

Notes.

Disappearing Imber.

The following notes may usefully supplement the information given in his article "The Disappearing Village of Imber" by Rev. W. Erskine Rankin in the *Baptist Times* of April 22nd, 1948.

David Saunders, the Pious Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, whose life story has been immortalised by Hannah More, and who lies buried in West Lavington churchyard, sometimes preached at Imber and is justly credited with helping to plant some of the early Nonconformist churches on Salisbury Plain and the surrounding neighbourhood.

In the Bratton church register are found quite a few names of residents at Imber who between 1810 and 1837, applied for baptism and membership of Bratton church. In the minute book of August 7th, 1839, the names of Thomas Found, James Pearce, Isaac Carter and William Grant are recorded as requesting their dismissal for the purpose of forming a Baptist church at Imber, and this was reluctantly granted.

At this time it would appear that the chapel itself was already erected, for on a printed leaflet containing a poem read at a tea meeting at Imber, July 13th, 1863, is the following statement: "Note. The Village of Imber is very pleasantly situated on Salisbury Plain, and is seen and distinguished at some distance by the fine foliage of the trees which relieve the monotony of the surrounding Downs. A neat and commodious chapel was opened for Divine Worship in 1863. A few years afterwards a Sunday School was commenced which owed its origin to the exertions and labours of Mr. John Neat and Mr. Edward Curtis. The School has flourished and borne moral and spiritual fruits, which have permanently enriched and enlarged the Church. It may be pleasing to some to know that this cause was begun by two of the inhabitants of Imber who listened and afterwards joined in the prayers of David Saunders, the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, of whom a very interesting account is given in the Tract Magazine for October, 1863."

In the 13th Annual Report of the Baptist Building Fund, it is interesting to note that, dated June 12th, 1838, a grant of £45 was made to Imber, Wilts.

In the church minute book of December 6th, 1839, there is

a reference to the death of John Carter, of Imber, who had been in membership with the Bratton church for between fifty and sixty years, and stating that he owed his conversion to David Satnders.

We find the church at Imber, in 1863, joining the newly formed Wilts. & East Somerset Association, reporting a membership of fifty-two with eighty-three scholars in the Sunday School, and the names of J. Feltham and J. S. Farmer as joint ministers. In the poem already referred to special referenc is made to Mr. Feltham as being a

dear old man.

Ready to do what good he can;
 If we can't profit by his speech,
 To blame him not, I do beseech.
 In age advanced, yet hale and strong,
 In the blest cause has served you long;
 May he be spared for many years
 To lead you on, through joy and tears.

It is evident from the poem that he had served the church long before 1863, and his name continues for nine years after.

Mr. Joseph Goddart, referred to by Mr. Rankin, appears to have been an outstanding figure in the history of the Imber church. He seems to have rendered excellent service and, at the Association Meetings held at Swindon in 1870, a grant was made to enable him to devote more of his time to Home Misionary work in the district. In Mr. Goddart's report in 1882 he says, "At Imber our congregation has greatly increased. The Chapel is thronged to excess, and many have been brought to the Saviour. We baptized fifteen last Sunday, and more are under deep impression". The following year eleven more were added to the church and the membership grew to sixty-six, with 141 in the Sunday School.

After 1883 we lose sight of Mr. Goddart. In 1885 we find the Church under the pastoral oversight of Mr. W. Drew, minister of Bratton, and on October 13th, 1886, we read of the autumnal meetings of the Association being held at Imber. In 1891 the report states that Miss Broadbent, of Sowerby Bridge, Yorkshire, has been appointed mistress of the Day School and has entered upon work in church and school with earnestness and hopeful prospects. With 1890 Mr. Drew's name ceases to appear as pastor of Imber, though still minister of Bratton. The Jubilee of the Sunday School was celebrated on July 10th, 1893.

The report of 1899 refers to the death of Charles Daniels at the age of eighty-one, and the loss this meant to the church. Three years later the death of Mrs. Goddart "widow of our old friend Joseph Goddart" is recorded. In 1910 the death of Mr. Stephen Matthews is referred to, and the loss by removal of Mr. E.

Daniels. Two years later we read of the death of Mr. Andrew Davis, late secretary of the church. The same year the church has pleasure in announcing that a new American organ has been opened free of debt.

In 1913 the Church Letter sounds more encouraging. It states, "The work of the Imber has been helped forward by the kindly service of Mrs. Smith, a Christian lady who has gone to live in the village. A Band of Hope has been started with a good number of members . . . Imber is a rather isolated village on Salisbury Plain and is sometimes difficult to reach. When the Local Preacher fails to come, and at other times, Mrs Smith will conduct the service for the people".

