

Brother Indeed: The Life of Robert Cleaver Chapman

Frank Holmes

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Preface

By Frank Holmes

“Barnstaple Patriarch”

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Preface

This is the book which Dr. A. T. Pierson wanted to write. Had he done so, the public would have been presented with something far more exhaustive than is attempted in these pages. From his time to the present, Chapman has lacked a biographer.

The only work of any significance on Chapman’s life is “Robert Cleaver Chapman of Barnstaple,” by W. H. Bennet. But this, though accurate, is simply a portrait of an elderly gentleman. It says little or nothing of Chapman’s early years.

The fact that Chapman lived to be nearly a hundred years old, and purposely destroyed most of his papers, makes the writing of his life extremely difficult. When I commenced my research I found that the details of his life prior to 1848 had been lost. Yet that is the most important period in the history of Brethren. The Lord’s guidance, however, has now brought much that was lost to light, so that well over half of this volume is concerned with Chapman’s life up to the age of forty-

five. Obviously this is not a full biography—I do not think the materials for that will ever be available. But my sincere hope is that it will lead to a renewed study of the principles for which Chapman stood.

My view of Chapman is that he demonstrated, in very practical ways, the meaning of the word “brother.” Are not the church and the world in need of such “brethren”?

I am grateful to a host of friends at Barnstaple and elsewhere who have assisted me in my task. Mr. K. Swaine Bourne in particular has done everything in his power to ensure that this life of his very dear friend should be published.

I certainly did not realise when I wrote this book that before it was published I should be in fellowship with those who meet in the way described in Chapter Seven.

I am grateful to Messrs. Wm. Heinemann Ltd. for permission to quote extensively from “Mary Lee,” by Geoffrey Dennis.

Frank Holmes

Crowborough, 1956

Foreword

It is a great pleasure to me to see in print a book I saw taking shape some years ago. On the occasions on which the author called at my home in Barnstaple to discuss the collection of data how we wished that the desk at which we sat could speak—what material it would have yielded! Presented to me by H. R. Shapland, it was made about 100 years ago by R. C. Chapman in the workshop pictured opposite page 57 and used by the patriarch for many years. Yet, though desks cannot speak, this one has often challenged me, as I have risen from it to visit streets, villages and assemblies where this man of God was often found in those days of long ago.

After fourteen happy years in the Lord's service in North Devon I came away with thousands of sacred memories and the feeling that there is something unique about the assemblies there. Wherein this consists it would be difficult to say, but perhaps it could be described as a sense of spiritual cohesion. No doubt several factors contribute to this, but I believe it is largely due to the persisting influence of R. C. Chapman's life and the fact that his prayers are still in remembrance before God.

What was the secret of that influence? I often wished that the story of that life could be freshly told and its influence explained to the present generation. Readers will see special significance in the message of the book when they realize that the entire volume was written whilst the author was still a Minister of the Free Church of England. It is remarkable that during his residence in Barnstaple he should have felt constrained to study the life of R. C. Chapman and collect material for a

biography, and one cannot help wondering whether this study helped to mould convictions which recently led Mr. Holmes, at considerable cost, to take his place with believers who seek, as R. C. Chapman did, to carry out the simple pattern of the New Testament.

The fruit of his patient enquiries presented in such a readable form will make a strong appeal to Devonshire folk but it is sure of a much wider welcome, for stories of R.C.C. still circulate in many parts of the world. Study of this biography is bound to be profitable, and if leaders among the Lord's people take the lesson to heart the results will be incalculable.

James H. Large

Chapter One Birth and rebirth

One Sunday morning early in the last century, the congregation at John Street Chapel, Gray's Inn Lane, London, were startled by the sight of a young man dressed in a sky-blue swallow-tailed coat, ascending the pulpit steps to stand side by side with their minister. Large gilt buttons added the finishing touch to his outfit and marked him as a member of the fashionable set of the day. But when he began to speak there was a hush; for in restrained, aristocratic tones he explained his purpose in entering the pulpit. He had come, he said, to testify to his new-found peace and delight in Christ.

Such was the setting for the first public witness of Robert Cleaver Chapman. Those who heard him were impressed by his obvious sincerity, but who would have thought that morning that this young man of twenty had seventy-nine years of active service before him, during which his character and influence would be increasingly acknowledged throughout the country, and indeed in Ireland and Spain also, whilst his name was to rank with George Müller and J. N. Darby as one of the "chief men among the brethren."

Chapman was the son of Thomas Chapman of Whitby. The Chapmans of Whitby were an ancient and honourable family boasting a coat of arms with the motto "*Crescit sub pondere virtus.*" Thomas Chapman was a wealthy merchant at the time of Robert's birth. He was then resident in Elsinore, Denmark, and his large family grew up there, surrounded by affluence and luxury. Few of those who had dealings with Robert Cleaver Chapman in later years guessed that this

humble man, who often had to look directly to the Lord for his next meal, could look back to a childhood whose earliest memories were of a great and richly furnished house, a staff of servants, and a coach bearing the family coat of arms.

At first Robert took lessons in the nursery with his mother. She does not appear to have been such a stern disciplinarian as Mrs. Wesley, but Chapman was always prompt to acknowledge his debt to her. She inculcated good morals, and saw to it that her children were brought up to attend church regularly. But the clear knowledge of the Gospel, and the teaching of the need of a personal Saviour were not part and parcel of the home-life. And the father's lax attitude towards these things is shown by the fact that he engaged a Roman Catholic, a French abbe, to take over Robert's education.

How easily might this young child have been drawn to Rome! But God overruled, and either the teacher was a lukewarm emissary of the Pope, or the scholar was stubbornly Protestant, for not a vestige of Romanism stuck to him. From the start Chapman did well at his lessons and evinced a special aptitude for languages. His linguistic ability, which stood him in such good stead on his evangelistic tours in Spain, is partly explained by the fact that in these early years he heard English, French and Danish spoken constantly.

He was still a boy when the family returned to England. The abbe was dismissed and his father sought out a good English school for his son. Eventually a school in Yorkshire, the county with which the family had had such long associations, was chosen, and Robert found

himself a new boy whose life abroad constituted him an object of curiosity for some weeks.

When the newness and strangeness had worn off, the lad settled down to his studies with a will. In particular he revealed a love of literature and a gift for writing. Often when he was away from the other boys he would daydream of the time when he himself would be an author of books or a poet. He kept up his language study, too, and delighted his masters by his eager interest in the classic literature of other countries.

Schooldays soon passed, and early in 1818 Robert left Yorkshire on the London coach. He was only fifteen, but life was beginning in earnest. When he stepped out into the inn-yard at his journey's end and found himself surrounded by the noise and bustle of the metropolis, the thrill and adventure of this new experience must have been vividly impressed upon him. He had come to London to obtain a legal training.

On February 6th he was bound clerk to James William Freshfield of New Bank Buildings. Freshfield was an attorney of the Court of Common Pleas, and Robert was to serve for the term of five years.

The walls of a lawyer's office must have seemed oppressive to the youth who had formerly but the dimmest conception of a world in which men toiled for a living. The mechanical labour of copying documents must have appeared very dull to his lively mind. The formal language of the profession must have grated on ears attuned to the music of poetry. But, distasteful as this new occupation was, Robert determined to make the best use of the opportunities it offered him. He

settled down to hard work, intent on rising as high as he could in the Law.

Five years passed by—years of study and hard, practical work. Long hours spent at the office were followed by hours of stiff reading at his lodgings. Persistent application—a habit which never left him throughout his long life—saw him through his studies, and at last, in 1823, when he had served his five years with Freshfield, he was admitted an Attorney of the Court of Common Pleas and an Attorney of the Court of King's Bench.

Older and more experienced men took notice of him and complimented him on the progress he had made in legal matters. It was commonly said that a brilliant future lay before him. There is no doubt that his being a Chapman of Whitby was an advantage to him, for he had the entry into fashionable circles. He was constantly invited to select parties in the West End where he was regarded as an attractive personality, for at the age of twenty he was tall and athletic with an engaging smile and an easy, confident manner.

At this period he had definite ideas about religion. He had read the Bible carefully and had become convinced that it was the inspired Word of God. Yet the real nature of the Gospel had not dawned upon his soul. It was his aim to keep the law and find salvation by good works. Years later, when he was ninety-one, he wrote to Gladstone, and the letter contained the following passage about the false hopes of his youth:

“The undersigned, in his years of youth, sought diligently, and with strong purpose, to establish his own righteousness, in hope thereby to obtain eternal life. In

the eyes of all who knew him he had become a blameless young man, religious and devout...”

But the day was fast approaching when the hopelessness of obtaining God’s approval in this way was to dawn upon him. Those were not happy years, despite the popularity he enjoyed. There was no peace, no satisfaction in the path of self-righteousness. Yet he was unwilling to heed the Gospel. “I hugged my chains,” he says. “I would not—could not—hear the voice of Jesus.” Conviction of sin came. He saw that despite his outward respectability there was a corrupt heart within. “My cup,” he says, “was bitter with my guilt and the fruit of my doings. Sick was I of the world, hating it in vexation of spirit, while yet I was unable and unwilling to cast it out.”

When he was in this condition, God led him into touch with one of the deacons of John Street Chapel. This man invited him to come and hear James Harrington Evans, the pastor of John Street. The chapel—which was damaged by a bomb in World War II, and later demolished—had been erected by a Member of Parliament, Mr. Henry Drummond, to provide a centre for the ministry of Evans, of whose talents Mr. Drummond held a very high opinion. Evans was an eloquent preacher, but Chapman was such a devoted son of the Establishment that it is remarkable that he ever went to hear him.

As the young attorney came down John Street and turned into the chapel he was probably ill at ease, for he had only a vague idea of the habits of Nonconformists. What sort of service would be inflicted on him? And

what sort of sermon would he hear? Would he be treated to an exhibition of rant and enthusiasm?

Entering the chapel, he found that it was simple and unadorned. As Evans conducted the service, Chapman realised, much to his own relief, that he was listening to a man of culture. No liturgy was used, though Evans had formerly been a clergyman of the Church of England. The prayers, however, were reverent, and the whole atmosphere was one of quiet dignity. When the sermon came, it proved to be thoughtful, balanced and challenging. Evans was always faithful in his exposure of the follies of self-righteousness. He had once been self-righteous himself, and this gave him an insight into the hearts of those who were seeking to justify themselves before God. In one of his sermons he cried: "What shall we think of him who is building his hopes of pardon, acceptance and salvation upon his own wretched and miserable doings? What shall we think of him who, instead of building on the safe and sure foundation of a crucified Saviour, is building on tears, on prayers, on almsdeeds, on religious, or rather, irreligious services; who builds his expectations of heaven upon the ruins of God's holy law, and thinks that in order to save him, God must undeify Himself? All this is sand—treacherous, yielding sand; for it is as possible for God to cease to be, as to cease to be just. 'A just God and a Saviour, there is none beside Me.' An unjust God is no God, and he who tramples on his own law is no better."

Sitting in his pew, listening to a sermon similar to this, Chapman saw his beautiful edifice of good works come tumbling into the dust. Undoubtedly his hopes of gaining acceptance with God on the grounds of doing his best were finally shattered that day. He saw and embraced

God's provision. Writing of his conversion in after years he said in words almost poetical:

"In the good and set time Thou spakest to me, saying, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing.' And how sweet Thy words, 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee.' How precious the sight of the Lamb of God! And how glorious the robe of righteousness, hiding from the holy eyes of my Judge all my sin and pollution."

He walked home from that service with a new joy and a deep assurance in his heart. From that time he gave up all hopes of pleasing God by the strivings of the flesh. He had learnt that "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God." He pinned all his faith to the Person and Work of Christ. He made no secret of his new profession. In the office he was not ashamed to speak of His Saviour, and he made up his mind that as soon as possible he would testify publicly to Christ's saving power. And so it came about that a short time after his conversion the incident already related took place, when he stood in the pulpit with Mr. Evans and openly confessed Christ. This was the dramatic prelude to a life of usefulness.

Chapter Two Preparation

James Harrington Evans was soon impressed by the zeal of this new convert. In a very short time Chapman came to him and asked for baptism. "You will wait awhile, and consider the matter," said the cautious pastor. "No, I will make haste, and delay not, to keep His commandments!" exclaimed the young man. This reply so impressed Evans that he arranged for the baptism forthwith.

It was evident to Chapman that he could not go on in the ways and companionship of the world. He came right out from all worldliness. He refused to soft-pedal his Gospel convictions in order to retain the good-will of wealthy and distinguished sinners. And so he ceased to be invited to many of the great houses where his former religion of works had been regarded as harmless and acceptable. His talk about conversion and the blood of Christ was resented, even by his own family. In his "Meditations," he says: "The offence of the cross hath not ceased; no sooner did I know Thee, and confess Thee, than I became a stranger to the sons of Hagar, who genders only to bondage, whose child I was by nature. Thy love drew me aside from the path of the worldling, whether wicked or devout; I became an offence to those I forsook, even those of my own flesh and blood. And wherefore were they angry? Because in taking up my cross I became witness against them by my boasting only in Thee, and counting all who are of the works of the law to be under the curse."

It was a difficult period. From various quarters he met determined and bitter opposition. But instead of indulging in fleshly argument and losing his temper, he

left his opponents with the Scriptures and the Spirit of God, and turned to the Lord for strength and joy. Happily there was a loving and understanding fellowship among the believers at John Street, and the ministry of Evans provided real food for the afflicted young convert.

Each Lord's Day Chapman attended the services. The chapel at John Street was not a Brethren assembly. At that time there was nothing answering to this description in the country. But Evans held views on Christian unity which have a striking similarity to the teachings of the early Brethren. Only scant attention appears to have been paid by students of Chapman's life to the influence upon him of this godly man, yet that influence was undoubtedly very great. Converted when a curate whilst he was reading one of Cooper's sermons to his congregation, Evans became such a soul-winner that he was given notice to terminate his curacy. After a time of struggle he seceded from the Church of England and later began his work in John Street.

Each Sunday evening Chapman stayed to the Communion service. Few of the believers did so, being content to meet around the Lord's Table once a month in common with the greater part of nonconformity. But Evans emphasized that the first disciples always broke bread on the Lord's Day, and Chapman learnt to treasure this weekly breaking of bread.

Before long the young convert realized that not all who were in fellowship had been baptized by immersion. Evans, though strong on believer's baptism, was equally strong on the unscripturalness of demanding anything beyond a living faith in Christ from a convert before accepting him into fellowship. He held that all that was

required for unity was a common life. If a man had been born into God's family he felt that he had no right to exclude him from fellowship merely because he could not see the need for believer's baptism.

