

Some Baptist Hymnists.

PART IV.

MODERN BAPTIST HYMN WRITERS.

1. CHANGES AND A TRUER IDEAL.

"**T**IME makes ancient good uncouth." Phrases natural to our forefathers are often unreal to us. Truth endures. But its mode of expression changes with the passing years. As we turn to hymns by modern writers, we naturally expect to find differences both in matter and technique.

Without entering into lengthy details, we may take it that, generally, these conform, more nearly than old ones did, to the ideal set forth by Roundell Palmer in his Preface to *The Book of Praise*.

A good hymn should have simplicity, freshness, and reality of feeling; a consistent elevation of tone, and a rhythm easy and harmonious, but not jingling or trivial. Its language may be homely, but should not be slovenly or mean. Affectation or visible artifice is worse than excess of homeliness; a hymn is easily spoiled by a single falsetto note. Nor will the most exemplary soundness of doctrine atone for doggerel, or redeem from failure a prosaic didactic style.

2. WALTER J. MATHAMS AND WILLIAM H. PARKER.

In dealing with some modern Baptist Hymnists, the author of this article may be allowed to write in the first person, for the names are those of personal friends; the first four of whom have "moved a little nearer to the Master of all music, to the Master of all singing."

(a) I begin with Walter John Mathams, born in 1853. After training at Regent's Park College, he was henceforth a Baptist Minister until, in 1900, he entered the Church of Scotland, first as Chaplain to the Forces, then as Minister of Churches. In Preston, Falkirk, and Wycliffe, Birmingham (his three Baptist charges), his memory is cherished as pastor and friend by older members. My friendship with him commenced during his residence in Birmingham, and lasted till his Home-call in 1931.

A preacher of exceptional ability and force, his fame rests chiefly upon his skill as a poet shown in his volume, *The Day of*

the Golden Chance. Dr. Robertson Nicoll recognised his gifts in the oft-quoted poem with its refrain,

Latimer's light shall never go out,

and commissioned the author to write another that appeared in *The British Weekly*.

But Mathams excelled as a writer of hymns. In my judgment, his rank among the best of modern times. In his striking personality, strength and tenderness were combined; and these characteristics are reflected in his productions. Compare the stirring strains so admired by John Clifford beginning,

God is with us! God is with us!
So our brave forefathers sang,

(*B.C.H. Revd.* No. 408),

with

Jesus, Friend of little children (No. 767).

Moreover, his was a truly devout spirit, manifested in

Christ of the Upward Way, my Guide divine (No. 420).⁴

(b) Probably the children's hymn most popular during the last twenty-five years is

Tell me the stories of Jesus.

It is found in numerous collections both sides of the Atlantic, and has been translated into various languages. In part, the popularity is due to the tune to which it is wedded. In the Centenary Year of the National S.S. Union (1903) prizes were offered for the best tunes for certain hymns printed in a booklet. At my request, Sir Frederick Bridge, M.Doc., Organist of Westminster Abbey, consented to adjudicate upon the music. I took the MSS. of selected tunes to him in his studio. After playing them over, he went through this piece two or three times, read the words, and said, "This is the best. A fine hymn, too. In a few years both will be sung all over the kingdom." On opening the sealed envelope attached to the MS. the composer proved to be F. A. Challinor, M.Doc.

The author of the hymn was William Henry Parker, a Nottingham man, born there in 1845, and died there in 1929; member of Chelsea Street Baptist Church, New Basford, where Rev. W. R. Stevenson ministered, encouraging him in his writing of verse. Most of the hymns were first printed in sheets

⁴Verse 5, last line, was suggested by Thackeray's *The Newcomes*, where, before death, the Colonel responded *Adsum*. Readers interested in the subject may care to refer to other hymns by Mr. Mathams. See *P. and H. for School and Home*, Nos. 238, 253, 289, 321, 322 and 336. *P. and H.* Nos. 1128 and 1270. *Sunday School Hymnary*, Nos. 386 and 473.

for Sunday School Anniversaries. The N.S.S.U. acquired them, and fifteen of them appear in *The S.S. Hymnary*.⁵

Children know but little,
Jesus, I so often need Thee,

and

Holy Spirit, hear us,

have been widely used. The last named was rapidly written during a solemn and sacred spiritual experience. Canon Julian, in a letter to me, said that, in his opinion, it was the finest hymn yet written for children on the subject of the Holy Spirit.