All reports cease until for 1928 we read, "During the year the Chapel has been thoroughly renovated at a cost of £49. The raising of the money involved real sacrifice; week by week the few people brought their gifts to God's House until the whole was raised. We regret that Mr. Wyatt, the Secretary of the Church, has been so ill, but rejoice that he is now happily improving in answer to prayer".

From 1931 on the picture grows darker; the reports refer to the purchase by the War Office of practically all the surrounding land with the consequent removal of most of the old inhabitants. In 1936 the Sunday School ceased to exist and the lights go out one by one. To Mr. F. Maidment, of Chitterne, belongs the honour of trying to keep the cause alive to the last. As he thinks of the little chapel the writer recalls the lines of Felicia Hemans,

Yes, call it holy ground,
The spot where first they trod;
They left unstained, what there they found—
Freedom to worship God.

S. MOSS LOVERIDGE.

A 6th Century Baptistery.

An article in *Revue Biblique*, No. 4, October, 1946, is worthy of note by Baptists. The Review is published by the School of Practical Biblical Studies established in a Dominican convent in Jerusalem, and the article deals with recent archaeological work done in the Desert of St. John, near Hebron. One of the finds was a baptismal chapel of the Byzantine period the general features of the structure being distinctive of the architectural renaissance in Palestine during the reign of Justinian. The baptistery itself, however, presents some characteristics which are exceptional in Palestine, though the chapel has this in common with many other buildings used for a similar purpose about this period and later, in that it is not attached to a church but is an

isolated structure erected simply for the administration of the ceremony of initiation. There are exact parallels to this particular find in e.g. North Africa.

The article to which we draw attention is of some length, the first part on the traditions associated with the site being contributed by Dr. Clemens Kopp, and the second on the technical features of buildings being compiled by A. M. Steve, O.P. This short note only proposes to extract a few features of general interest to Baptists. These centre around the baptismal chapel and the provisions made for the administration of the sacrament.

The chapel is on the site of a spring which has been associated since earlier times with a phase of the ministry of John the Baptist not recorded in the Gospels. Prior to the recorded incidents it is said that John baptised in the solitudes of the Desert of Judaea, and for some time there have been conjectures as to where the particular place might be at which this ministry took place, or was thought to have taken place. Local tradition on this, as on most subjects in Palestine, is not a dependable guide. For various reasons a site at Ain el-Ma'moudiyeh (the Spring of Baptism) near Hebron was considered worth investigating and the French School of Biblical Archaeology sent out a digging party, which uncovered the chapel. It is, of course, roofless and is much damaged, but enough remains to reconstruct an accurate picture of what it once was like. The structure is solidly built below ground level on a simple plan of a rectangle with apse. The measurements in metres are as follows: length 4.90, including apse 6.65; breadth 3.15. The baptismal pool is sunk toward the upper end, with part of its parapet within the semi-circular recess of the apse. The pool is circular, the interior dimensions being; diameter 1.75; depth, including parapet, 1.20; without parapet 1. The sides are perpendicular with curvature at base. There are four interior steps on the apse side, the bottom step terminating about the centre of the floor, thus restricting the possible movements of the administrant and the candidate. The pool is fed by a spring, the water of which is led from the source to the pool by a suitable conduit. The whole is preserved intact and the excellent photographs accompanying the descriptive matter in the article provide all the material required to stimulate the imagination of the reader.

The dimensions of the pool make it certain that the candidate went down into the water and was baptised either by standing and having water poured on the head, or by kneeling and being immersed in that posture by the administrant. The latter is more probable, and immersion in some form might be argued as certain if consideration be given to Byzantine liturgics. It is beyond all doubt that this most interesting chapel contained facilities which

can be interpreted as supporting the thesis that normal baptisms at the period when it was in use were by immersion.

R. B. HANNEN.

Inácio Fernandes.

"The first Portugese Baptist Minister was ordained in India, nearly 150 years ago, by William Carey, the famous missionary of that country," is the almost enigmatic three-lined statement in *The Herald of Truth* of Cambridge, Mass., in January, 1939; a statement calculated, so to speak, to make the mouth water of anyone interested in such matters of history. For, of Inácio Fernandes very little is known, although he proved an efficient assistant to Carey, Marshman and Ward. Fernandes, born in Macau in 1758, was educated in a school run by Augustinian monks, and it seems probable that he went to India with the intention of earning a living, as it is known that he served employers for a number of years. But if this was the object of his removal to that country there is no explanation of the reason why his teacher, a monk of the order to which he owed his education, should have accompanied him. Is it possible that the Augustinians made a point of sending to far away lands a monk accompanied by a layman? If so, the plan was frustrated by force of circumstances in this case. It is doubtful if, after the lapse of nearly two hundred years, we shall ever learn the true explanation.