Chapman was early impressed by the deep love which Evans showed towards the weak and erring among the flock of God. If any transgressed materially and could not be brought to repentance, it was only after long pleading that such a one was "cut off" from fellowship. There was no harshness or precipitate condemnation in the discipline applied at John Street.

A strong friendship sprang up between the young attorney and the experienced preacher. Chapman was specially impressed by his pastor's humility. Exposed to the peculiar temptations to pride which beset the path of a successful minister of Jesus Christ, Evans consistently regarded himself as "less than the least of all saints." The force of this example was not wasted on his young friend, who afterwards confessed that in those early days he had many a tussle with his old pride. People who heard Chapman say that in later years were amazed, for pride seemed far removed from his character. So complete is the victory which Christ gives!

One way in which he learnt the lesson of humility was by spending a good deal of his spare time in visiting the poor in the black, miserable districts which lay off Gray's Inn Lane and Theobald's Road. His evenings now contrasted strongly with those he had spent in the West End. It was only with difficulty that he could bring himself to enter some of these dirty, disease-ridden hovels. But night after night he carried on his visitation, taking the Gospel of Christ to the poor and the outcast.

Three years went by and Chapman's worldly prospects greatly improved. He inherited a private income and began to practise as a solicitor on his own account, with offices at 3, Copthall Chambers, Throgmorton Street. In this, as in almost everything else he had attempted, he met with much success. His gracious manner commended him to his clients, and he put the best of his knowledge and ability into his work. Yet still his spare time was spent in work in the slums. It would have been the easiest thing in the world for him to have subscribed liberally to slum work and left it to someone else, but nothing satisfied him short of doing the work himself. This burning desire for the spiritual and material welfare of the poor never left him for the rest of his life. He always regarded it as a mark of the true work of Christ that "the poor have the gospel preached to them."

By this time the congregation at John Street were used to the sight of the tall, smiling-faced young solicitor tenderly leading along a certain poor, decrepit blind woman who had no one else to take her to the services. As they came down the aisle together they were a living rebuke to those who, whilst sound in doctrine, were selfish and unloving in practice.

As a preacher Chapman was not showing much promise. He obviously fell into the trap which threatens every young preacher—he tried to model his sermons on those of his pastor. Such a course is rarely fruitful. John Kelman, when he was colleague to Dr. Whyte, once tried to ape his senior, but after the sermon, Dr. Whyte placed his hand on his shoulder and said: "John, preach your own message." In the same way Chapman struggled to express himself in Evans' manner. He took a text, drew up formal divisions of his subject, and then wrote the

whole thing out in studied English. Evans could do this and still be eloquent in the pulpit, but Chapman, seeking to imitate him, had but poor success.

After practising as a solicitor at Copthall Chambers for four years, Chapman removed to 72, Cornhill. He was now twenty-seven, and prospering in every way. Few members of his family took any notice of him, but one cousin who had married a West Country lawyer named Pugsley was friendly. The Pugsleys were not believers, but they were not bitter opponents of the Gospel. One day Mr. Pugsley came to stay with Mr. Chapman. It was a great surprise to Pugsley to find the young fellow so engrossed in the service of the poor, for it seemed to him inexplicable that a man situated as Chapman was, should bother about the condition of people who lived in slums.

To do him justice, however, Pugsley felt that Chapman's actions were prompted by inner forces of which he himself was ignorant. He determined to find out what it was that he lacked. He told Chapman quite frankly what his position was, and the two had prayer and studied the Bible together. The result was that when Pugsley returned to his home in Barnstaple he was a changed man.

For Chapman, however, a new problem had arisen. He was finding that there were many things in his work which were distasteful to him as a Christian. He had such a tender conscience that he found many of his duties painful. One day, for example, he was working on a case when he discovered that the defendant and plaintiff were believers. He promptly asked both his own client and the other party to call at his office at the same

time. Sitting at his desk he directed them to 1 Corinthians 6:1: "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" Then he got them to discuss the grievance as before the Lord, and the result was a settlement acceptable to each. But not all his difficulties of conscience could be solved so satisfactorily, and although he knew that if he remained in his profession his prospects were brilliant, he felt that the time was fast approaching when he must give it up.

In the summer of 1831 Chapman went down to Pugsley's home at Barnstaple for a visit. He found Pugsley working amongst the poor of the place. Each Sunday, cottage meetings were held in Pilton Almshouses on the edge of the town and Chapman was asked to preach there. News of the young London solicitor who was preaching to the people at Pilton Almshouses spread, and he was nicknamed "The man with the little eyes." One Sunday evening whilst he was there a party of young girls decided to go and hear him, and see his "little eyes" for themselves. They were out for a lark and no doubt believed their presence would be very disconcerting to a young fellow of twenty-eight. They came in late, probably with the intention of creating a disturbance, and Chapman was preaching. One of these girls was called Eliza Gilbert, and the Spirit of God spoke to her in the instant she entered the room. Chapman was quoting the Scriptures and she was arrested. She went away sobered and said: "He hurt me. I must hear him again." She came back the next week and was converted.

His holiday in Devon over, Chapman returned to London. The business of his office went on as before and he

applied himself to it with his accustomed assiduity. But he was becoming aware of a Divine Call to full-time Christian work. Yet his friends were very doubtful about this. They told him frankly that he was a poor preacher, and at that time they were undoubtedly right. The discourses which he read to his congregations went right over the head of the average person. The following extract shows how he tied himself and his hearers up in intellectual knots in trying to express the simple thought that it is against nature for a child not to love its parents:

“That child must indeed be void of all sense of feeling, who has no love for its parents. It is the first impulse of the mind, and as its powers expand we may observe that in proportion as the sense of moral duties is inculcated by education, do the affections of the heart become excited, and nothing exhibits to our experience a stronger proof of the natural depravity of the human heart than that uncultivated minds digress from every moral or religious duty, and being left to indulge in uncontrolled desires without any restraint of either religious or moral law would degenerate into a state beneath that of the brute creation.”

Who could have imagined that a preacher of this type could become the Chapman of later years? But whatever his fellow believers thought of his preaching, they were convinced of his holiness of life and his devoted personal evangelism. He undoubtedly had the gifts of a pastor and evangelist except in the important matter of preaching. It may be that intellectual habits and prejudices prevented him at that stage from being the preacher he could have been.

And now, without any knowledge of the future, he took a momentous step. Months of waiting upon God had convinced him that he should sell all his possessions, give away his private fortune, and relinquish his profession to devote all his time to the Lord's work. It is possible that in taking this attitude to possessions, Chapman, like George Müller, was influenced by the example of Anthony Norris Groves, who had so acted six years earlier. It is related that long years afterwards, at a conference at Leominster, it was observed one day that Chapman seemed to have lost his usual cheerfulness and to be under a burden. He remained in his room that afternoon and was his usual self when he reappeared. It was learned later that a considerable sum of money had been given him, and he had spent the hours getting relief from the weight by sending gifts to various persons. Many others might relieve themselves of a burdened spirit by this method!

But now God's plan began to unfold. Chapman received an invitation from the members of Ebenezer Strict Baptist Chapel, Barnstaple, to be their pastor. Believing that this was of the Lord, he left London to reside in Barnstaple. Many who knew him in London were critical. They forecast failure. They repeated that he was a poor preacher. His reply was: "There are many who preach Christ, but not so many who live Christ; my great aim will be to live Christ."

Chapter Three Early days at Barnstaple

It was a twenty-four hour journey from London to Barnstaple in 1832. As Chapman neared his journey's end he could see the town stretched out beneath him on a bend of the River Taw. It was practically flat, for it had been built on a marsh within a basin of hills. The steeple of the parish church rose above the jumble of crooked roofs which made up the old town. He could tell by the ships' masts where were the Great and Little Quays, Castle Quay, and Mill End Quay. The enclosing hills were fresh and green, for it was April, but many of the little streets and alleys were dirty and unhealthy.

His first task on arriving in the town was to obtain lodgings. He walked down the pot-holed High Street, looking for some likely side street. There were hotels and boarding-houses, but nothing simple enough for his wants. At last, when he was approaching the far end of High Street, he saw a tiny alley on the left-hand side. It was called Gammon Lane and here he found clean, cheap quarters in a tiny cottage, right in the shadow of the old workhouse.

The following Sunday he preached at "Ebenezer." It was a new building standing in a small burial ground in Vicarage Street. The site is now occupied by a workshop and three red-brick cottages, and the burial ground has been taken into an adjoining garden. In the nine years since the erection of the chapel no fewer than four ministers had come and gone, so that Chapman had undertaken no desirable task. There were obviously some people there who always made it uncomfortable

for a pastor after the novelty of his ministry had worn off.

If Chapman presented no remarkable figure in the pulpit at the beginning of his ministry in Barnstaple, he certainly made an impact upon the hearts of the townsfolk by his tireless visitation and personal work. Day after day he worked up and down the narrow streets of the town. Whenever occasion offered he would be down at the workhouse, holding a service, or talking to the inmates about the things of God. And what a need there was for Gospel work in the town—especially in the district of “Derby” where his chapel lay. This network of miserable little streets had sprung up by a lace factory at the other end of Vicarage Street. The lace industry had come to Barnstaple at the end of the previous century. A Mr. Boden from Derby had opened the factory, and this was why the district had been nicknamed “Derby.” The lace manufactured here was much admired, and in later years obtained a very wide sale. But like many other beautiful products of the time, it was made by people who lived under appalling conditions. As Chapman moved in and out of their poor dwellings his heart bled for these miserable, thriftless wretches who dragged out a weary existence in the dismal streets of “Derby.”

Day after day he witnessed drunken brawls, for drink was the great evil of the place. Over eighty fully licensed houses existed in this small town of seven thousand inhabitants. Everywhere he found “Tiddlywink shops,” or beer-houses, which required no magistrate’s licence. In fact in some streets he noted that almost every other house sold beer. Conditions were aggravated by the fact that licensed houses were allowed to keep open all

night, whilst there was only one policeman, backed up occasionally by two overburdened beadles, to keep an eye on the whole town. Such conditions provided a stirring challenge to the faith of the young pastor. He pressed on, and saw conversions.

One Sunday a tall, well-built, open-faced young fellow of twenty was in the congregation. His name was William Bowden, and the Spirit of God spoke very definitely to his soul. He saw that Christ had died for his sins and he accepted the Divine offer of mercy. Chapman was wonderfully cheered to witness a genuine change in his life.

Eliza Gilbert, the girl who had been converted in the Almshouses at Pilton during Chapman's holiday visit, was one of the most faithful attendants at "Ebenezer." She came to Chapman one day and told him that she wished to be baptized. "But my mother declares that when I go out of the house to the service it will be to leave home for the last time," she explained. Despite this threat the service was arranged.

When the day arrived there was great rejoicing at "Ebenezer" at the faithfulness of the young woman. As the congregation broke up, many eyes followed her as she walked home. They saw her turn into Rackfield House and wondered what would be her reception. In a few moments she was out again. The sight of her wet hair had infuriated her mother who now stood on the threshold barring her entrance, and cried, "Go away. Never come back. I'll have no dissenters in this house."

Friends at the chapel promptly received the young woman into their own home. But she found it hard to be cut off from her mother's love. Months passed and she

became very ill, and the doctors thought she would die. Under these circumstances her mother gave instructions that she was to be brought back to her old home and given the best of attention, but she added: "I do not wish to see her." So for three years an amazing situation existed in which Eliza lay in her bedroom without once being visited by her mother. Once a week, on Friday mornings, Mr. Chapman was allowed to visit her. At these times her mother went out to avoid meeting him, leaving someone else in charge of the house. The front door was left ajar as a sign to him that the coast was clear, and he walked straight in. Though he could not call more often than once a week he was permitted to write. Here is an extract of one of his letters to Eliza:

"My Dear Sister—Grace and peace be unto you. God has given you suffering in the body, but your pain and weakness are blessed, for Christ is yours and you are His. How great the blessing—redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of the grace of God. Let us but keep this in view, this perfect eternal redemption, and all is well. Then has patience her perfect work, and we submit to the hand of God, not because we cannot resist, but because God is love and is our Heavenly Father... He can now succour us by His power, grace and compassion. He knoweth how to do this. There is none like Him to feel with us, and it is our cordial to think upon this. Christ not only binds up our wounds, but makes our wounds His own. Then shall we not say, Show Thyself our Kinsman, our Priest, and do with us, Lord, as Thou wilt?

Your affectionate brother and servant in the Gospel,
Robt. C. Chapman."

Eventually, however, Eliza made a remarkable recovery. Other members of her family were saved under Mr. Chapman's ministry. But her mother continued to hate him. "I hope the chapel will fall on his head!" she would exclaim. Yet, such is the longsuffering of the Lord, even she herself was converted through the witness of him whom she regarded as her enemy, but not until she was past eighty.

A considerable number of young people were added to the church in the opening years of Chapman's ministry. Among them was a young man named George Beer. He and William Bowden became fast friends and engaged together in Christian witness in the district. It must have been a great thrill to the young pastor to have in his congregation two such devoted enthusiasts. They eagerly drank in his expositions of Scripture and grew rapidly in grace. Separation from the world and practical holiness of living were constantly stressed by Chapman as being essentials of the Christian life. He gave due prominence to doctrine, but he kept coming back to the need for good works to accompany faith. He commonly exhorted his hearers to become "doers of the word and not hearers only."

From the start Chapman urged believers to get out into the open-air with their message. And this sense of the value of outdoor witness remained with him to the end of his life. One of the very rare photographs of him shows him as an old man standing at an open-air meeting. Some thoughtful brother (or was it a sister?) had brought along a mat for him to stand on, for it had been raining. Nothing except the clear Will of God could keep him away from such a meeting. When in those early days at Barnstaple he discovered that people

would not come in to hear the Gospel, he took it out to them, and refused to heed those who suggested that if he preached the Word in the chapel on a Sunday his responsibility was at an end.

It was a special joy to him to see Bowden and Beer giving themselves wholeheartedly to this open-air work. They soon proved themselves efficient speakers who could hold the attention of their audiences. They preached in the streets of "Derby," exposing themselves to ridicule and sometimes to physical violence. Often they would walk out to the villages in the neighbourhood and declare boldly the good tidings of the grace of God. In one or two of these villages there were Strict Baptist causes which were favourable to the movement of the Spirit which was evident at Ebenezer Chapel. In others there was no real Gospel witness at all, and here cottage meetings began to spring up. In this way were laid the foundations of that considerable circuit of village causes which centres upon Barnstaple, and which is so closely linked with Mr. Chapman's name.