Tell me the stories of Jesus (*B.C.H. Revd.* No. 750),

originated thus, according to the account given me by the author. On returning home from school one Sunday afternoon, he sat in his summer-house and, recalling the oft-repeated request of his young scholars—"Teacher, tell us another story"—he made his first draft of the hymn. It is not to be wondered at that boys and girls love these verses, for they form a series of concrete word-pictures in varied and vivid style, enabling young singers to realise outstanding events in our Lord's life from Galilee to Calvary.

As to Mr. Parker's personality, quiet in demeanour, kindly in disposition, always trying to see the best in others, he was one of God's true gentlemen, respected and loved by all who came in contact with him. It was my privilege to unveil a beautiful Memorial Window in the chapel where for so many years he served Christ and His Church.

3. JAMES SEAGER AND WILLIAM CAREY, JUNIOR.

(c) In College days, James Seager was to me a name, and nothing more. He was known only as a Rawdonian, at that time a Baptist preacher whose photograph in the College Common Room showed him to be a bearded gentleman of impressive appearance. But in 1884, upon my settling at Sale, Cheshire, he was the first minister who called on me bringing brotherly good wishes. To do this he voluntarily came out from Salford, where he was Pastor of George Street Chapel, since closed. That fraternal act has never been forgotten. It was typical of the man.

During nearly fifty years of our acquaintance he proved to be at all times a loyal friend, gracious in manner, studious, thoughtful, with literary tastes; and, withal, a lover supremely of Christ—God's word made flesh—and, in lesser degree, a lover of God's thoughts manifested in His wondrous works in the realm of Nature.

⁵ See Index II., under author's name.

In Seager's latter years, he held charges at Dorchester and Hathern. Our last meeting was in Loughborough, where for months he was an invalid, whose sufferings were borne with rare patience. He had mellowed. To be in his presence and hold converse with him was a benediction.

One interest we held in common was Hymnology, on which he gave several week-evening addresses to his people. It is, therefore, not surprising that he himself should be a hymnist. Of his compositions, three were on the same theme, viz. The Beatitudes. Of these, one is in the *S.S.H.*, No. 403m. So frequently was it in demand for Church and Sunday School services that it had to be reprinted in leaflet form. Each verse is a response after the minister or superintendent has read the Lord's sentences of blessing one by one. These Beatitudes of our divine Master, giving the portraiture of a true disciple, made a wonderful appeal to James Seager. Indeed, unconsciously to himself, they moulded his character, for he lived them.

(d) William Carey, junior, and I were fellow-students and chums at Rawdon College in the early eighties; the friendship there begun being maintained by correspondence during his residence in India, and by personal intercourse when he was home on furlough. He was one of Rawdon's most illustrious sons. From early days, and right through his life, he radiated sunshine among all who knew him. His very laugh was a message of good cheer.

Lest our personal association should lead to—what some might deem—an over-estimate of his character and gifts, let the tribute of Rev. C. E. Wilson, Joint Secretary of the B.M.S., be here quoted :

He was one of the notable, outstanding missionaries of this generation. He bore with grateful loyalty an illustrious name, not without adding honour to it. . . . He was equally at home and successful in his work among the university students in Dacca and in his pastoral superintendence of villages of the rice-beels of East Bengal. His lasting monuments are in Bengal, in the fine church and school buildings at Barisal, which he erected, and for which he himself gathered most of the funds; in his contributions to Christian literature as a hymn-writer, editor of several magazines, his *Religious Survey of Bengal*, and other works.

