

Two Baptist Pamphlets

RECENTLY in a secondhand bookshop, I discovered two very interesting pamphlets, one dated 1773 and the other 1798. The first page of the earlier one reads: *A Charge and Sermon delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. Thomas Dunscombe at Coate, Oxon, 4th August, 1773.*

The sermon was delivered by the Principal of the Bristol Baptist College, Hugh Evans, M.A. (1713-81), and the charge was given by his son and successor, Caleb Evans, M.A. (1737-91). The text of the sermon was *Philippians* ii. 29: "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation." The charge to the minister was based on *Colossians* iv. 17: "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." The tutor at Bristol College, James Newton, M.A. (1734-90) was also present and took part in the services, as did Benjamin Francis (1734-99) of Shortwood, Nailsworth. Daniel Turner of Abingdon (1710-98) put the usual questions to Thomas Dunscombe and set him apart to the pastoral office. His elder brother, Samuel Dunscombe, then minister at Cheltenham, also a Bristol student, was present, and also a college friend, John Rippon (1750-1836) who came from the same church as the two Dunscombes, Tiverton in Devon.

That must have been a glad and notable day for the church at Coate, because for over a year their new pastor had been preaching as a supply, and deliberating as to the call of the church. On that day in 1773 he began a great ministry of twenty-five years, during which he established new fellowships at Buckland and Bampton, where chapels were built. He also restored the cause at Farringdon, and assisted the new struggling church at Oxford. In 1792 he received the M.A. degree from the Rhode Island College. Romance came to him late. He was nearly fifty when he married Miss Mary Steele of Broughton, Hants., whose aunt, Miss Anne Steele (1717-1778) was both poet and hymn-writer. When Caleb Evans died in 1791 he was succeeded as Principal by John Ryland (1753-1825).

The second pamphlet contains "A Sermon preached before the Ministers and Messengers of the Baptist Churches belonging to the Western Association at the annual meeting held in Salisbury; on Thursday, 31st May, 1798, and published at their request." The preacher was John Ryland and his text came from *Matthew* xxii. 40: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." This pamphlet of forty-two pages was printed by Biggs and Cottle at Bristol. Joseph Cottle (1770-1853) was a church member at Bristol and served for several years upon the college committee. He published "Lyrical Ballads" by Coleridge and Wordsworth, also in 1798. He and James Newton were bosom friends. Newton was assistant minister at the Pithay Church as well as Tutor in the college. That meeting at Salisbury in 1798 reminds us that the Western Association then covered a very wide group of churches, from Salisbury to Falmouth. In 1823 it was divided into four smaller areas. John Ryland crowded his days with unremitting toil and died on 25th May, 1825. During his years at Bristol the college removed from very limited accommodation in North Street, to new and much larger premises in Stokes Croft. These were opened early in 1812, and housed the college for over one hundred years. The present college buildings, near the University, were opened in 1919.

GORDON HAMLIN