Chapter Four Changes

Although he was the pastor of a Strict Baptist chapel, Mr. Chapman had never been a Strict Baptist. This fact was well-understood by the people of “Ebenezer” when they invited him to undertake the pastorate. He was firmly convinced that the baptism of believers by immersion was the only true mode, but he also held that differences of judgment on this point should not prevent fellowship between truly converted persons. So in coming to “Ebenezer” he laid down one condition. Years after, he explained what that condition was:

“When I was invited to leave London and go to minister the Word of God in Ebenezer Chapel, then occupied by a community of Strict Baptists, I consented to do so, naming one condition only—that I should be free to teach all I found written in the Scriptures.”

This one condition, however, left the door open for the sweeping changes which followed. He found written in the Scriptures the command: “Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.” This text, to mention no other, undermined the Strict Baptist position completely, since they will only receive those who have been baptized by immersion on a profession of faith, and reject from the Lord’s Table and from all fellowship, any who do not fulfil this condition, even though they have ample proof that Christ has accepted such as His people.

Preaching that the unity of God’s children was not dependent on any rite or ceremony, Chapman saw the minds of God’s people gradually broadening, and their hearts warming towards the truth. But he would not

force the matter. He wanted to see the church of one mind before the old rule was abolished, and so the unbaptized were still forbidden to come to the Lord's Table.

Baptism was the most delicate subject he had to deal with. In other things his fellow-believers searched the Scriptures with him, and for the most part accorded with his judgment. They looked into the matter of ministry and discovered that a one-man ministry was not to be found in the New Testament. Ministry, they found, was a matter of Divine gift, and so they waited upon the Lord to raise up from amongst them pastors, teachers and evangelists. They broke bread in simplicity, and this service developed in time along lines now familiar in many Brethren assemblies. Before the actual distribution of the bread and wine there was a devotional period during which various brethren would lead in thanksgiving, or announce a hymn, or comment briefly upon some Scripture. After all had partaken, a definite word of instruction would be given by Mr. Chapman, or by some other recognized teacher who might be present and led of the Spirit to feed the flock.

This manner of breaking bread was, however, one that developed with time. Chapman never claimed that its precise outline was laid down in Scripture. But its two main principles were Scriptural, namely, the liberty of all brethren to take part as the Spirit led, and the recognition of specific gifts in certain brethren. These principles were shaping the views and practices of several students of the Word of God at that time, especially in Plymouth and Bristol.

At Bristol, George Müller was feeling his way along similar lines in the work of Bethesda Chapel. He was not quite certain about the question of accepting unbaptized believers into fellowship, however, and sought Chapman's advice. The two had a long and serious conversation about four years after the latter's coming to Barnstaple. Chapman put the matter thus: "Either unbaptized believers come under the class of persons who walk disorderly—and in that case we ought to withdraw from them in accordance with 2 Thessalonians 3:6—or they do not walk disorderly. If a brother be walking disorderly, we are not merely to withdraw from him at the Lord's Table. Our behaviour towards him ought to be decidedly different from what it would be were he not walking disorderly, on all occasions when we may have intercourse with him, or come in any way into contact with him. Now this is evidently not the case in the conduct of baptized believers towards their unbaptized fellow-believers. The Spirit does not suffer us to refuse fellowship with them in prayer, in reading and searching the Scriptures, in social and intimate intercourse, and in the Lord's work; and yet this ought to be the case were they walking disorderly." It was this conversation which decided Müller. He later wrote: "This passage (2 Thessalonians 3:6) to which Brother Chapman referred, was the means of showing me the mind of the Lord on the subject, which is, that we ought to receive all whom Christ has received (Romans 15:7), irrespective of the measure of grace or knowledge which they have attained unto."

Yet Chapman did not force this viewpoint upon the friends at "Ebenezer." This slowness to break down the old Strict Baptist practice made some of his Plymouth

friends critical. Men like J. N. Darby who were then enjoying a New Testament fellowship in that city, found it hard to see why he could not set up such a fellowship immediately in Barnstaple. They argued that if a course were Scriptural it should be taken at once. But Chapman maintained that whereas this was true, it was the church that must take the course, and for some to take it in opposition to the convictions of the rest would only lead to disunity. Looking back in later years he said:

“When sixty years since I came to this place, I waited for unity of heart and judgment among the company who called themselves Baptists; and when, by the power of the Scriptures, the greater part of them were minded to throw down their wall, we waited on in patience for fulness of unity of judgment. For this I was blamed by men of much grace, who at that time were endeavouring in the south of Devon to bring about a joint testimony of saints to the full truth of God. What we now enjoy here of mutual love and the Spirit’s unity would never have been our portion had any other course been taken.”

He wanted every believer in the fellowship at “Ebenezer” to see the need for the change. He says:

“A brother who visited me in those days urged me to set aside the strict rule that none but baptized believers should be allowed to break bread. I replied that I could not force the consciences of my brethren and sisters; and I continued my ministry, patiently instructing them from the Word. I well knew at that time that I could have carried the point with a large majority, but I judged it to be more pleasing to God to toil on to bring all to one mind.”

What an example this is of pastoral patience! How much friction would be avoided in Christ's church if all acted with like restraint! Surely this is the voice of a man of love—a brother indeed! None the less, some were offended by Chapman's preaching, and only two years after his coming to Barnstaple a few Strict Baptists left "Ebenezer" and attempted to form a new church—a venture which quickly came to nothing. A Baptist publication ("Baptist Churches in North Devon") says that this step was taken "in consequence of the original Baptist church in Vicarage Lane, under Mr. Chapman, having imbibed peculiar notions, and become alienated in spirit and practice from the denomination at large." But it is noteworthy that the same publication, which appeared in 1885, whilst recording this ill-fated break-away, paid a tribute to Chapman in the following words:

"We think it right to say that, although Mr. Chapman separated himself from the Baptist body, and became what is called a Plymouth Brother, yet he has continued his Christian labours in Barnstaple for many years, and been greatly blessed of God. He has baptized many on a profession of faith. A large company of his adherents meet in what is called The Rooms. For holy living, weight of character, and self-sacrifice, few can equal him; yet simple and humble as a child. He is now full of years."

How many men live through years of controversy, and manifest love and patience so constantly, that in their lifetime, tributes such as this are paid to them by the fair-minded among those who differ strongly from them?

Eventually the whole body of believers at "Ebenezer" were of one mind and heart concerning the terms of

fellowship. It was a great day for Chapman when the old Strict rule was set aside and he was able to welcome to the Lord's Table all who were truly born again.

One of the wealthiest gentlemen in the town, Mr. John Miller, the owner of the "Derby" lace factory, was a Baptist, and was opposed to the Strict view. At the time of Chapman's settling in Barnstaple this gentleman was anxious to set up a General Baptist cause in the town. If Chapman had felt able to confine the changes at "Ebenezer" to those which brought it in line with the General Baptist position, he would have secured an influential follower. But he felt that to admit an unbaptized believer regularly to the Lord's Table was to accord him the fullest possible fellowship, and he could not agree with his General Baptist brethren that such a person was "not a member." Moreover, his views on ministry were not those of the General Baptists. And so Mr. Miller built another chapel just around the corner from "Ebenezer." It was opened less than twelve months after Mr. Chapman's settlement in the town. But bricks and mortar do not make a church, and things went so badly with this new cause that in three years' time the building was up for sale and the Roman Catholics, who were anxious to start a work in the town, were negotiating for it. Fortunately, these negotiations came to nothing. After a second attempt, the General Baptists were more successful.

Meanwhile the work at "Ebenezer" was going on from strength to strength under the blessing of God. All who were in fellowship were keen to follow out the teaching of the Word of God. There were very real bonds of affection among them, and the sisters, when they met or parted, would always kiss one another—a somewhat

precarious exercise so far as their bonnets were concerned. Those who passed by the chapel-yard on Sundays were often amused to see that even the brothers would “greet one another with an holy kiss.”

Chapter Five Some habits

After Mr. Chapman had lived for a time in Barnstaple, he took a house in New Buildings. His idea was to get right into the heart of the “Derby” district and live amongst the poor. New Buildings was a cul-de-sac not far from “Ebenezer.” Its cottages were very small and simple. Strange odours sometimes assailed the nostrils of its inhabitants, for beyond the end wall there was a tanyard. All this presented a contrast to the circumstances in which Chapman had lived in London. Speaking of this time, he afterwards said that at his conversion he knew that pride was likely to be his besetting sin, so he presently went to the town where he had on occasions driven in a carriage and pair with coachmen and footman (this probably refers to visits to the Pugsleys) and there lived in a workman’s cottage in a side street. “My pride never got over it,” was his typical comment. Thus early, with one well-directed blow, he scotched this deadly viper.

Chapman lived at No. 6, and he determined from the start to make his house a place where any of God’s people could freely come and stay. He lived by faith, receiving no stipend, and he felt that if people would come and live for a week or two in a household where the smallest item was received at God’s Hand by faith, it would help them in their own lives. When he first took the house, he prayed that visitors would come, and they soon did. But only for a short period. After that they dropped off and he was left alone. This puzzled him a great deal. It would not have puzzled many people, who would simply have explained it by saying: “People who

come to Barnstaple to stay are not likely to be satisfied with the housekeeping of a young batchelor of thirty, carried on in a little whitewashed cottage in the poorest part of the town." But Chapman was convinced that the Lord had led him to take this house and had given him confidence to expect a regular flow of visitors. He was therefore deeply distressed, and got down on his knees, humbly examining his own life before God. "Why, Lord, dost Thou not send Thy children to me?" he cried. He never had to repeat that question. From that day there was never any lack of visitors under his roof.

It was always a point with Chapman that no questions were asked as to how long visitors intended to stay. When a guest arrived he would be shown his bedroom, told what were the habits of the household, and requested to leave his boots outside his door for Mr. Chapman to clean. People sometimes suggested to Mr. Chapman that it must be awkward to have visitors arriving at all times, and staying as long as they pleased, especially when his house was so small. "But God arranges that!" he would reply. And if anyone were sceptical, the facts were open for investigation and they showed unmistakably that God did arrange it. In nearly seventy years there never was a single occasion when visitors had to be turned away because there was no room.

Sometimes at the end of the day, provisions would run out and there would be no money to buy more. Chapman did not regard this as an emergency. It was simply the way that God was working that day. "We must pray about it," he would say. And so next morning's breakfast would be provided solely through prayer. So naturally and unostentatiously was the life of faith lived that those

who stayed at No. 6 were quite unaware of anything out of the ordinary. Mr. Chapman did not wish to convey the impression that childlike dependence upon God was an extraordinary thing. Least of all did he wish to draw attention to himself, even on the grounds that by so doing God would ultimately be glorified. It is true that as the years passed he became a well-known figure in many parts of the British Isles, but this was simply because so many people found his ministry powerful. "There were giants in the earth in those days," wrote Dr. A. T. Pierson after Chapman's death. Chapman was a spiritual giant. Not an inch of his stature was owed to the carnal methods of publicity experts.

No task was too lowly for Chapman. Visitors were particularly impressed by his habit of cleaning the boots and shoes of his guests. Indeed, it was on this point he met with most resistance, for those who stayed with him were conscious that despite the simplicity of his house he was a man of good breeding, and when they had heard him ministering the Word with gracious authority, they were extremely sensitive about allowing him to perform so menial a task for them. But he was not to be resisted. On one occasion a gentleman, having regard no doubt to his host's gentle birth and high spiritual standing, refused at first to let him take away his boots. "I insist," was the firm reply. "In former days it was the practice to wash the saints' feet. Now that this is no longer the custom, I do the nearest thing and clean their shoes."

The people of New Buildings could scarcely have been long in discovering that no ordinary man had come to live among them. At four o'clock in the morning he could be seen striding down the street and out of the town.

These early morning walks sometimes took him to Ilfracombe for breakfast—twelve miles away over Devonshire hills. On one occasion, at least, he walked to Exeter—a distance of forty miles—before lunch. Normally, however, he would walk a few miles and then return to clean the shoes and call his guests.

It will be gathered from this that he rarely rose later than 3.30 a.m. By his bedside was a large, square, lead-lined bath. Each night, punctually at 9 o'clock, he said "Goodnight," had a hot bath, and went to bed. Each morning, while the town was still asleep, he jumped into a cold bath, and then dressed. He once said to a young visitor: "You see, dear brother, God has given us a valuable body, and He expects us, as good workmen, to keep it in good order. I open the pores of my body at night, and close them with a cold bath in the morning."

Up till midday, whether he was indoors or out, the greater part of his time was given up to prayer, Bible reading and meditation. A conservative estimate would be seven hours of definite communion with God before noon. This was undoubtedly the secret of his spiritual power. The present generation of believers would do well to take heed to his example. Quietness and the strength that comes from long waiting on God are not always valued as they should be. The activity of the flesh is too often substituted for the power of the Spirit. A certain amount of work is rushed through, God is asked to bless what has been done, and plans are feverishly laid for the morrow. Robert Chapman got through a vast amount of work, but without a vast amount of stir and bustle. His life was like the steady flow of a mighty river, which is of far greater moment than the noisy trickle of a choked-up gutter.

On Saturdays he gave his mind a complete rest before the duties of the Lord's Day. He usually spent the whole day in his workshop. Walking and carpentry were his chief recreations, and Saturday was the day for carpentry. At the rear of his little cottage he had fitted up a tiny room for this purpose. Here there was a bench, and a fine set of tools, but the main feature was a lathe. The lathe was his great delight. On it were turned innumerable bread boards. These he presented to his guests, or sold for Missionary funds.

Normally no one was permitted to see him on Saturdays. It was well understood by friends in the neighbourhood that if they wanted a talk with him about some matter they should choose some other day. One highly favoured young brother who ventured to the door of the workshop on one such occasion, was told: "You can come in. But talk about the lathe."

Yet even this recreation was accompanied by spiritual exercises, for he always fasted on Saturdays, and, while he was working, poured out his soul in communion with his Lord. This habit of combining the spiritual and the practical was characteristic of Chapman. He prayed as he walked or as he did household duties. In fact, he refused to recognize any artificial distinctions between religious and material duties, but was always conscious of the Divine command: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24).

Perhaps in some ways Saturday was the richest day of the week for him; for on every other day his mind was occupied with pastoral matters. Saturday was a day

given up to the necessary refreshment of his own mind and spirit. One who burst in upon him one Saturday in some emergency, said that his face shone as the face of an angel.