Mr. Wilson then describes him as

A trusted colleague . . . a most lovable, warm-hearted friend, rebuking all tendency to sloth or depression by his own prodigious diligence. Many a night he would work at his desk from sunset to dawn . . . He will long be

remembered by his children's hymns in the Bengali language and in English.

Of his English hymns he is known by,

Jesus loves me! Jesus loves me!
Oh, the happy chime!

and

Little birds on lightest wing.
(Nos. 31 and 10 in the *S.S. Hymnary*.)

Dr. G. Hamilton Archibald frequently had the former of these sung at his Lecture-Conferences.

Of the Bengali hymns, Carey's are literal translations skilfully expressed in English. Chief among them is that of Krishna Pal, his ancestor's first convert.

Dr. Marshman's version,

O thou, my soul, forget no more,⁶

is a paraphrase in long metre form, and does not bring out the device of Bengali hymnists in using a single phrase as a refrain. Carey remedied the lack, as will be seen from verses 1 and 4, of his rendering.

Introduction to each verse,

That One who gave up His own life sinners to redeem,

(*Refrain.*)

O my soul, do not forget Him.

1 Forget Him no more, make this devotion's core,
Jesus, name divine! given to redeem,
O my soul, etc.

* * * *

4 O'er and o'er I sing of Him my holy King,
Jesus' name will bear me safely o'er the stream.
O my soul, etc.

In this form, sung to a haunting native melody, the hymn is usually taken at Communion Services in Bengal.

Others of his Bengali hymns (published by The N.S.S. Union, 57, Ludgate Hill, E.C.4) are—

Endeavour Band,
Jesus only, none beside,
Now go home, taking Jesus,
Sing victory to Jesus,

and one of Dr. W. Y. Fullerton's favourites,

Show me Thy face at the dawn. (See *Hymns for To-day*, No. 115.)

The subject of this brief sketch was born in 1861 at Wolverhampton, where his father, Rev. J. P. Carey, was minister; his great-grandfather being William Carey, of Serampore, and his younger brother, Rev. S. Pearce Carey,

⁶ See *B.C.H. Rvd.* No. 155.

biographer of his ancestor. In 1885 William Carey junior went to India under the B.M.S. and laboured there till 1935, when he was called to higher service.

Two author-friends of mine still with us are—

4. F. A. JACKSON AND F. GOLDSMITH FRENCH.

Both are true poets. (e) Frederick Arthur Jackson is a Yorkshireman, whose boyhood was spent in Bingley, and the air of the moorlands can be felt in most of his verse. His volume, *Just Beyond*, received most favourable reviews in literary and other Papers. The *Daily News* notice of the book has these sentences :

In the make-up of his lyrics there is scarcely a fault to be found. The diction is choice and chaste, the style is graceful, and the rhythm regular and smooth.

The spirit of poetry breathes in his prose. Devotional articles contributed to religious journals have been issued in volume form. These evidence originality of thought, and are suggestive and helpful, all being written with distinction of style.

As a hymnist, Mr. Jackson is represented in the *B.C.H.* (*Rvd.*) by a new Baptismal hymn—

Master we Thy footsteps follow (No. 484).

an Empire hymn found in several other books—

Where the flag of Britain flies (No. 705).

and one for the dedication of an infant—

Father, now we thank Thee (No. 707).

The latter two also appear in the *S.S. Hymnary* with

There is a book that comes to me (No. 304).

Join we all in gladsome singing (No. 363).

and

Fight for the right, boys (No. 384).

His skilled help has been given by contributing lyrics to *Child Songs*, Vols. I. to III., and to various Cantatas; and in *The Ropeholders' Hymn*—

Down the mine for buried treasure (*Hymns for To-day*, No. 108).

Trained at Spurgeon's College, Mr. Jackson has exercised useful ministries in the North and the Midlands, now being settled in Campden, Glos.

