be of too Evangelistic and stimulating a character. A strong element in it voted consistently at the general meeting for confining the tracts circulated to the publications of the

S.P.C.K., at that date less lively and telling than they have since become.

Another institution, chiefly, though not exclusively, worked by Evangelical men, mostly of graduate standing, was the Oxford Union for Private Prayer—a most excellent organization, which still survives, though, unfortunately, in a languishing condition. Many saintly names are recorded in its list of members.

The institutions set on foot by the parochial clergy were the Saturday Evening Meeting for Prayer and Exposition of the Scriptures, by the Rev. A. M. W. Christopher, in the old Rectory “Upper Room,” undoubtedly the most powerful Evangelical influence in Oxford at the time; the Friday Afternoon Meeting for Missionary Intercession at the house of the Rev. Henry Linton; and a useful Greek Testament Class on Sunday evenings, conducted by the Rev. George Tonge, Curate of St. Peter-le-Bailey, and Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Carlisle. Of each of these I shall speak in its order.

Such was the condition of Evangelical religion and effort in the University as I remember it when I went into residence as a freshman in October, 1866. Brought up in the old High Church school of thought, I had later received a strong impulse of an Evangelistic rather than Evangelical nature, and, beyond a few occasions on which I had listened to well-known men like Goodhart and Molyneux, I was unaccustomed to Evangelical sermons. Probably one of the first I ever heard was from the Rev. T. A. Nash, at St. Aldate’s Church, when I went up to try for a scholarship in 1866. Of Evangelical Churchmanship I knew very little, and was inclined to be critical.

In our first term, my schoolfellow C. S. Bontein, of Oriel, and I called upon Mr. Christopher at his house, Richmond Lodge, and received a cordial welcome. He invited us to his Saturday evening meetings, which we promised to attend. We went to the University prayer-meeting, of which I have spoken. I was also made a member of the Tract Distribution Society, and joined Mr. Tonge’s Greek Testament class.

In Lent term, 1867, the same two began some Evangelistic meetings at Sutton Courtney, which brought us into connection with two senior men, H. C. B. Bazely, of B.N.C., and C. H. C. Ward, of Exeter. At our second meeting these two joined us. This was the beginning of Bazely's Evangelistic work, which largely developed in after-days. Dr. Hawkins, Provost of Oriel, prohibited Bontein from taking an active part at any such gatherings, which led to his migrating to a Hall, and subsequently to his seceding to Plymouth Brethrenism. The Principal of my own College did not interfere. He said that there was free trade in religion nowadays.

I now go back to describe the work and influence of Mr. Christopher. He was a Cambridge man, an M.A. of Jesus College, and had been a University "Blue," playing in the cricket eleven of his year as one of the winning team against Oxford. Mr. Christopher, now an Honorary Canon of Oxford, happily still survives at the age of ninety to greet the old friends who visit him with the same cheerful smile and hearty welcome that they remember so vividly from olden days. It was his practice in term-time to remain at home all day in order to receive visits from undergraduates, to each of whom he addressed words of warm sympathy and counsel, frequently inviting them to join with him in prayer; and he used to furnish his young friends with a good supply of books and tracts of an earnest Evangelical tone. He was especially fond of Caroline Fry's "Christ our Example," Scott's "Force of Truth," and Brownlow North's books, as well as those of the Rev. J. C. Ryle.

Mr. Christopher frequently invited us to breakfast at his house, and it was in this way that I became acquainted with Mrs. Christopher, one of the most gracious and amiable ladies I have ever been privileged to meet. On Saturday evenings I went regularly to the Rectory meetings, and there for the first time found myself amid a circle of Evangelical friends. Mr. Christopher used to expound the Scriptures, especially Rom. v., and to offer up earnest extempore prayer. Very many times

have I sat listening to his simple fervent words with intense feeling. The "Upper Room" was usually crowded. From time to time Mr. Christopher would invite leading clergy to address this meeting, and to preach in St. Aldate's the following day. Among these I remember C. J. Goodhart, James Bardsley of Manchester, J. C. Miller, Wilkinson of Birmingham, W. Cadman of Marylebone, and W. Haslam. Mr. Christopher's method was simple. His first and dearest effort was to induce men to receive the truth of the Gospel of Christ, and he would tell many anecdotes of the conversion of well-known men, both clerical and lay. Next to this he sought to show the reformed character of the Church of England, and to guard us, always most charitably, against contrary errors. Thirdly, he was ever stirring up the more earnest men to speak to their College friends about the things of God. And, lastly, he put before us the great ideals of service in the mission-field abroad and the great parishes of our large towns. Every effort for good found him a sympathizer and helper. He lent his Rectory room for the University prayer-meeting and the Tract Distribution Society. The useful schemes of others were as welcome to him as his own.