Chapter Six Encouragements and difficulties

Mr. Pugsley, Chapman's relative, was so impressed by Chapman's example that not long after he was converted he had given up his profession and had settled in the country outside Barnstaple, in a district where he felt there was a crying need for the Gospel. He, however, did not feel it necessary to give away his private fortune as Chapman had done, but devoted it to the Lord's work, and lived himself as simply as possible. The work which he carried on was closely linked with "Ebenezer" and with Mr. Chapman's name. It covered a number of tiny hamlets which were then spiritually dark. Three chapels had sprung up in the neighbourhood, at Eastacombe, Hiscott and Lovacott. At that time they had Baptist connections, but today they are Brethren assemblies. It is noteworthy that Mr. Charles Shepherd, who took a considerable share in the work of the chapels after Pugsley's death, eventually left the district to succeed James Harrington Evans at John Street where Chapman had been converted. One of the places in Pugsley's neighbourhood was called Tawstock. Here the Wreys, a distinguished family with an ancient baronetcy, have a beautiful estate. The antique church, nestling beneath Tawstock Court, is full of well-preserved monuments to the ancestors of the Wreys. Sometimes members of the family have been rectors of the parish. It therefore caused widespread comment when one of the members of this family—a daughter of the rector himself—was baptized by Mr. Chapman. This happened within twelve months of his arrival in Barnstaple. His culture

and gracious bearing commended him to people of all classes. He never sought the patronage of the wealthy or influential, but he did seek to bring them to a knowledge of salvation. With Pugsley living in the neighbourhood of the Wrey estate, contact with the family had been made possible, and Miss Wrey had seen her position as a sinner before God. Trusting Christ in simple faith for salvation, she had experienced the new birth and, in consequence, though she knew that her decision would set tongues wagging and make her father's position difficult, she had felt bound to ask for baptism.

It was a remarkable scene that was enacted on the day of her baptism. She stood on the banks of the river, side by side with a farmer's son who was to be baptized on the same occasion. As she stood there she could look up over the woods and pastures of the Wrey estate, and she was conscious of the curious eyes on either bank, for many had come to see the rector's daughter baptized. When the simple service was over, Chapman went back to Barnstaple convinced that the work of God in Mr. Pugsley's neighbourhood had been helped forward by the events of that day. And undoubtedly they were, for Miss Wrey's conversion made many think seriously, whilst the farmer's son—George Lovering—carried on Christian work for over thirty years in North Devon, founding chapels at Swim-bridge, Atherington, and Little Hill.

Another man who came under the influence of Chapman was Henry Heath. He was probably affected by Miss Wrey's example, for he was the young schoolmaster at Tawstock school. This school is one of the most delightful features of Tawstock, being thatched and

whitewashed. It is situated by a stream beneath a wooded slope, between the village and old rectory. Henry Heath was twenty-four when he first came into contact with Chapman in 1839, and his talents seemed to demand something better than a village schoolmastership. The school was associated with Tawstock Church, and he was studying for Holy Orders. Chapman invited him to attend the weekly Bible readings held in New Buildings. Each week he walked into the town, his mind filled with the truths he had heard the previous week. His eyes opened rapidly to the true importance of the Bible. He had previously regarded it as a theological work to be studied simply in an academic way. But now it became a living Book to his soul—the very Word of God. An intimate friendship sprang up between the two young men. For some years Henry Heath worked readily with Pugsley and Chapman. Then in 1848 he removed to Hackney. There he was enabled to accomplish a great work for the Lord. He was in fact one of the richest prizes Chapman won for Christ, for his after-life showed him to be a gifted and consecrated teacher and pastor.

One of Chapman's greatest friends had settled near the neighbouring town of Bideford. William Hake was a cultured man and a friend of Anthony Norris Groves and George Müller. He came from Exeter. Chapman and he had met for the first time at Barnstaple in the year before Chapman's settling at "Ebenezer." So when Chapman came to Barnstaple he wrote and urged Hake to come and share the ministry there with him. This Hake felt unable to do, but they were both delighted when Hake moved to Bideford and carried on a school at a house called "Tus-culum" (now "Wellesbourne") in

Limer's Lane. Chapman loved to take the ten-mile walk to his friend's house, for they were both lovers of Scripture, each desiring to do all the Lord's will.

The keenness of Chapman to have a gifted colleague in the work at "Ebenezer" is easy to understand when we realize that he was anxious to move away from the conventional "one-man" ministry. He felt that if there were two men of gift from the start, the position would be more clearly understood by everyone, and the Lord would raise up others to minister with them. It was in this spirit that Müller and Craik went jointly to Bristol. But this was not the Lord's will at Barnstaple at that time, and Chapman had the difficult task of waiting for the gifts to appear, and then encouraging their exercise. And it was a difficult task; for mere speaking, and speaking to edify, are different things. Whereas the gifted were sometimes slow to exercise their gifts, the ungifted were by no means so reticent. Yet prayer, patience and loving dealing carried the church through such difficulties, and the pattern of local ministry emerged. It is true that whenever a specially gifted man appeared he almost invariably was called to full-time work elsewhere. This happened, as we have seen, to Henry Heath. It also happened to William Bowden and George Beer. But the Spirit of God did not leave the assembly. Yet a dark shadow fell on that little company at "Ebenezer."

A few discontented Strict Baptists who had withdrawn from Mr. Chapman's ministry and attempted unsuccessfully to set up a work in opposition, were bent on causing trouble. They declared that the chapel was built for the use of Strict Baptists, and that, since the original principles had been departed from, Mr.

Chapman and the others had no legal right to continue to worship there.

With his legal training Chapman could soon clarify the position. He obtained the Trust Deed and examined it clause by clause. Strange to say it did not enforce the old Strict rule, and nothing in it prevented the practice of what are now known as Brethren principles. He could therefore have carried on in "Ebenezer" for the rest of his life, and the Barnstaple Brethren might then have continued to meet there until the present day. None the less, he determined not to allow this difficult position, which was so liable to misconstruction, to remain unaltered. It should never be said, though unjustly, that he had obtained possession of the chapel by cunning. The difficulty was to find a suitable site on which a new chapel could be built.

At that time the tan-yard at the end of New Buildings was for sale, together with a field adjoining. This seemed an ideal site. One end opened on to a main street of the town, and the other end was a few yards from Mr. Chapman's door in "Derby." A chapel built on this plot would easily be accessible from either direction. Accordingly, Mr. Chapman entered into negotiations with the owner of the ground and, an agreement having been reached, the deposit was paid.

But the Established Church had a plan for incorporating the "Derby" district into a new parish, and building a church in a central position. The church authorities had had an eye on this site, which was ideal for their purpose, but they had failed to act. When it was known that Mr. Chapman had secured a legal right to the ground they regretted their tardiness. Hearing of this,

Mr. Chapman laid the whole position before the Lord. He was led in his reading to Philippians 4, 5, which, literally translated, reads: "Let your yieldingness be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." Believing this to be a message from God, he gave up his right to the ground and the church authorities were able to proceed with their plan. The Church of St. Mary Magdalene, which was built on this site, was later the scene of some good evangelical work, including that of the Rev. Cunningham Geikie, author of "The Life and Words of Christ."

It seems that the assembly left "Ebenezer" before they had any alternative permanent accommodation. It is likely that they met for a time in some public hall in the town. But the evidence concerning this period seems to be lost. Certainly it was no easy matter to find a site for the projected chapel in a suitable part of the town, but the question was not one which troubled Mr. Chapman and his friends greatly. They were convinced that God was with them, and would lead them to the right place eventually. And their faith was justified by the event.

Chapter Seven Grosvenor Street

A good deal of building was being done at that time at the eastern end of Barnstaple, and a new street called Grosvenor Street had come into being. This was handy to “Derby” and not too far from other parts of the town, and when a piece of ground in this street became available, Mr. Chapman and his friends discerned the hand of God in the matter, and the site was obtained.

By 1848 the new chapel had been erected. It had no special name, but was usually referred to as “The Room”—a common term among the early brethren. It was a plain structure, but much larger than “Ebenezer.” No attempt was made to conform to any style of ecclesiastical architecture, and the interior might nowadays be termed dull, since there are considerable unbroken expanses of wall, the windows being set very high. Formerly the walls were coloured blue, and this must have produced a rather weird effect.

A considerable part of the modern book “Mary Lee” by Geoffrey Dennis, centres upon the chapel at Grosvenor Street. The author gives a graphic description of Mary’s first visit to the meeting:

“Grandmother took my hand as we mounted the steps from the street; we passed into the Holy Place. I received at once the curious effect of a light bluish mist which, though brighter, reminded me of the thick blue gloom of my attic, and which was caused by the light-blue distempered brick of the walls and ceiling. There were eight windows in the Room, which was many times larger than our parlour and by far the largest place I had ever entered; each consisted of twenty-four small

square panes, six in the perpendicular by four breadthways, a source for years to come of endless countings and pattern-weavings and mystical mathematical tricks. There were two of these windows at each end of the room, and two down each side. All eight were set so high as almost to merge into the ceiling. The curious result was that while near the floor it was comparatively dark, the upper part of the room was very light. A symbol, I thought; for Earth is dark, but Heaven bright. Aunt Jael led the way up a druggeted sort of aisle to the front pew where we alone sat; the family's immemorial place, though purchased by no worldly pew-rent. In the first rush of newness I but dimly apprehended the benches of black-clad figures we had passed. Immediately in front of us stood the Lord's Table, covered with spotless white damask, and laden with two tall bottles of wine, two great pewter tankards, and two cottage-loaves on plates. Beyond the Table was a low raised dais from which the Gospel was preached at the evening meetings for unbelievers."¹ All this refers to 1853. But "Mary Lee" is fiction, and while the description of the building is generally accurate, the picture given in the novel of the assembly in those days is very different from that which these pages present.

There is no record of any public ceremony at the opening of the new chapel, and no foundation stone is visible, although, as the frontage was reconstructed some years ago, the latter—if it ever existed—may have been removed or covered up. The actual date of the opening is not known, but from the superscription of the first of Mr. Chapman's letters from Ireland, we learn that the place was in use in February, 1848. Gardiner in "Barnstaple, 1837-97," gives the date of erection as

1848, but does not cite his authority. It follows from the letter mentioned above that most of the building must have been completed before the dawn of 1848. A further complication is provided by the fact that a map in the North Devon Athenaeum shows a chapel on the site in 1843.

The seats in the chapel were bare and cold, and members of the congregation might be seen carrying their own cushions to meetings. A later generation of elders has made a concession to the comfort of worshippers by providing warm coverings.

There was no baptistery in the new chapel, although there had been one at "Ebenezer." It does not seem that Chapman ever used a baptistery, preferring to baptize in the river. In recent years, however, a baptistery has been installed at Grosvenor Street as it is felt that the state of the river makes baptizing there inadvisable.

The visitor to Grosvenor Street in Mr. Chapman's day would have found the chapel rapidly filling up for the Gospel service. People of all classes came in: the very poor from "Derby," a large number of tradespeople, professional people, and a few gentry. Rather before the appointed hour, Chapman would enter through a door which led directly into the plain and simple pulpit, and take his seat on the tiny bracket provided for the preacher. This door was left open, because the passage behind it was crowded with mothers with their young children. One elderly lady has described how as a little child she used to look with awe through the door (now used as the door of a cupboard) at the grave preacher, and how she shuddered each time he sat down on his perilous perch.

By this time Chapman had vastly improved as a preacher, and had learnt to express profound truths in the simplest language. In this Gospel service he habitually opened up the doctrines of grace, preaching for an hour or more with great energy, and enlivening his discourse at intervals with striking sentences such as the following:

“The Bible is always a new book to those well-acquainted with it.”

“Absalom’s vanity let his hair grow long; and his long hair did the service of the hangman’s rope.”

“Soon as the word is uttered, ‘I have sinned,’ that very moment flies the seraph.”

The congregation learnt to wait for these gems of spiritual wisdom. They felt that they were listening to a true man of God, and, as conversion followed conversion, they discovered that God had given them an effective evangelist. There was no jealousy among other brethren, no thought that it was wrong for Chapman to be in the pulpit week after week as the Gospel messenger. Certainly no one gave utterance to the God-dishonouring argument that a Spirit-given evangelist must become stale and repeat himself after some weeks. Indeed, they knew from the Scriptures that the same man might be God’s appointed messenger in a town every day for years, and never become a mere bore, or take to himself powers beyond the will of God.² At that time, in fact, the arrangements obtaining at Barnstaple were quite common among Brethren. Each assembly looked to the Lord to provide the Gospel ministry from within itself, with the occasional assistance of some gifted brother who might be staying in the district or

who could walk over from a nearby meeting. Where it was manifest that one man was gifted above his brethren, he would sometimes take all, or the greater number, of the Gospel services. The introduction of Sunday travelling has brought about changes in this respect, and the system of having a different preacher from other districts each Sunday of the quarter is now followed in many assemblies. It is perhaps worthy of consideration whether the unconverted are best reached in this way, or by means of men whom they know, and personally respect. One thing is certain, that a great number of unconverted people followed Chapman's ministry week after week. God used his personality as a vehicle for conveying the truth to their minds. It provided continuity—an important factor in evangelism. Many came because they saw the man at work in the town during the week, serving others without a thought for himself, and living Christ. The Spirit used this to give great practical force to the message, and week after week men and women were born again.

At the Breaking of Bread, Mr. Chapman would sit to the right of the pulpit in a seat set at right angles to the main part of the congregation of worshippers. From this position he could rise to minister the Word and be heard and seen by all. The practice followed at Plymouth by J. N. Darby and others, of stepping forward to the table and speaking from there, was not adopted at Barnstaple, but teachers generally sat where they could most conveniently minister if led to do so.

There was no ranting or cheap emotionalism in the services. Not all who took part in this meeting were as gentle and cultured as Mr. Chapman, but his example and influence went a long way towards overcoming the

peculiar difficulties which surround the so-called “open” meeting. If a brother who had no spiritual message persisted in holding forth, much prayer would be offered. If the trouble continued, he would be spoken to very gently and lovingly. Chapman never followed the unhappy practice of administering a public rebuke to a brother while pretending to address the Lord.

The hymns sung were many of them new, at least as far as the words were concerned, for the Brethren had early discovered that there was a deficiency of hymns centering upon the Lord’s Table, and stressing the priesthood of all believers. There was no choir, but musically-minded friends were encouraged to meet together during the week to practise tunes, so that hymns in some of the rarer metres need not be confined to the same few tunes. It was at these informal hymn-practices that some of Mr. Chapman’s hymns first began to be sung.