(f) Frederic Goldsmith French, born in London, 1867, passed through a theological course at Midland College and Nottingham University; and, after three years' oversight of the Church in Chatteris, settled at High Road, Lee, Kent, in 1894, where he still ministers to an attached and appreciative congregation.

He is a born student, a man of wide and varied reading, a thinker whose preaching is teaching, and a writer of cultured literary power, displayed in his books on Thomas a-Kempis, and *An Introduction to Mysticism*. His fine hymn on The Teachers' Plea has been frequently reprinted since its publication in the *S.S. Hymnary* (1905), repeated in the *B.C.H. (Rvd.)*, No. 390—

Lord of the reapers, hear our lowly pleading.

Of many hymns printed but not published the following on a present Christ will show my friend's right to be considered a poet.

Beyond the mountains gaunt and grey,
 Beyond a stretch of tideless sea,
 There lies a country far away,
 More dear than many lands to me :
 For there, within a lowly town,
 Grew one who is my Lord and King,
 Who came to neither court nor crown,
 Save those which marked His suffering.

In love He learned life's common ways,
 With all its peril and its pain ;
 He filled His long and patient days
 With toil for my eternal gain :
 For me He sought the silent hill,
 As for some starlit house of prayer,
 In whose deep stillness God's good will
 Might reach His heart in accents rare.

For me He conquered as He prayed,
 With sure unshaken deathless faith ;
 For me in robes of scorn arrayed,
 He came at last to shameful death :
 And yet I wrong Him if I dream,
 That far away or long ago
 Alone, He wrought the work supreme,
 Which in my heart of faith I know.

For even in this city grey,
 In any sad and squalid street,
 Who knows the living Christ to-day
 The present Christ may surely meet :
 Though I am glad for that far land,
 Wherein He came and lived and died ;
 In this my home, He takes my hand,
 And walks for ever at my side. AMEN.

5. TWO WOMEN HYMNISTS.

(g) Among present-day authors of prose and poetry, Alice Muriel Pullen takes a place of honour. She comes of good Baptist stock as the daughter of Rev. H. H. Pullen, of Spezia, Italy, and niece of Rev. Edgar R. Pullen, for forty years minister of Shirley, Southampton. She engaged in Christian educational work with the sisters Doris and Muriel Lester at

Children's House in Bow, and since has lectured in different parts of the country, besides devoting herself to writing.

In *School Worship* two of her hymns are—

and At work beside His father's bench (No. 46),

Praise to the overcomers, (No. 305),

while the *B.C.H.* (*Rvd.*) has

Thou perfect Hero-Knight (No. 724).

American Editors have used these and other of Miss Pullen's compositions, including

and A workman in a village home,
For man's unceasing quest for God,

Hail to all the heroes.

(*h*) The lady who adopts the pen-name of "Doreen Ireland," known especially in Baptist missionary circles through her story, *The Spirit of Weard Hall*,⁷ and by other writings, comes from an old Irish family—a fact that explains her *nom-de-plume*. She was baptised in Ryde by her Minister, Rev. M. Lister Gaunt, and was an earnest worker in The Girls' Auxiliary. Sonnets and poems written by her have appeared in different magazines. Her hymns,

and Lord, here am I,
From far green hills of Galilee,

are Nos. 32 and 42 in *Hymns for To-day*.

Briefer notes must suffice for

6. OTHER WRITERS.

(*i*) William Thomas Adey, Minister at Scarborough, Ealing and Kingsbridge, in 1905 contributed to the *S.S. Hymnary*,

There is room for little children (No. 107).

(*j*) Alfred A. Cole, who for nearly forty years ministered in Walsall, and died there in 1893, issued a book of hymns from which was taken

The rippling waves played o'er the sea (*S.S.H.* No. 212).

(*k*) William E. Cule, Editor to the B.M.S. Carey Press, writer of stories, Sunday School teacher and Baptist deacon, published in *Hymns for To-day* two hymns of distinction—

and Creator Lord of life and light (on Prayer) (No. 28),

The morning's golden glory (No. 87).