In the summer term, 1867, H. C. B. Bazely went to Mr. Christopher and proposed that Evangelistic meetings should be held in the Town Hall, St. Aldate's. Bazely was a man of a remarkable kind. He was the son of an old High Churchman, who had been a Fellow of Brasenose, and a Proctor of the University. As a schoolboy at Radley, his mind turned against the system in which he had been brought up and which he considered the discipline of the school to foster. He had taken a Classical Scholarship at Brasenose, a First Class in Moderations, and a Second in Greats, and was now a Hulmeian Exhibitioner of his College. Later, he took the Denyer and Johnson Theological Scholarship, in 1868, and proceeded to the B.C.L. degree. He would not take the M.A., as he thought he should be required to sign the Articles of Religion. His ecclesiastical position was undetermined when I first knew him, but afterwards

settled into Presbyterianism. His theology was Calvinistic, but with large-hearted appreciation of the views of others. At this time, he was in communion with the Church of England and he always continued in regular attendance at Mr. Christopher's Saturday Evening and other meetings. The "Life of Bazely," by Canon (now Bishop) Hicks (Macmillan, 1886), gives an account of many events in his life and many features in his character. Somehow, however, it fails to present the man as we knew him, and the author seems to have missed the peculiar aroma of his personality, with its quaintness, which had assimilated a strong Scotch quality, and its dry and biting, but not unkindly, humour.

The meetings in the Town Hall were duly arranged and issued in great success. Various well-known Evangelistic speakers were obtained to address them, amongst whom were Lord Radstock, the Earl of Cavan, Robert Baxter, Stevenson Blackwood, Admiral Fishbourne, William Taylor the navy, Joseph Samme the costermonger, and the Rev. W. Haslam. Some fifteen hundred townspeople gathered at each meeting; vast numbers of tracts were distributed, including "A Saviour for You," "The Sinner's Friend," and others; and many undergraduates took part as mission-workers. Some of the speakers, especially those of good social position, used the opportunity to influence the undergraduates. Chief among these was Lord Radstock, who would breakfast with us in our rooms and there meet many of our friends.

While this work was at its height and was creating no little stir and even excitement amongst us, one morning, in the Summer Term of 1867, I was walking with C. H. C. Ward round the Schools, near Broad Street, while he, in his enthusiastic way, was expatiating on the need of constant prayer for such an important movement. Brasenose being in a central position, it was agreed to invite our friends to a short prayer-meeting every evening; and, although the "Eights" were then in full course, we had twelve or fourteen men every evening, with a great spirit of prayer, in what was then the back "Quad" of Brasenose,

now pulled down. The following term, F. J. Chavasse, of Corpus, proposed that this meeting should be removed, with Mr. Christopher's permission, to St. Aldate's Rectory, in place of the meeting previously held twice a week. In this way originated the University Daily Prayer-meeting.

Open-air, cottage, and other meetings were organized to influence people for good, both in Oxford and in the villages. The clergy of St. Aldate's, St. Ebbe's, St. Peter-le-Bailey, and Holy Trinity, welcomed help from the University men, thus providing an outlet for their new zeal. F. J. Chavasse instituted a Sunday-school in a cottage at New Hinksey, at that time without church or school. Amongst his helpers were W. Sinclair, scholar of Balliol, W. B. Brown of B.N.C., and others. Bazely started an outdoor service on Sunday evenings, at the Martyrs' Memorial. These special efforts impressed many townspeople with greater respect for junior members of the University than they had felt before.

Once a year, Mr. Christopher gave a great Church Missionary breakfast, inviting senior, as well as junior, men. Some well-known speaker was obtained and a strong missionary feeling was kindled. On one occasion, at Mr. Christopher's house, I listened to an evening address from Sir Bartle Frere, the tenor of which I well remember. The rooms were crowded, and men were sitting on the staircase.

I must now turn to speak of the work of the Rev. H. Linton, of St. Peter-le-Bailey. The Friday afternoon meeting for missionary intercession at his house, Northbourne, was very different from those of which I have spoken above. Mr. Linton's deep sense of reverence disinclined him for extemporaneous prayer in public. The prayers at this meeting were from a Missionary Liturgy drawn up by Dean Goulburn and others, and were read by Mr. Linton himself. They were very beautiful, and I have continued to use them, with my curates, for a great part of my life. Mr. Linton made us many gifts of books, such as the works of Dean Vaughan, Mr. Bourdillon, Dean Goulburn, Dr. Heurtley, and others. Here I first saw the

Rev. C. P. Golightly, who, I believe, regularly attended these meetings.