Many who had been brought up in the Establishment or in traditional nonconformity, found a new inspiration in the Lord’s Supper as it was conducted at Grosvenor Street. It was the sense of directness in the approach to God which impressed most. Even some who had always believed in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers now discovered for the first time what it really involved. The whole congregation offered up spiritual worship as the Spirit led them. During the first three-quarters of an hour one brother after another would rise to offer praise, or to point briefly to Christ in the Scriptures. Then Mr. Chapman would break the bread. When all had partaken, a teacher would minister the Word, or the task would be shared by two. Often Mr. Chapman would speak at this point, and in an exposition lasting twenty

minutes or more, would instruct the mind and challenge the conscience and will, in some such sentences as these:

“If we read the Word of God chiefly to get comfort we shall have but little, and that of doubtful kind. Let us put away this selfishness, and use the Word of God as the Sword of the Spirit against the flesh in us.” “Would that the saints of God tried themselves by this test: ‘How much do I believe?’ instead of ‘How much do I know?’”

Such faithful dealing sometimes sent men and women away from the Lord’s Table with sore hearts, and yet with the sure knowledge of the Source of healing. It was not easy to go on breaking bread under Mr. Chapman’s ministry if one favoured a low standard of Christian living. His simple remarks upon the Scriptures cut into a man’s business and social life, and stressed the practical nature of true Christianity. Some of the early Brethren were recognized exponents of one particular branch of truth such as the Tabernacle, or the Second Coming. Those who heard Chapman could never tell in advance what doctrine he might emphasize on a particular occasion, but they were sure that he would soon get to its practical application. The Spirit’s arrows soon began to fly as he warmed to his subject. As he himself said: “The Spirit of God never heals, save as He wounds.”

Although sisters did not minister in the assembly at Grosvenor Street (in accordance with 1 Corinthians 14:34-35), one of the most prominent worshippers there was a lady, Miss Bessie Paget. She had formerly lived with her sister at Exeter, where she had exercised a considerable influence upon the life of Anthony Norris Groves. Through her example the Barnstaple assembly

learnt what a fruitful ministry a woman could carry on without disobeying the Scriptures. Bessie Paget was undoubtedly a remarkable character. In her contact with Christian workers she gave them the highest encouragements, and she acted as a spur to the devotion and service of many men. Chapman himself owed not a little to her influence. Upon coming to Barnstaple she obtained a house in New Buildings, where she was able to assist in giving hospitality to all comers. In fact the two houses were practically regarded as one, though they did not stand next to each other, and on Thursday evenings Mr. Chapman went across to "No. 9" for the weekly Bible readings.

Besides encouraging and assisting the menfolk in their work, Miss Paget sometimes struck out along a line of her own, or, better, of the Lord's choosing for her. One such venture was a Sunday School which she carried on in a hall in Union Street, right in the centre of the "Derby" district, and quite near New Buildings. Here she had full scope for her initiative and her administrative talents. The children of "Derby" were ill-clad and under-fed, and they had no sense of discipline; but in Miss Paget they met a firm disciplinarian and a warm-hearted benefactor. Doubtless some people smiled at the notion of a woman dealing almost single-handed with such raw and unpromising material. But Miss Paget's Sunday School prospered, like most of the things she undertook.

Mr. Chapman and his helpers were not afraid of social work, for they saw the Lord caring for men's bodies in the Gospel records, and they knew how God was blessing Mr. Müller's labours for the orphans at Bristol. "Derby" offered plenty of opportunity for loving one's

neighbour, and the flock at Grosvenor Street were not slow to seize it. They did not confine their bounty to believers, for they saw that the Scriptural injunction was "do good unto all men, especially (not exclusively) unto them who are of the household of faith." And so various activities were carried on for the benefit of the poor, activities in which Miss Paget played a leading part. At one time a soup kitchen was opened up in New Buildings, and this did a very good work. Great liberality was shown to the needy, and Chapman was always ready to put their interests before his own. He was once given a new coat by a friend who felt that his old one was too shabby for him to wear. Weeks passed and he never appeared in the new garment. The donor naturally made enquiries and found that Chapman had given it away to a man who had none. What puzzled Chapman, however, was the fact that believers should think that there was something extraordinary in such conduct, for even John the Baptist had taught: "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none."

Many people felt that New Buildings was scarcely the place for a man of Chapman's type to live in. In fact a good part of the congregation at Grosvenor Street would have found it difficult to live there in those days, for drunkenness, filth and poverty were evident in the alleys around. One day a wealthy gentleman approached him with a most attractive proposition. A fine house, standing in its own grounds in the country on the outskirts of Barnstaple should be his if he would agree to live in it. But the offer was courteously declined. "No," said Chapman, "I must live where the poorest saint can visit me."

One day Mr. Chapman had the pleasure of an unexpected visit from a relative, who evidently desired to know how he lived. This relative arrived at the railway station and engaged a cab to take him to Chapman's home. When they stopped in New Buildings he said to the driver in surprise: "I told you to drive to the house where Mr. Chapman lives." "Well, sir," returned the man, "I have done so. He lives here." Evident amazement filled the visitor's face as he rang the bell and waited. It was not long before the door was opened and he was greeted by Chapman.

"Robert, what are you doing here?" the visitor cried.

"I am serving the Lord in the place to which He has sent me."

The visitor went into the house, but he was full of questions.

"How do you live? Have you a banking account?"

"I just trust the Lord, and tell Him all I need. He never fails, and so my faith is increased, and the work continues."

Curiosity filled the mind of the visitor, and he opened the larder door. There was very little there. He asked permission to get some groceries, and Chapman agreed, but stipulated that they should be purchased at a certain shop. When he had found the shop, Chapman's relative awed the shopkeeper by the size of his order. As the amount of goods increased he became very grateful and courteous. When all was completed and the bill paid, the grocer became very keen to do his part, and said: "I will deliver the goods myself if you will give me the address."

"Please deliver them to Mr. R. C. Chapman," requested the customer.

"But—but there must be some mistake!" cried the grocer.

"Oh, no," he was assured, "Mr. Chapman specially directed me to come to you."

The man was completely broken down by this because he had for years made Mr. Chapman the target of his abuse and wicked criticism. In a short while he was at New Buildings, where Chapman's relative was amazed to see him lying prostrate before the man of God in tears and sincere repentance, asking for forgiveness, and yielding to Christ as his Saviour.

The work of God at Grosvenor Street was opposed by others than the grocer just referred to. Members of the Established Church were displeased when persons in their families sought baptism. Mr. John Bridgeman, residing at Northgate, Barnstaple, was secretary of the North Devon Infirmary, and a religious man who attended the Parish Church regularly. His four very musical children formed a Vocal Quartet in Barnstaple, and were much in demand in religious circles. One son was a gifted 'cello player and organist. Of the two daughters, the younger, Miss Susan P. Bridgeman, while still very young, began to attend, with her mother, the meetings at Grosvenor Street, and there accepted Jesus Christ as her Saviour. When she later decided to obey her Lord in believer's baptism, her father was very angry and refused his permission. He threatened to lock the door on her if she were baptized. This was a great test for her, but when the day arrived she told him she must obey God's Word. He did all he could to induce her

to abandon her decision. However, when this was of no avail, he said in a deliberate way: "Remember what I have said." So the young lady was baptized in the River Taw by Mr. Chapman. But as she returned through the streets of Barnstaple in her dripping garments, God intervened for her. The door was open, and she entered home with the experience of joy through obedience, knowing the presence of the Lord. Later, as Mrs. Swaine Bourne, she had the privilege on many occasions for several weeks at a time, of entertaining Mr. Chapman at her home in Edgbaston, Birmingham. Mr. Chapman described "Elford House" as "my Birmingham home." Her son, Mr. K. Swaine Bourne, writes: "Mr. Chapman dealt with me at a Christian father in the Lord, and through that long ministry and contact with him, my life was influenced spiritually. He also very graciously invited me to stay with him at New Buildings, Barnstaple, on several occasions, for a fortnight at a time. With Mr. Chapman as head of his own table, with invited guests (sometimes as many as twenty missionaries would be there at a time) I could not but be deeply influenced by the atmosphere of Christian fellowship and communion. Some of the Lord's people staying there were under a cloud of trial and frustration, but were uplifted and released from bondage through the ministry of the Spirit through God's servant." It was at this time that the photographs of Mr. Chapman's bedroom and workshop were taken.

1 Geoffrey Dennis. "Mary Lee." pp. 36-37.

2 Acts 19, 8-10.

Chapter Eight In days of strife

Through unity and peace normally characterized the work at Grosvenor Street it must not be thought that the assembly there was altogether unaffected by the sad divisions that took place among Brethren from 1845 onwards. Only love and patience kept the meeting from becoming the cockpit of party strife.

The trouble began only sixty miles away at Plymouth. Here there was a large assembly where vast numbers waited upon the ministry of learned and gifted men such as J. N. Darby, Dr. Tregelles, H. W. Soltau, and B. W. Newton. There was much sweetness and power in the fellowship, and hundreds of people came from other churches each Lord's Day to taste for themselves the joy of simple New Testament worship and ministry. Clergymen still officiating in the Church of England were often present and ministered. But, as one who shared the fellowship wrote afterwards: "It was too fair a scene for Satan to contemplate, and he must by some means mar its beauties and desolate its loveliness."

Newton began to teach error and Darby charged him with it. The position was serious, but in itself it would not have caused the widespread divisions which later followed, for, by the grace of God, Newton himself was led in time to see the falseness of his teaching. Today there are no Brethren who hold Newton's heretical view of the humanity of Christ. Yet, such is the cunning of the Devil, all the strife among Brethren began with this incident.

Even before the discovery of Newton's heresy Darby had set up another assembly in Plymouth. After the error

was known he began to insist that every assembly in the world should “cut off” the original Plymouth assembly, and refuse to accept into fellowship any person who came from it, whether personally tainted with the error or not. This brought him into conflict with George Müller at Bristol, who held that each assembly had the right to decide who should be accepted into its fellowship. It was upon this issue that Brethren split into “Open” and “Exclusive” sections.

Chapman went to a special meeting of leading Brethren held at Bath to consider the trouble. In the course of the discussion he addressed Darby personally.

“You should have waited longer before separating,” he said gravely.

“I waited six months,” returned Darby.

“But if it had been at Barnstaple, we should have waited six years,” said Chapman.

In the years that followed this first split, Chapman was often asked to visit assemblies where troubles had arisen. His solid, Scriptural advice was listened to with reverence. He became, in fact, one of the most respected counsellors of individual Brethren assemblies in the nineteenth century. It was here that his peculiar gift lay, and in this particular he was eminently successful. God had given him a firm, loving, Spirit-inspired tact which enabled him to handle delicate situations and difficult people to the glory of God and the blessing of the whole church. He needed it at Barnstaple sometimes. In the course of time an “Exclusive” assembly was set up there in a hall at the back of Rackfield House, and there were many painful

episodes. But through it all he dealt lovingly and in patience with his revilers.

In 1869 it was alleged that false doctrine was countenanced at Grosvenor Street. This was entirely untrue. The oversight looked into the charge and, by examination, found that the brother accused did not hold the heresy complained of. None the less it was painful for Chapman to know that such stories as this circulated far and wide. Yet he indulged in no fleshly retaliation upon those who slandered the assembly. "We can say," he wrote at that time, "that our spirit of love and intercession is perpetually growing in regard to our brethren who refuse intercourse with us. Whatever the party (alas, that we must use such a term!) to which they belong, they are of Christ's flesh and bone."

To deal with the situation, special meetings of prayer were called. It was felt that if all God's people could be brought to know themselves, and judge themselves, this spirit of strife would cease. "Oh, that the spirit of self-judgment be full and complete according to the Word and by the power of the Spirit of God, and, oh, that it may run through the body of Christ!" he wrote. "Shall we not then have the joy of seeing the self-judged flowing together from all quarters, not needing, but forestalling the pressure of God's hand in outward public judgments which are on the way?"

As the years passed, divisions among Brethren multiplied. In 1893 Chapman wrote: "Surely at this time and in the present state of the Children of God the great business everywhere is self-judgment for schism and division, after the pattern of Daniel in his 9th chapter. The Church of Christ at Corinth was never rent asunder

as are the saints of God now; they always assembled in one place... Any outward division in any place without the lowliness of Philippians 2 and like Scriptures, would only aggravate the evil that is marring the testimony to the oneness of the Church of God and giving countenance to Satan's imitation of it in the Church of Rome..."

It was in this letter that Chapman referred (in words already quoted) to the course of love and patience which he had followed whilst waiting for the old Strict rule to be abolished at "Ebenezer." "What we now enjoy here of mutual love and the Spirit's unity would never have been our portion had any other course been taken," he affirmed. "We are doing our endeavour, our diligence, to perfect what God has in pitying love wrought among us." And, indeed, despite the existence of another assembly, and the uttering of unhappy slanders, the work at Grosvenor Street went on from strength to strength, and there was hardly room to accommodate the congregations.

Sometimes false doctrines did actually raise their head in the assembly at Grosvenor Street, and when this happened they were immediately dealt with. One brother went astray on the question of the punishment of the wicked, affirming that it was not eternal. He had been a valued helper and Chapman loved him greatly, but he was excluded from fellowship. On this point Chapman wrote to Müller in 1871: "Knowing that in Christ we have redemption through His blood, and that by the cross of the Son of God we escape the second death and its everlasting punishment, and that everlasting life is ours by His death, we cannot but look with grief and holy indignation at the now wide-

spreading doctrine which limits the duration of the punishment of the wicked. Towards the erring ones we have the bowels of Christ; with the error we would deal with iron hand... Let us use all gentleness, and patience, and long-suffering in showing by the sacred Scriptures how great the folly and guilt of the pride of wisdom which would bind the hands of God's justice and limit the duration of the punishment of the wicked... Yet if all ways of gentleness and of that wisdom which cometh from above be set at nought, then in faithfulness to the Lord and kindness to the erring ones we must, as touching fellowship, 'avoid them' and 'reject them,' for they do the part of the heretic. Yet inasmuch as not a few are, we doubt not, regenerate, we must still plead with God, and also watch for opportunities of entreating them, that they may be recovered from the enemy's snare." It is good to know that the brother in question was eventually led to see the falsity of the teaching he had embraced.