A few years of hard work enabled Fernandes to set up in business for himself in Dinajpur as a manufacturer of candles, which thereabouts and in those days were so much in demand that he became rich. How Carey and Fernandes came to meet we do not know, since the latter worked in the belt between Brahmaputra and the Ganges, whereas Carey's headquarters were in Sahranpur on the border of the Thar Desert, and means of transport cannot have been easy to come by. The one was rich in this world's goods, but had an empty soul, while the other, though so poor that he even suffered hunger, had abundance of the riches of Heaven. Sure it is, however, that neither the miles which separated them nor any other impediment prevented Inácio Fernandes from hearing William Carey and casting himself at the feet of God. When he was about thirty-seven years of age his heart and his purse had been yielded to Christ, as is witnessed by what he suffered for His sake and by the erection in Dinajpur of the first church for the evangelisation of the natives of India, which was flourishing remarkably when he died in 1831, three years before William Carey and of the same age as he. He was a great help and a credit to the wonderful work

of the great pioneer in the Indian field, and it is regrettable that so little is known of this, the first Portuguese Baptist minister, who earned such distinction in what is the most glorious of undertakings.

SILVERIO VIEIRA.

The Baptists of Norfolk.

Entitled "Collection of Material in Preparation for an Historical Record of the Baptists of Norfolk and their Churches", a valuable three-volumed typescript packed with detailed information compiled by Rev. Maurice F. Hewett, of Norwich, has been deposited at the Norwich City Library in the care of the Norfolk Records Society. By his thorough and painstaking researches Mr. Hewett has placed future students of Norfolk Baptist history deeply in his debt.

A Baptist Great-Heart.¹

One of the flash-points in the story of Bristo Church, Edinburgh had its origin in the glowing heart of Henry David Inglis, who was at one an exponent of the Law and the Gospel, described on the title page of a volume of his sermons as "an advocate and one of the pastors of the Baptist Church, Edinburgh." Inglis was born in the same year as Burns and died in 1806 when he was only forty-six years of age.

Originally intended for the legal profession he was apprenticed to a writer to the Signet, with a view to being trained for the Bar. The Law, however, was not to be the chief business of his life. A sermon preached by Dr. Erskine of Edinburgh awakened in him a deep sense of sin, and aroused him to "a thorough concern about the interests of his immortal soul". He found a certain degree of peace in believing in Jesus Christ; but was troubled for a time by the doctrinal difficulties which abounded in his day. Soon, however, his new-found conviction stirred in him the desire to preach the Gospel, much to the disappointment of his father at the relinquishing of his legal career. Yet, in the end, it was with his father's full consent that he commenced the study of Divinity at Edinburgh University. He was not destined to be a minister of the Church of Scotland, with the doctrine and spirit of which he quickly found himself himself at variance. The minister of Cramond, afterwards a physician in Edinburgh who left the Church of Scotland on a question of principle, strongly influenced his opinions. His mind was open to "clearer views of the Gospel and the Kingdom of Christ. More and more

¹ *The death of the writer of this note is deeply regretted.*

he accepted the doctrines of the early church, and the glorious Gospel opened more and more to his view, as it invites the most vile, levels all distinctions among men on the score of merit, and reveals a salvation completely wrought out and ready for the most guilty believing in it". This strongly evangelical standpoint was out of keeping with the prevailing moderatism of the established Church. He withdrew at once from the Divinity Hall and the Church, and sought eagerly for a body of people united upon the principles of the Kingdom of Christ and the loyalty of its members to the great Head of the Church. At first he linked himself with a small body known as the second class of independence, but he was not at home until in September 1777 he was baptised by Archibald McLean and was accepted as a member of the Edinburgh Baptist Church.

Inglis' gift for public speaking soon led to his being invited to expound the Scriptures and exhort the brethren and, after some years, to his becoming one of the church's pastors. His evangelical passion sought expression in work which at that time was novel and far from popular. The spiritual condition of the people lay on his soul like a burden, and he was filled with the desire to go out into the highways and byways and compel his fellow-men to come into the Kingdom. So we find him coming to the elders of the church to ask for their approval of an open-air campaign.

We read that he preached at least twice or thrice every week, sometimes in places five or six miles from the city. All the time he was in daily attendance at the Bill Chamber where he acted as Clerk-Depute, and he was regular in his attendance at all the church meetings, Sunday and weekday alike. He preached in nine different places in the open air, sometimes in barns and by-places, in fields and public haunts, in Newhaven in a small field adjoining a public walk or garden. Not all his friends approved of this kind of work. His wife, to whom he was devoted, once spoke to him of how she felt when he had made some appearance of this kind, and her words met with such a rejoinder that she ever after remembered the occasion with shame and remorse. For he answered her in the withering words employed by David to his wife Michal when she twitted him with dancing before the Ark of the Lord in the garments of the priestly caste, "I will be yet more vile than this".