The Oxford Union for Private Prayer was at this time closely connected with this meeting. On Trinity Tuesday a social meeting and luncheon for the members was held at Islip Rectory, but was afterwards transferred to Mr. Fremantle's, at Claydon.

Mr. Linton was an assiduous distributor of tracts. One of his own on "Assurance" I remember well, and still have a copy. He kindly gave me a class in his Sunday school. Mr. Linton, probably more than any other clergyman named, visited undergraduates known to him in their rooms; and he used to invite us about once a term to an evening party at his house.

The Rev. E. P. Hathaway, Rector of St. Ebbe's, was a man of burning zeal and acute, far-seeing intelligence. His health was infirm, and he suffered from sleeplessness. Mr. Hathaway had been a barrister, and his legal knowledge was of essential service to him in the important enterprises which he undertook. By his efforts, I believe, an Evangelical ministry was obtained for St. Aldate's, St. Peter-le-Bailey, St. Ebbe's, Holy Trinity, and St. Clement's, the advowsons being secured and suitable appointments made. He had two excellent curates, H. E. Fox, a Cambridge man, since Hon. Secretary of the C.M.S., and W. B. Brown, whose mission-work is known all over the country. Mr. Hathaway devoted his efforts largely to the interests of the five parishes named, and every year raised a large sum to supplement the inadequate endowments. He also cared for the parochial schools, and concerned himself in finding curates for the parishes. In this way a great force was brought to bear both upon the city and the University.

The sphere in which Bazely moved was altogether his own, though he was in constant touch with the older men, especially Mr. Christopher, and with great modesty and loyalty attended their meetings. He had not yet seceded to Presbyterianism, and probably at no time was he more useful. As a theological "coach" he was in contact with many undergraduates. To me,

as a junior man, he gave much valuable advice and assistance in my reading, lending me his marked editions of the classics. He gave me many publications by the Rev. J. C. Ryle, which helped to clear up my views on various subjects. I was with him constantly, both in term-time and vacation, for about eighteen months, in 1867-68, and took a long tour with him in Scotland and the Shetlands in my first long vacation, beside uniting with him in various Evangelistic enterprises in Oxford and elsewhere. After that he drew off, not from any coolness, but, I believe, because he thought I was now able to stand alone, and other men needed his care more. He was a diligent visitor amongst the poor, and generous in his gifts to them. As a tract-distributor he was indefatigable. In his outdoor preaching he greatly excelled his efforts indoors, which were often rather dry. Canon Hicks has included in his "Life" a description, contributed by me, of Bazely preaching at the Martyrs' Memorial—a unique and remarkable figure.

One of the most striking events I remember during my undergraduate life was the famous meeting in Brasenose Hall, held by Bishop T. V. French, of Lahore, and John William Knott, formerly Fellow of Brasenose, previous to their going out together to India. Many of the leading personages of the University were present; and, though I cannot remember much of what was said, I can never forget the figures of those two devoted men as they stood up and simply told of Christ and His cause in heathen India, where the latter was destined to fall within a year and a half, and the other was permitted to labour for many years more before yielding up his own life in the midst of his work.

These reminiscences may seem to disclose no large or connected movement, nor do they tell of any comprehensive organization, and still less of any influential patronage secured for the Evangelical cause. But the power of God was in and with these simple-hearted men. They lived and prayed, and laboured and suffered. Some smiled; others disapproved; most held aloof. "Of the rest durst no man join himself to them."

But God was with them, and let none of their words fall to the ground. They spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance, and their influence was more direct and effective, in all likelihood, than could have been exerted by any diplomacy or any patronage. The Oxford of to-day has more organized effort and more prominent names to back it. It will be well if it can wield the same power and achieve as great results.



When the Foot Drags.

BY THE REV. CHARLES COURTENAY, M.A.,

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THIS is a contribution to the study of the inner life of the minister of Christ; an attempt to clear and invigorate that inner being when the foot drags. To put a new spring into that dragging foot, or even to show the way to lift it, is worth attempting, even if the venture be not wholly successful.

I. Let us first ponder carefully *the complaint*.

It is easily identified, for all my ministerial readers will have traversed that very dark subway of life which I have ventured to describe by the dragging foot. The mood comes on with more or less suddenness, and, when it comes, plunges us into the worst of life's morasses. The old buoyancy which has hitherto kept us afloat in God's free air disappears, and the strangest of changes takes place in the inner spirit. The joy of work evaporates, the sense of hopefulness disappears, the love of our fellows suffers an eclipse, the delight in rapid movement ceases, our songs are dirges, and then, well—the foot drags.

The distressing part of the complaint is that, in spite of it, we have to keep moving, the foot has to be kept "on the go." Visits must still be paid to souls hungering for some buoyant message of life, sermons must still be preached to congregations who are more or less dependent on our life and brightness,