In dealing with error, whether in doctrine or practice, an elder needs to be on guard lest he speaks or acts in the flesh. Love and patience are the Spirit's answer to every such situation. Lack of these has brought about most of the divisions between the children of God today.

Chapman felt no satisfaction when a difficulty had been resolved by the exclusion of a brother from fellowship. He knew that such a course was sometimes essential, but it never gave him pleasure, and he never forgot that brother, but followed him in prayer through the years if he remained unrepentant. One such man had declared that he would never again have anything to do with Chapman. On no conditions, he said, would he speak to him. But one day an awkward situation arose. They both

found themselves walking towards one another on the same pavement in the open street. What could be done? When they met, Chapman, knowing all that the other had said about him, put his arms around him, saying: "Dear brother, God loves you, Christ loves you, and I love you." This simple, loving action broke down the man's hatred, and led him to repentance. Very soon he was breaking bread at Grosvenor Street once more.

Such loving conduct was Chapman's strength, and marked him out as a true brother. But many, even among the Lord's people, are more impressed by the loud voice of controversy than by the wooing voice of love. Scoring victories over one's opponents is, of course, more spectacular than instructing them in meekness. So Chapman had many critics on all sides.

It is only fair to say of the two other leading figures of those years, Darby and Müller, that they were both holy men, and by no means devoid of love. The position seems to be that each member of this remarkable trio manifested one gift above all others. With Müller it was faith; with Darby it was hope; and with Chapman it was love. Müller's faith was evident in the Orphan work; Darby's hope was seen in his expositions of the Second Coming; and Chapman's love appeared in his quiet ministry of reconciliation.

Chapman mourned over the bitter and rash dealing which was sometimes carried on in the Name of Christ. For all who would listen he had words counselling restraint. His constant fear was that, in seeking to maintain the truth, men should act in the flesh and contrary to the Scriptures. To one who had to deal with error he wrote: "The matter you write of is one of the

gravest that can be in the Church of God. Beware of any thought of unbelief; Christ is made wisdom to us; a patient waiting on God for unity of judgment will bring present comfort amidst all the sorrow, and give to those who have to converse with the erring one tenderness and gentleness with decision and wisdom. We shall help in prayer, and hope to hear further from you. As to yourself, dear——, be sure the promise is yours: ‘He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good.’”

It has been suggested that had J. N. Darby gone down to Barnstaple in July, 1849, and discussed the whole situation frankly with Chapman, instead of going to Bristol to see Müller, the cleavage between “Open” and “Exclusive” Brethren would not have occurred. No one can be sure of that, however. But there is one thing certain. If all concerned in those unhappy divisions had exercised the love, patience and restraint which Chapman always counselled, the Brethren as a whole would have continued to present a spiritual unity according to the mind of Christ.

Chapter Nine Tramping the Emerald Isle

Chapman was always keen to promote the Lord's work in Ireland. It was actually as early as 1848 that he left Barnstaple for a preaching tour in that country. This tour took him around the greater part of the Irish coast and occupied between two and three months. He must have covered over six hundred miles in Ireland itself. For the greater part of this distance he travelled on foot and, if time had permitted, would always have preferred to do so. Nothing pleased him more than to walk along with some casual acquaintance, speaking of the things of God. Indeed, he found that this was the most fruitful form of evangelism, for in heart to heart conversation on the open road the peasants lost their fear of the priest.

It was early February when he set off, but the weather was delightful for the crossing. Landing on the South coast at Cork he was welcomed by the Queen Street assembly. Here he found a happy fellowship obtaining, and was refreshed in spirit as he broke bread with them on the Lord's Day. The unhappy divisions which were then disturbing many assemblies were not without effect in Ireland, and questions were being asked at Cork on these matters. One brother in that meeting had many talks with Chapman, and they discovered that their views differed, but there were no harsh words. "We rejoiced in our unity, as far as we discerned it," Chapman wrote, "and judged it a cause of self-humiliation that we could not fully agree, but not a reason for strife and separation. God would soon make His children one, did they always set their faces like the

cherubim, towards the mercy-seat." These two sentences are typical of Chapman's attitude to differences which in some instances have brought a capital "B" into the word "brother," and taken a great deal of the real meaning out of it. Whether in England or Ireland, Chapman practised the love and patience which marked him out as a brother indeed!

The assembly at Cork was like an island of light in a sea of darkness. The Romanists seemed to hold absolute sway over the hearts and consciences of the people in the city. It was difficult to make contact with the ordinary person, even in the open air, for to hear a Protestant read the Bible or pray was regarded as a sin which had to be confessed to the priest. But through the failure of the potato crop there was much poverty and hunger, and in doing something to relieve this in the poorer parts of Cork, Chapman found a way to reach the consciences of many. He discovered that there was real concern beneath the outward opposition. "Here is a vexed and troubled conscience," he wrote to Grosvenor Street, "seeking rest and not knowing how to obtain it. I reckon myself favoured of God to speak to such consciences."

Friends at Barnstaple had been sending money for a year past to support children in the neighbourhood of Cork, who had lost their parents in the famine. This work was centred at Donoughmore, and was carried on by an Anglican rector and his wife. Chapman had cordial fellowship with these friends and stayed at the rectory. It was a delight to him to see the fine spiritual work that was being carried on amongst the orphans, and he promptly determined to encourage his English brethren to contribute further to its support despite the fact that

it was not directly connected with any Brethren assembly.

Leaving Cork, Chapman began his long tour by walking westwards, and his first stopping-place was Mallow. Here he was welcomed by a small company of believers. He found them concerned by news of the serious illness of J. N. Darby, and joined them in prayer for the recovery of this man of God. To believers at Barnstaple, who, like himself, were by no means entirely in agreement with Darby's conduct, he wrote: "The Lord grant us his restoration to health. His name is very dear to children of God in Ireland."

During his stay in Mallow, Chapman obtained permission to preach to the soldiers in the local barracks. He also visited the jail and spoke to the prisoners. On the Sunday, after breaking bread in the morning, he took up a position in the marketplace near a Roman Catholic church and preached to the crowd that came streaming out of Mass. He was listened to attentively by many, and a good number came into the Gospel meeting that evening when they were told that he was to be the preacher. Some weeks after, a young man lay dying in the Mallow Workhouse, and he was asked if he wished the priest to be sent for. "No," he replied, "I heard a stranger preach Christ in the marketplace the other Sunday. That Saviour is all-sufficient for me."

The next places on his route, Kanturk, Newmarket and Millstreet, had no Brethren assemblies, but in each he found a few of the Lord's people and encouraged them in their witness. He was pleased to find a young clergyman preaching the pure Gospel at Kanturk, and

made it his business to call upon him and have fellowship in prayer.

The following week-end found him at Castleisland where he could not find a single born-again person. It was a strange Lord's Day for him, yet he wrote cheerfully: "I have not been alone, and have been the rather making intercession for saints and the world, because I have not had brethren with me." Without supporters, he stood in the open air and preached the Gospel, and as he turned towards his lodgings, his heart oppressed by the darkness of this town, he saw a rainbow arching the sad streets of little houses. "Had I turned another way I should not have seen it," he said simply; "it spoke with the voice of God to my heart."

Between one town and the next he found plenty of opportunities of speaking for Christ, and only eternity will reveal how many souls received God's gift of eternal life through these wayside conversations. Farmers, policemen, beggars—people of many walks of life—listened eagerly to his witness. He was amazed at the ignorance of spiritual things and the deep, dark superstition which characterized them all. Many to whom he spoke appeared never to have heard the Gospel before, and hardly any of his hearers were quick to apprehend the meaning of the things he told them. Throughout his tour he had no large audiences, except now and then in the open air, but his real aim was to "talk" the Gospel to all who would listen. There was nothing spectacular in his method. No dazzling results could be shown. But he left at least some knowledge of the Gospel behind him through almost the entire course of his six hundred mile journey. And at various points in his tour he left converts who became centres of

Christian influence. The assemblies which he visited were inspired by his zeal, and profited greatly by his teaching and advice.

The people at Grosvenor Street followed his itinerary with intense interest. In fact he became a little alarmed lest too much time should be given to the public reading of his letters. "Beloved Brother Heath will take heed to the time, when he reads my journal," he counselled, "that greater matters may not give place to it—I mean the worship of God and the ministration of the Word. If portions be read on a Friday evening, or if need be on a Monday evening, the rest may be read in private at leisure." One of his letters from Ireland reveals the remarkable humility of the man. He had passed a crowd returning from Mass on Ash Wednesday. "I am humbled to think that I passed the crowd at Portumna without addressing them, and without asking of God whether I should speak or hold my peace. My strength, that is, my spiritual strength, needed recruiting ... but I might have found especial help from God by looking to Him. I did not enquire of Him, but pressed forward, hoping to meet others further on. I met none, and I name this that beloved ones who think of me before God may the rather put no confidence in me, and that they may ask the full and soul-assuring guidance of the Holy Ghost for me in all things and at all times."

The weather was not always kind to him. One day he had to cover forty miles, and there was a strong wind in his face when he set out. He asked the Lord to turn the wind, but it continued for the whole of the journey, and his plight was sometimes made worse by gusts of rain, snow and hail. "His answer for that day," he says, "was

that His grace sufficed me, so I was happy in Him and preached His Word to a few on the way."

In some towns the opposition was very bitter. Once, while preaching in a public square, he was struck on the ear and temples with a football. But a Roman Catholic lady stepped forward and offered him the use of her handkerchief to wipe off the mud. Incidents such as these did not worry him. He was much more distressed if he saw well-meaning Christians taking up the cudgels on his behalf. At one place, when he was speaking in the open air, a boy came up to him and offered him a penny. Of course, the onlookers laughed, and Chapman was treating the matter as a boyish prank, when a brother stepped forward and began to deal with the boy in a way that upset the crowd. "My chief difficulties in out-of-door preaching," he said afterwards, "have been occasioned by friends who did not understand, or did not remember, that it was my glory to suffer for Christ's sake, and who therefore have dealt with my revilers not with the mind, and contrary to the precept, of Christ."

On passing into Northern Ireland, Chapman observed the different conditions which obtained. It was true that both Roman Catholics and Protestants in the North were much quicker to grasp the truth than those in the South, and the priests had far fewer disciples. But where they had power, the priests were not slow to forbid the reading of the Scriptures; whilst the Protestants were often merely formal in their professions of faith and acts of worship. "In labouring among them," he wrote, "I am cast upon God for help as elsewhere. 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.'"

During his itinerary Chapman had much happy fellowship with Christians of various denominations. Whenever he heard of a man who was maintaining an evangelical testimony, he sought him out and encouraged him. He rejoiced in the zeal of some Wesleyans whom he encountered, and he made friends of many Presbyterians in the North. In one town, a Presbyterian came to Chapman's host and asked to have the privilege of assisting the preacher financially. On being assured that nothing was needed, he pressed the matter, saying that the traveller would find many on whom he could bestow the gift. So Chapman gladly took it, and was greatly comforted by this token of love from a brother whose judgment in some matters did not coincide with his own.

It is clear that journeys such as this involved considerable expenses. All was provided for by the Lord, and faith was the sole principle of finance. While the Irish tour was largely done on foot, Chapman travelled great distances by train during his life, and again and again he proved the Lord. On one occasion, Mr. James Mansfield, a son-in-law of Mr. John Bridgeman, came on to a railway platform and saw Mr. Chapman sitting in a carriage. Chapman had come to the railway station without a penny, confident that the Lord would provide for his ticket. But nothing had happened up to the time he reached the booking-office, so he passed on unchallenged and sat down in the train to see what the Lord would do. After a few moment's conversation Mr. Mansfield felt constrained to ask to see Chapman's purse. It was produced with a smile. Before the train left it contained a ticket and a liberal gift.

Chapman wound up his Irish tour at Dublin, where the Brethren movement had started some twenty years before. It had been a gruelling journey, and the fact that he was able to cover so much ground, alone and on foot for the most part, reveals the extent of his stamina and spiritual resources. His experiences led him to believe that there was great scope for evangelical work in Ireland. In after years he kept closely in touch with Irish believers. Mr. William Gilmore in his book "These Seventy Years," tells of Chapman's visit to Belfast in 1893 for the 12th July meetings. Chapman asked which would be the biggest meeting in the city, and he was told it would be Ahorey. "How many will be there?" "Oh, about 700." "And what will be the smallest?" "Newtownards." "How many will be at Newtownards?" "150 or 200." "That is where I will go, I like to help small ones." Today a considerable number of assemblies in Ireland, both large and small, owe a great debt to Chapman.

Chapter Ten A faithful pastor

Back in Barnstaple again, Chapman settled down to his regular pastoral duties. He was, in fact, pre-eminently a pastor, vigilantly tending the flock of God. He worked lovingly and patiently to “seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and...bind up that which was broken, and...strengthen that which was sick.” He was careful to enter where he could into the joys and sorrows of those whom he served, remembering the injunction to “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”

The work of a pastor is never spectacular. The true pastor toils on month after month, year after year, dealing with the special difficulties of God’s people, seeking to lead them on in the grace of God, “in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” To the onlooker his work seems much the same, year in, year out. But though the general pattern of it varies little, the details are constantly changing, for an observant pastor finds that no two of the Lord’s people have exactly the same problem. Since, however, these details are nearly always confidential, the full story of a man’s pastoral work cannot be told.

Mr. Chapman’s evangelistic work in Spain and Ireland, and his conference work in England, all serve to mark him out as a trusted servant of God; but the centre of his whole ministry was Grosvenor Street, and his pastoral work there. The warm fellowship, sincere reverence for Scripture, and Scriptural order which existed there at his death, provided the best monument of his seventy years’ labour. It illustrated the fact that a man’s work

can be consolidated when he exercises his gifts largely in one district.

It must not be thought, of course, that he acted alone and exercised an exclusive ministry. He was one elder among several at Grosvenor Street. He did not accept Darby's assertion that it was no longer possible to obey the Scriptural injunctions regarding elders. He refused to believe that such passages as 1 Timothy 3, and Titus 1, were now only of historical significance. He had come to Barnstaple, in the first instance, determined to teach all that he found written in Scripture, and he found a recognised oversight in the inspired Word. He did not stress the recognition of deacons, though this was done at "Bethesda," Bristol, where it was felt that the pattern revealed in the New Testament could not be wrong. The Barnstaple oversight were not men recognized because of their social or financial standing. They were men whose gift to instruct and powers of leadership were evident to all their brethren. It is true that Chapman stood out from among them because of his remarkable combination of gifts. He was pastor, teacher and evangelist—the ideal combination for founding a work of God. Some took it upon them to criticise him for this. They said he had never ceased to be "the minister" of the assembly. But his fellow-elders at Grosvenor Street knew how anxious he was that all should exercise their gift. They would have been the last to wish him to grieve the Spirit by holding back in a false humility from the full discharge of the work to which God had so manifestly called him.