Another strange recreation of this remarkable man was his visitation of the City Prison and his ministrations to felons condemned to the death penalty. This last was a form of ministry which few would take up unless compulsion were laid upon them by their personal position and duty. But Inglis sought this work of his own choice, and for a number of years carried it on

assiduously, not without definite spiritual results. The case of William Mills, a criminal who suffered death on 21st September, 1785, attracted attention and led to some controversy, in the course of which Inglis came in for censure and was solemnly condemned from the pulpit. The reason was that the condemned man in his last words from the scaffold declared that Inglis had been the instrument in the hands of God of winning his attention to the glad news of peace. Inglis did not take the church's censure lying down, and proceeded to argue the question and defend his action in two long letters to the public "illustrating the Doctrine of Grace in the case of William Mills". His ministrations were not only given to these poor wretches in the prison as they awaited their end. On occasion he went to the scaffold with them, comforting their hearts and fortifying their spirits with words of hope and cheer.

It is nothing to the credit of the authorities of the City of Edinburgh that they brought this gracious ministry to an end. Difficulty upon difficulty was placed in his way, and at last, in spite of a strongly worded protest to the Lord Provost and Magistrates, he was compelled to give it up. As he trenchantly puts it in his letter, the real objectors were not the civic heads, but the leaders of the Church, who at that time did not believe that the mercy of God could be offered to a condemned felon.

In 1793 Inglis resumed the study of the Law, with a view to following it as a profession. Within a year he was able to go through the usual trials and in 1794 he was admitted an Advocate. He carried his high sense of principle into his new position and would not undertake the defence of an unjust case.

In a beautiful letter written by his wife after his death and not intended for publication, we have a moving word-portrait of a Christian gentleman who, though in public life and in touch with worldly men by reason of his professional position, gave the impression of being a citizen of heaven. His portrait by Raeburn, of which a splendid copy hangs in the vestry has brought inspiration on many a Sunday morning to his successors in the pastorate of the Edinburgh Baptist Church, now Bristo Church, Edinburgh.

JAMES HAIR.

Union Chapel, Manchester.

One by one the great Baptist auditoriums disappear. The latest of these spacious monuments to Victorian Nonconformity to be sentenced to demolition is Union Chapel, Manchester. It is some small consolation to know that, as in the case of its sister church, Myrtle Street, Liverpool, the site is to be occupied not by a

luxury cinema or a mammoth store, but by the new wing of a hospital. But for the war, during which Union Chapel was damaged by enemy action, the transfer would probably have taken place ten years ago when permission was granted by the Charity Commissioners for the building to be sold and the historic cause to unite with the younger church at Fallowfield. For a time the congregation worshipped in the library of the Baptist College at Brighton Grove and later moved to Fallowfield, with which its membership is now to be merged.

It was, of course, the forty-five years ministry and brilliant expository preaching of Alexander McLaren that brought such renown to the sombre structure in Oxford Road. At the age of thirty-two McLaren came to Manchester in 1858 from Portland Chapel, Southampton, and so successful was his ministry that it was found necessary to build a new chapel to accommodate the growing congregations. Opened in November, 1869, it seated about 1,400 and could probably hold another 400. The word "Union" in its title indicated the broad terms of the trust, which allowed McLaren to begin his ministry with Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians as well as Baptists on his diaconate, but stipulated that the Minister should be a Baptist and immersion of believers the only form of baptism. "The Congregations," wrote a contemporary, "were as remarkable for their composition as for their size. They contained men of all classes and creeds, rich and prosperous merchants, men distinguished in professional life and others working their way towards success. Young men from the offices and warehouses of the city sat side by side with artisans. Strangers were attracted in large numbers, among them clergymen and dignitaries of the Established Church, non-conformist ministers, literary men, artists and students from the theological colleges." This phenomenal success continued for the following thirty-four years, during which many honours were conferred upon the great preacher. But the world famous ministry came to an end in June, 1903, and the prince of expositors died in his native Scotland on May 5th, 1910. He was succeeded in the pastorate by his colleague, Dr. J. E. Roberts, who was followed by Rev. George Evans and then the present minister, Rev. J. W. Townsend. The outward movement of population, the many changes that have taken place in the atmosphere of the times and the drift away from the churches have all had their adverse effect upon the scene of McLaren's triumphs. Soon the building that once was known as "The Nonconformist Cathedral of Lancashire" will be no more. The day of these great temples of pulpit oratory has passed away. Will it ever return?

GRAHAM W. HUGHES.