⁷ Published by the Carey Press.

(l) William Young Fullerton, the beloved Home Secretary of the B.M.S., was born in 1857, and passed Home in 1932. Evangelist, preacher, biographer and pastor, he wrote hymns, three of which are in *Hymns for To-day*—

Hark to the voices of the earth (No. 55),
We name the name of Jesus (No. 39),

and the one with which he will always be associated, "The Saviour of the World," opening with

I cannot tell why He, whom angels worship (*B.C.H. Rvd.* No. 547).

(m) Joseph Brown Morgan, Minister of Halffield Chapel, Bradford, and leader in the Christian Endeavour Movement, was Joint-Editor of *The C. E. Hymnal*, 1896 edition. For this he wrote hymns, five of which are repeated in the revised book issued in 1933.

Hark, 'tis the clarion! (No. 309.)
O Saviour divine, (No. 269.)
Seasons in their noiseless courses, (No. 62.)
Sweetly the sound of the trumpet, (No. 511.)

and

Up with your hearts in a song of rejoicing. (No. 374.)

(n) Leonard J. Egerton Smith, born in 1879, student at Spurgeon's College, has been Pastor in Kettering, Attercliffe, and at Burnham-on-Sea since 1921. He is author of one of the best modern hymns for young people—

For all the love that from our earliest days,

written for Dr. R. Vaughan Williams' noble tune, "Sine-Nomine." See *B.C.H. (Rvd.)* No. 711.

(o) One other lesser known but equally worthy Hymnist is John Robert Way, a Spurgeon's College man, who has been content to labour in small churches, and is now at Thorverton, Devon. The Devon and Cornwall Association recognised his faithful services by electing him as President in 1934. A modest man, of retiring disposition, only a few of his friends knew of his gift for hymn-writing. One of these put me in touch with him, and Mr. Way has sent to me several of his compositions.

One hymn for the Discipleship Campaign was printed in *The Baptist Times*, with its opening lines,

Won to win another
For the Christ who died.

Another,⁹ set to Henry Smart's tune, "Pilgrims," was welcomed by many as an alternative to Faber's rather hazy and

⁹ Published in *New Series*, No. 19.

sentimental, "Hark, hark my soul!" The first verse deals with Christ's birth—

How blest the night when angels sang the story
Of Him who came the world's distress to bear,
How sweet the song—"To God be highest glory,
Goodwill to men"—that floated down the air.

Refrain.

Jesus the Saviour, come and adore,
Bow down and worship Him
The King for evermore.

But verses 3 and 4 are for all seasons—

3 Soft steals the music through the burdened ages,
Weary with pain and heavy with unrest,
Whispering alike to peasants and to sages
Thoughts of the life in Jesus Christ made blest.—*Refrain.*

4 Echo, my heart, the sweet and blessed rapture,
The golden tidings ringing from above,
Till angel anthems all my feelings capture
With the glad gospel message "God is Love."—*Refrain.*

The first verse of another of Mr. Way's hymns shows that he is able to interpret the desires and aspirations of youth—

With happy hearts and gleeful songs,
We join the ranks of God,
To march along the sunlit way
The Saints of old have trod;
With youthful hope we wave aloft
Our banners to the sky,
While from our lips ring joyful notes
Of praise and victory.

Chorus.

No care we fear; no ill, no foe
Can bring our hearts dismay,
Because in all the path we go,
Our Captain leads the way.

(See *New Series*, No. 22.)

Although these Notes on Modern Baptist Hymnists are, of necessity, brief, and do not include every author of published verse, yet they will suffice to prove that among Baptists there are still found those whose joy is to sing forth the honour of the Name that is "above every name," and to express in lyric verse the desires and intercessions of those devout souls whose hope and trust are fixed upon that God of whom they can say, "*The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.*"

CAREY BONNER.