He was greatly used in visitation. In the afternoons he made it his business to move amongst God's people and seek their welfare. As he passed along the back streets

he would be respectfully saluted by those whom he met, for even those in "Derby" who normally greeted people of a different class from themselves with insulting remarks, felt that he was a man who had their interests at heart. Women standing at their doors would receive a gracious smile and a helpful word, given so gently that it was rarely resented.

When he entered a house he would usually have some Scripture in mind, and would wait his opportunity to introduce it into the conversation. But he did not do this in any ordinary way. For example, one day, upon being asked how he was, he replied that he was burdened. With some concern the enquirer said: "Burdened, Mr. Chapman!" "Yes," he replied. "He 'daily loadeth us with benefits.'"

On another occasion he solemnly remarked that it was a pity there were so few D.D.'s. "Surely not!" returned a somewhat shocked brother. "Yes," was the reply. "We want more people in Psalm 119, 25: 'Down in the Dust.' Then we would also have more quickened 'according to Thy Word.'" This method of arousing new interest in a familiar text was characteristic of him, and his friends learnt to expect some instructive quotation whenever he made a remark which shocked them.

Another method he used to bring home to the soul the real point of a text was to quote part of it, and wait for the person addressed to complete it. He would greet a friend in the street with the apparently conceited remark: "I can do all things," expecting the other, of course, to reply: "through Christ which strengtheneth me." All this he did in such a natural and pleasant way

that what might have seemed an odd affectation in another, was accepted and valued in him.

One day he visited a Christian lady who was much cast down. She spoke gloomily of the future. Her mind was oppressed by the contemplation of the hardships which she felt lay ahead. She refused to be comforted. "Let us read together," he suggested. She reached down her Bible, and he pulled out his. He said he would read the twenty-third Psalm. Turning to it, he began "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall want." "Mr. Chapman," she objected, "you have made a mistake." Again he read, still omitting the 'not.' "But," she cried, "it is not like that in my Bible!" "Then read what it says in yours," he replied. By now she saw what he was driving at, and, as she read "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," her fears were dispelled, and her joy returned.

Chapman was particularly solicitous about the reading of believers. There was not such a flow of wholesome Christian literature from reliable evangelical publishers then, as there is now. In view of the danger of unsuitable books influencing believers for evil, and also because he feared that the reading of books about the Bible might become, for some people, a substitute for actual study of the sacred text, he counselled his hearers to confine themselves to the reading of the Scriptures. He often quoted a rhyme, which stuck in their memory so well that it has not yet been forgotten in Grosvenor Street. It ran:

"Men's books full oft with chaff are stored,
God's naught but golden grain afford.
Then leave the chaff, and spend thy pains

In gathering all God's golden grains."

Mr. E. S. Pearce, who lived with Mr. Chapman for some years, wrote to a friend that the latter dreaded printer's ink. Yet there is little doubt that, if he wished, Chapman could have won distinction as a writer. He always knew where to find the right word, and his compositions are, for the most part, exquisitely worded.

In his earliest days he was not afraid of publication, and only five years after he came to Barnstable, the first edition of his hymnal appeared. One of the loveliest verses in this ran:

"My soul amid this stormy world
Is like some fluttered dove;
And fain would be as swift of wing
To flee to Him I love."

Other hymns were: "With Jesus in our midst," "The Lord of Glory, who is He?" He wrote at least a hundred-and-sixty-five hymns and other poems, including some sonnets. The most striking of his sonnets is "When late I saw the moon at dead of night."

His "Meditations" are also very lovely, and they belong to that early time. But in later life he consistently refused to publish, and while we respect the humility which led him to take this course, it does seem that the Church is the poorer for it.

The most helpful of his books, "Choice Sayings," was originally published without his consent. Two sisters conspired to take notes of his addresses and bring together a volume of extracts under this title. After a long time he was persuaded to acknowledge the book as

his own, and revise its pages. C. H. Spurgeon, who thought highly of Chapman, was much impressed by "Choice Sayings," and remarked: "The gold of that land is good." After Chapman's death another volume of extracts was published under the title "Goodly Words," whilst a small volume called "The Good Shepherd" appeared, containing fuller notes of some of his addresses.

Chapman was always watchful of the interests of young people. He did all in his power to encourage young Christians to grow in grace. He knew the art of leading the young, rather than driving them. He would listen to their hopes and aspirations with unfeigned interest. He believed that he might learn something from the youngest believer. As he grew old he did not forget that he himself had been exercising a full ministry as a young man. It is a man's gift, and not his age, that determines questions of service... In Barnstaple the young were set to work as the Lord gave opportunity, and the result is still evident today. Moreover, when they embarked on any new venture, such as marriage, they would come to Mr. Chapman for advice. One young man was emigrating to Canada, and Chapman invited him to breakfast on the morning of his departure. When they were alone, Chapman expressed the hope that the young fellow would be successful in the country to which he was going. "I give you the first Psalm, and the first chapter of Joshua," he said. "If you follow these, your success is sure." Taking these passages to heart, the young man was blessed abundantly in his new life, and returned in later years to be a respected elder at Grosvenor Street. Truly the Word of God is given "that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:7) and

where a man's life pleases the Lord "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3).

Chapman had time for the children. It is a poor shepherd who has no interest in the lambs. W. H. Bennet relates that once, when Chapman was staying with him in Cardiff, a party of Sunday School teachers came to tea to meet him. Speaking to them of the importance of their work, Chapman said: "Remember that these little children in your classes will be the fathers and mothers of the next generation, each the centre of ever-increasing circles of influence, whereby the Gospel may be spread abroad and souls blessed." He then spoke of a lady whom he had recently met in London who had told him that she remembered meeting him at a friend's house when quite a little girl, and that he had given her two passages of Scripture, which were the means of winning her for Christ in early years. At this, one of the ladies who had come to tea said that her conversion was under somewhat similar circumstances. She was passing along the street one day as a child when Mr. Chapman stopped her and asked what seemed an odd question: "Can you tell me, dear, why Jesus was led as a sheep to the slaughter?" She was too confused to answer, and Chapman was too wise to press her further. But she thought about the strange question, and asked her mother about it. She was advised to read Isaiah 53. Here she found the answer, learning that Jesus was wounded for her transgressions. This spoke immediately to her soul, and she was saved.

One day Mr. Chapman and some other brethren went to tea with a member of the flock. There were several children in the house, and how to seat everyone was a problem. The good lady of the house laid a special table

for the distinguished guests, and provision was made on a less sumptuous scale for the children. When Chapman came in he sat down in the place indicated at the best table. Having satisfied everyone by doing this, he then told his brethren to sit at the other table, while he called the children to share the comfort of his board. There followed an amazing scene in which, to the embarrassment of the mother, and the delight of the youngsters, the grave elders had to maintain their dignity in the children's chairs, and with the children's crockery and cutlery, while the young people themselves revelled in the unheard-of luxury of the "glass-cupboard china," and enjoyed the good words of the favoured visitor.

The children of his great friend, Henry W. Soltau, loved to talk to Chapman, and they told him that they had trusted the Lord Jesus for salvation. "Children," said he, gathering them close around him, "some day—it may be years ahead—the great enemy Satan will certainly try and make you doubt the love of Christ. But remember: 'No man shall pluck you out of His hand.'"

Mr. Chapman was often called in to assist in the solving of family troubles. One young couple who were Christians had separated, and he was asked to help them. But his first approaches were not appreciated. One day, however, the wife attended a meeting at which he spoke on the sins of the tongue, and afterwards she said to him: "It was too bad to expose me before all those people." But her case had not been in his mind when he prepared the subject, and it was plainly the Holy Spirit speaking to her soul and reproving her for the sin which had contributed to the separation from her husband. Taking the opportunity to point out this,

Chapman spoke to her of the necessity to acknowledge her grievous fault, making it clear that while she laid all the blame on her husband there would be no re-union. The husband was living in another town, and one day Mr. Chapman found himself there, and took the occasion to call upon him and go for a walk with him. Of course, the man was expecting some reproof, but not a word was said concerning his conduct in the matter. Yet the company of such a holy man as Mr. Chapman was itself a reproof. The husband felt ashamed of himself, and longed to see his wife and confess his fault. The meeting soon took place and, with many tears, each sought forgiveness of the other. After this sweet reunion they lived a happy and useful life together.

Chapman always discouraged tale-bearing. If someone told him of another's fault, he would say: "Let us go to our brother at once and tell him of this." This nearly always silenced the accuser, who would be unready for such a straightforward, Scriptural course. One day a sister called at New Buildings and said: "I am greatly distressed about the conduct of——." Chapman listened and when she stopped he asked: "Is that all?" "Well, there is another thing." "Then tell me all." There was silence when the story was done. Mr. Chapman said: "Please excuse me," and left the room. After a time he re-entered with his overcoat on, and a Bible in his hand, saying: "I am going now." "But, Mr. Chapman, I came for your advice!" "I will give it," he replied, "when you come with me to call on the sister. You see, I never judge by appearances, but always hear both sides." At first the invitation to go with Mr. Chapman was refused, but after advice and counsel from God's servant, the sister yielded. When they reached the other's house and all

three were together, a remarkable change occurred. The sister who had brought the complaint completely broke down in grief and repentance, for hers had been the unChristlike conduct, and the Spirit of God convicted her of it. She was forgiven, and all were filled with joy at the work of God in her heart, and the restoration of Christian fellowship.

Chapman acted upon the same principle if someone criticised another's address. "I didn't think much of that, did you?" someone remarked to him once when a certain brother sat down after speaking. "Let us tell him so," said Chapman, making as if to do so. Of course, the critic was shocked, and Chapman took occasion to point out to him that unless the speaker was informed of that opinion, the remark could do no good.

When difficult circumstances arose, Chapman was careful to find the Lord's way of overcoming them. Trouble was experienced at Grosvenor Street through a brother singing out of tune in a very strong voice. He was asked by the brethren not to do so, but the more they upbraided him, the louder he sang. At last, in exasperation, they appealed to Mr. Chapman, saying: "Something must be done to stop this. Will you please put an end to it." Chapman's reply was: "Let us all pray about it." Next Lord's Day everyone was amazed to see Mr. Chapman stop short of his usual seat and turn in to sit beside this brother. No one was more surprised than the brother himself. But there was no bawling out of tune that day, and when the service was over the "songster" turned to Mr. Chapman and thanked him for his loving kindness, and there was a full restoration of fellowship with all in the meeting. In this was shown the power of the Spirit of God working in a consecrated life.

This was God's way of solving the problem, and Chapman had waited upon Him until he had found it out. Other methods had only created fleshly opposition.

Chapman had a rare facility for administering rebuke where it was needed. When he called one day at the house of a sister in the assembly who was bitter against him, she did not ask him in, but gave him a piece of her mind while he stood on the doorstep. After listening a while he called another brother who stood on the other side of the road, and said: "Dear brother, listen to this dear sister; she is telling me all that is in her heart." But the stream dried up.

At a conversational Bible reading, when all were anxious to profit by his presence, a talkative person held forth for so long that everyone was wearied. When at last he ceased, there was a pause and then Mr. Chapman quietly quoted Proverbs 10:21: "The lips of the righteous feed many." The brother had the grace to acknowledge afterwards that at that moment he discovered that his lips were not the lips of the righteous, for he had not been feeding anyone. The secret of the effectiveness of these rebukes was that they were never administered under any fleshly urge, but by the moving of the Spirit, and through the instrumentality of one who was recognized by all to be a brother indeed!

In his application of discipline, Chapman showed the depth of his pastoral solicitude by the concern he felt for the spiritual welfare of the offender. He hated to see anyone shut out from the fellowship of the saints. If, after many attempts to bring about repentance, it was clear that an erring brother must be "cut off," Chapman always yearned after him, and prayed and worked for

his restoration. At Grosvenor Street the exclusion of such a one was not looked upon with self-righteous satisfaction. The extreme course was only taken with much "anguish of heart" (2 Cor. 2:4).

This long patience under trials in the church was shown when an enquiry was made as to a very difficult brother who had gone to live at Barnstaple. Chapman replied that he was a valuable brother, a very valuable brother; and added: "We did not know our need of patience till he came among us."

In all his service for the "flock of God," Chapman had at heart the interests of others. Yet he never attempted the unChristlike task of pleasing everybody. He once said to a friend: "My chief desire is to please Him. If I please my brethren, I am glad. If I fail, I am not disappointed."

Chapter Eleven Eight months in Spain

From the start, Chapman was keenly interested in missionary work. Two of his earliest converts, William Bowden and George Beer, went out to work for the Lord in India. Chapman had invited Anthony Norris Groves to speak at “Ebenezer” on his return from India in 1835, and these two young stalwarts were held spell-bound by his description of the needs and opportunities that abounded in that land. Finding that Groves was bent on gathering a party of workers to return with him to the Indian field, they had felt that this was God’s call.

Chapman himself was specially interested in Spain. As early as 1838 he had visited that country, travelling mainly on foot and risking his life to take the message of Christ to the peasants. Then a young man of thirty-five, he had knelt with a companion on the summit of El Castillo, near the town of Vigo on the Atlantic coast, and had poured out his heart in supplication that the light of the Gospel might penetrate the darkness of Spain. In faith he had risen from his knees and written home to Barnstaple, saying: “We shall establish our evangelists here.” Many years later he could look back on that prayer of faith and say: “Surely God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.” But first there were great discouragements.

The years that followed Chapman’s first visit to Spain saw much suffering among the few believers in that land. The priests were determined to stamp out Protestant teaching as soon as it revealed its presence in a town or village. All efforts to distribute the Scriptures met with determined opposition. A certain

amount of good work was done by Dr. Rule of Aldershot and Dr. James Thompson of the British and Foreign Bible Society, but Spaniards who attempted to spread the Gospel were silenced by every possible means. Things reached a climax with the imprisonment of Manuel Matamoros. Great sympathy was felt in England for this young and courageous Spanish believer, whose only crime was that he had led others to Christ, and the matter was raised in Parliament. Palmerston, whilst unable to promise any good result from the representations made by the British Government to Spain, made a shrewd remark upon Roman policy. He said: "Although in countries where they form a minority they are constantly demanding, not only toleration, but equality; in countries where they are predominant, neither equality nor toleration exists."

