

considerate regard for the necessities of those who sought relief as well as for the interests of the Ratepayers'. He surely went beyond his formal duties in providing the Aged Poor with an annual New Year's Entertainment. He was Vice Chairman of the School Board presided over by that very establishment figure, the Reverend Sir Lovelace Stamer, Rector of Stoke and first Suffragan Bishop of Shrewsbury. Such a respect developed between the two men that at Mr Grose's funeral, conducted by his pastor, the Revd Sam Hirst, the Bishop pronounced the benediction, an act of considerable significance in 1890, for the widely acclaimed Burials Act of 1880, which gave nonconformist ministers the right to preside at nonconformist funerals in parish churchyards, still left conservative churchmen trying to resist nonconformists' just claims.

But all was not sweetness and light in Stoke: the following year in November 1891 the Mayor of Stoke, Alderman Kirkham, a well-respected Congregationalist, led a procession of almost 300 dignitaries and others from Stoke Town Hall across the road to the parish church for a civic service. That same evening the new Baptist pastor, the Revd S. C. Allderidge, recently arrived from Ripley in Derbyshire, preached a fiery sermon at London Road Chapel on 'The Triumph of Principle', in which he censured both the mild Congregationalist Mayor and the Rector, Sir Lovelace Stamer, protesting 'that an official of nearly twenty years' standing in a Congregational Church, a gentleman who has advocated by his voice and by his influence and wealth, the principles of Congregationalism, principles which have been purchased by the lives of our holy fathers and sealed by noble martyrdom, principles for which bloody revolutions have been made and crowns hurled into the dust, should publicly deny them by honouring the church which has been the foe of all liberty, the enemy of all progress, which has persistently hated independency, and taught that Nonconformity is a lie, is a disgrace to us and an insult to nonconformity.' Mr Allderidge was reported to have gone on to argue that the Church of England taught that 'a child is on the high road to hell because he has not been sprinkled by priestly hands and made the object of insane mumblings', not remarks calculated to deepen the bonds of ecumenical friendship nor, as the Bishop/Rector painfully pointed out, accurate in reflecting his church's teaching on the fate of the unbaptized.

It was as difficult then as it seems to be today to get the right balance between denominational conscience and ecumenical understanding. But one hundred years of growing together ought not to be lost on a denomination that has always expected to see the work of the Spirit manifest in God's dealings in history with all those who confess him as Saviour and Lord.

* * * * *

There is still time to enter for the Payne Memorial Essay Competition - for details see inside back cover.

been established between this fellowship and the founders of Tonbridge Baptist Church. Chambers (*op.cit.* p.76) also gives information about the formation of a Strict Baptist cause formed when some worshippers left the Independent Chapel in 1838. The story of the church is illustrated with numerous photographs. However, the authors have depended solely on written sources and no attempt was made to record oral history. This means that, although tribute is paid to Mr Bernard Potter, who served as a deacon for more than forty years (p.17), significant contributions to the life and the witness of the church by others is ignored. There are still some who were in leadership positions in the church in the early 1860s and their reminiscences ought to be recorded. The importance of oral history needs to be more widely recognized than it is at present. The story of Tonbridge Baptist Church is that of ordinary people whom God used for building his church.

MICHAEL J. COLLIS *Minister, Stafford Baptist Church, The Green*

NEW PUBLICATION

THE HOME MISSION STORY

by

Douglas C. Sparkes

published by

The Baptist Historical Society

on behalf of

The Baptist Union of Great Britain

£8-00

from the Treasurer, Revd T S H Elwyn
28 Dowthorpe Hill, Earls Barton,
Northampton NN6 0PB