In 1863, Matamoros was sentenced to nine years in the galleys, but later the sentence was commuted, and he went to live at Bayonne, just over the French border. Here Chapman found him when he travelled out to Spain in 1863 with Gould and Lawrence, who intended to settle in that land as missionaries. Matamoros was a Presbyterian, but Chapman had precious fellowship with him, and was specially struck by his zeal for the spreading of the Gospel in Spain, despite his feeble health. Three years later, Matamoros went to his reward, confident that the Lord would send Gospel light into Spain. Gould and Lawrence laboured under difficulty for two years and were then obliged to flee the country. Chapman, who was of course unable to remain with them after they had settled, had followed their work with constant prayer, and yearned to be able to minister freely in Spain. The opportunity came in 1871,

when as a result of a change of government, conditions had become much easier in that land.

Travelling in Spain was not exactly pleasurable in those days, and Chapman was sixty-eight. But his health was excellent, and he faced the prospect of spending a good part of a year there, with joyful anticipation of God's blessing.

He entered the country through France, and made his way at once to the cathedral city of Saragossa. Walking through the streets he saw the great size of the population. Everywhere there were signs of Virgin worship, for the city was one of the most important centres of this idolatry in Spain.

It did not take him long to discover the existence of a fairly large Protestant church in the city. He found out the address of the pastor, a Spaniard named Jose Eximeno, and called upon him. In a very short time they were fast friends. Eximeno revealed himself to be a truly born again man, unspoilt by his popularity amongst the local Protestants, and humble and anxious to learn. Chapman soon realised that the man knew little enough of spiritual things, which was not surprising, considering the conditions of the land in which he lived, but he was hungry for the Scriptures. So Chapman gently led him on in the things of God.

There was much unemployment in Saragossa, and Chapman, always practical, arranged for his landlady to make soup for distribution to some needy cases, doing with one meal less a day himself to make this possible. In this he showed that his love for men was genuine. Indeed, this was recognized by all who met him, and as he visited in the streets and alleys of Saragossa during

the week or two of his stay there, his reading and expounding of the Scriptures was listened to with great attention; so much so, that when it was known that he intended to hold a private meeting at his lodgings on the last evening of his stay, so many people expressed the wish to be present that the place of meeting was changed to the hall where Jose Eximeno ministered, and although only one hour's notice was given of the change, a fine company of people gathered. To Chapman it was a marvellous experience to be able to preach freely in a city where the Gospel had for so many centuries been virtually unknown.

But Barcelona was to be his headquarters for the greater part of his stay in Spain, and his arrival there was hailed with great joy by the Brethren missionaries. An excellent work was being done by the Brethren in this north-eastern corner of Spain. A change of mind on the part of the local authorities had been brought about when a fever had broken out in the seafaring section of Barcelona, and the missionaries had ministered to the needs of the sick without regard to their own lives. So when Chapman arrived in the city he found that the magistrates were favourable to the work. Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence had obtained a large house for a small rent, and this was being used as a centre for Gospel enterprise. It was a joy to Chapman as he went in and out of this house to see the young and the poor being assisted in body, soul and spirit.

The first Sunday morning of his stay in Barcelona, Chapman went to the breaking of bread, which was held in a school-room. It was a great thrill to hear brethren of that priest-ridden land offering their simple worship as priests themselves. A blind man stood up and prayed

with spiritual understanding. Chapman said afterwards: "The eyes of his heart had been opened by the Spirit of God."

The missionaries had been able to establish three schools in the district, and the work in these was bearing fruit in salvation. Chapman visited the schools soon after his arrival and was delighted with what he saw there. In fact, throughout the five months of his stay in the neighbourhood of Barcelona he kept in close touch with the children of the schools, and sought out their parents in their homes. One day during school-time he knocked at a door and was asked in by a mother.

"Here is my little girl's New Testament," she said. Chapman took it and turned over the pages. They were well-thumbed and worn. It was clear that it had been read and re-read. Slips of paper were ready to fall out of it, and Chapman picked them out. They were full of verses which the child had found arresting and had written out. "She had a Bible given to her six weeks ago," said the mother. Chapman handled this also, and found that in that short time it had been read extensively. His heart was singing as he came out of that humble Spanish home. His mind recollected the words of the Saviour: "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father." These indeed were marvellous works that were being done in the heart of the enemy's stronghold. But he gave God all the glory, and said humbly: "Thou, Lord, hast wrought all our works in us."

Away on the mountains in the town of Vilaser there seemed to be an opportunity to establish another school, and Chapman supported this venture. One day, soon after the school had been started, he took the tiring

journey to Vilaser and spent the evening taking a class of young men. The first part of the evening was given to secular subjects, but when the school books had been put away, he gave a plain statement of the Gospel which was listened to with close attention. There were twenty-five youths present, and some men might not have thought much of the opportunity, but Chapman, with his intimate knowledge of Spain's past, felt that it was a very blessed sign.

Another happy moment for Chapman was when he baptized five Spanish believers in Barcelona. As he ministered the Word on this memorable occasion, many in the congregation wept. "God was with us," he wrote to the Soltaus, "and I am assured of the rich blessing of God on this land."

Each Wednesday evening in Barcelona a meeting was held which Chapman described as "like that on Thursday evenings at New Buildings"—a high commendation, for he prized the Thursday Bible readings at Barnstable. He was also greatly struck by a meeting held for young women from the factories of the city. Things such as these made him exclaim: "Oh, to think of the pure Word of God being now freely spoken in any one corner of this dark land, which for 300 years has excluded the Scriptures and all the time been putting to death the children of God within its borders. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!"

One day, during Chapman's stay, the King of Spain was to visit Barcelona, and it was obvious that the streets would be packed with people. It was too good an opportunity to miss, and Mr. Lawrence and one or two others hired a coach to take them to the city centre with

a large consignment of Scripture portions for distribution to the crowds. They stopped the coach by the roadside and prepared to begin their work, but the police appeared and ordered them to move. At that moment the procession was passing, and to move meant getting mixed up with it, but the police were adamant, and in a few minutes the distributors found themselves amongst the official carriages and not far behind the King. From then on, all those within the coach were handing out Scripture portions to those who were alongside, as fast as they could move. Even the soldiers broke line to get a copy.

During June, Chapman had paid a short visit to Madrid, and in October, feeling that time was short and he must soon return to England, he set off for that city again. He wished to see the work of God there, and then to journey, right across Spain and back again in an attempt to gain first-hand knowledge of the possibilities of commencing work in other centres.

Mr. Gould had commenced a meeting in Madrid, but he had soon received the Home-call. Chapman found his widow carrying on a school in the city, and there were other encouraging signs. An English brother named Green who spoke Spanish fluently, had secular employment there and devoted his spare time to Gospel work, whilst one of the Spanish converts was showing great promise. But in so vast a place the number of labourers seemed pathetically small.

Mr. Lawrence was to accompany Chapman on his journey across Spain—covering more than eight hundred miles altogether. Most of the distance was travelled by train, but conditions were none too

comfortable. The journey was made in November. They left Madrid at five o'clock in the morning. The train crawled along, stopping a long time at stations, so that it was night before Ciudad Real—only about 150 miles from Madrid—was reached. But this suited Chapman's purpose admirably, for it allowed him to make contacts with the passengers, who came from various parts of Spain, and it enabled him to witness on the stations of the various towns through which they passed. He and his friends were carrying a large supply of Gospels and made full use of the opportunities of distribution. All listened readily and were pleased to accept the books, but at one station, matters took an awkward turn. A railway inspector objected that the line was private property and that, therefore, they had no right to give away Gospels. The captain of the guard was sent for, and it looked as if Mr. Chapman would be marched through the town to appear before the mayor. But taking out some money, he said: "Have I a right to throw this to the poor who beg at the station? Here is bread—have I a right to give this also?" Unable to answer this, they allowed him to proceed on his journey.

At Ciudad Real, Chapman and his friends obtained lodgings, only to discover that their landlord was noted as a desperate character in the neighbourhood, an adherent of Don Carlos. "Don't talk to him about your religion," they were warned.

Next morning, Chapman approached the man and said quietly: "There is one thing which English and Spanish people need more than anything else." "What is that?" he asked. "Peace with God," returned Chapman, simply. "Have you that peace, my friend? I have had that peace through our Lord Jesus Christ for many years."

The man seemed amazed. He did not rage or blaspheme, but said: "Have you any of those books you were giving away yesterday?" Needless to say, he was speedily supplied with Scriptures, and the party set off for the station with thankful and prayerful hearts.

That day many more souls were contacted as they travelled slowly westwards. A young man who was spoken to said: "Ah, this is just what I want; I have been searching after these books for years." And everywhere they found interest and a willingness to listen. Not one person refused a Gospel or ignored their witness. They were not even asked whether they were Protestants.

On the last stage of their journey they entered Portugal, and a Portuguese labourer boarded the train. Chapman gave him a Portuguese New Testament and spoke with him about his soul. So readily did he receive the message and so wholeheartedly did he accept it, that Chapman wrote: "I expect to see him in glory when the Lord shall make up His jewels."

They received a warm welcome in Lisbon from the few believers there. An Englishwoman, Sister Roughton, had kept a school there for many years, much to the concern of the priests, but illness had caused her to close it down. She impressed on Chapman the possibilities of witness, if it could be re-opened. Chapman felt strongly the privilege of fellowship with God's people in this dark place. Each Lord's Day during his stay in the city he ministered the Word and rejoiced at the open door.

In December he and his friend arrived back in Madrid, having gained valuable information about spiritual needs and openings in many places. It is noteworthy that the very first number of "The Missionary Echo"

contained two letters about this important journey, one from Chapman and the other from Lawrence. This magazine, now known as “Echoes of Service,” introduced the letters by saying: “Mr. Chapman has again been for some months in Spain... and the following letters tell of his journey (on which he was accompanied by Mr. L.) from Madrid to Lisbon, before returning to this country.”

Before leaving Spain, Chapman took leave of his friends in Barcelona, and then returned to England through France, Switzerland and Germany, ministering to companies of believers by the way. From Germany he wrote in Spanish to the Christians of Madrid:

“To my brethren in Madrid, well-beloved in Christ Jesus, our Lord and our Head—the Lord Jesus lives—yes— and according to what He has said, we shall also live; for all the children of God, all those regenerated by the Holy Spirit, are members of Christ, the First-born from among the dead. Christ once on the cross overcame death and all our enemies; but seated at the right hand of God He still conquers, strengthening us by His Word and by His Holy Spirit; and our weakness, by faith sustained upon the arms and bosom of the Lord, is sufficient against the armies of the prince of darkness. Soon will Christ come in His glory, and the resurrection of life will for ever end all the trials of our faith, all temptations and fears; then will be the harvest we have waited for... In my prayers I remember you, brethren in Christ, and I am sure that in like manner you remember me.”

He was always remembering Spain in his prayers, and God's work in that land today owes a very great deal to his labours and intercessions.

Chapter Twelve University of love

New Buildings, the narrow cul-de-sac among the "Derby" slums, became a hallowed place to thousands of pilgrims. A letter posted in a foreign country and addressed simply: "R. C. Chapman, University of Love, England," was duly delivered by the Post Office.

Chapman was always prompt to deny any suggestion that he was founding a new school of religious thought. It was once hinted to him that he had recovered certain truths which the Church had lost sight of. His answer was: "I know of no recovered truths. I hold nothing that others have not held before me." But though he did not found a school of thought, we may confidently say that he carried on a School of Love. And his instruction was by deed rather than lip. Again and again his actions taught men what it really meant to be a brother in the Lord.

Chapman never gave up his desire to have William Hake as his fellow-labourer. It was good to have Hake at Bideford, but he longed for the day when they could work together in Barnstaple. Such men as Hake are all too rare. It is true that he was not so highly gifted in all points as Chapman, but he had a memorable way of expressing himself. Soon after his conversion, his mother said to him: "William, you are cracked!" "Yes, Mother," was his typical reply. "The crack lets in the light!"

For many years Hake laboured in Bideford, and the influence of the Hake family can still be traced in the town today. At first there were family gatherings in the house on the Lord's Day. One of his sons, writing of

these meetings, said: "I remember, when I was quite young, his 'keeping the feast' on the Lord's Day morning with my mother, two or three friends, and the servants who were also in the Lord. Evidently, as he pondered the death of the Son of God, solemnity, worship, peace, praise, were in his heart." Later a building in North Road, which had originally been a gentleman's house but for some time had been used as a workshop, was rented, and converted into a meeting place. So the years passed, and it seemed that Hake would end his days in Bideford. Indeed, in 1860 the end seemed near. His brain was overtaxed and a serious illness ensued. He was sixty-five, and a doctor gave him only three months to live. But earnest prayer was offered and he recovered. And it was soon after this that the Lord gave Chapman the desire of his heart.

Strangely enough, it was by the loss of one of Chapman's best friends, and most ready helpers, that this thirty-year-old longing was fulfilled. Miss Bessie Paget was called to be with Christ in 1863, and she left her house, No. 9, New Buildings, to William Hake. Taking this as God's leading, he committed the responsibilities of his school to his son, George, and took up residence in New Buildings.

Chapman himself was, of course, already a very familiar figure in Barnstaple. And now the townsfolk soon became accustomed to the sight of the two old gentlemen walking arm-in-arm through the streets. In one of the mean streets of the town there was a lodging-house kept by a great drunkard. This man was the terror of the neighbourhood. One day he was particularly aggressive and kept running into the street half-naked, offering to fight anyone. But all wisely kept out of his

sight. It happened that Chapman and Hake were in that part of the town and, knowing nothing of this, entered the street in which the man lived. As they passed his house, the intoxicated ruffian heard them and, taking them to be challenging his strength, rushed out after them with fists up, determined to knock them out. As he caught up with them he brandished his fists and made ready to strike his blow. But in that moment both his arms fell to his sides as if struck down by some unseen power. And the two men of God walked on, unharmed.

From time to time they would carry out a systematic visitation of the town. They started at one end in the adjoining village of Newport, and worked right across to Pilton on the opposite side. At each house they left a Gospel tract, and spoke a word wherever they could. In this way they extended their influence far beyond the company that met in Grosvenor Street. Nor was it so much what they said that made the deepest impression on the unsaved. It was their holy living that told most of all. Their light could not be hidden, and men saw their good works and glorified their Father which was in heaven.

Humour was not excluded from New Buildings, and both of the friends knew how to appreciate it. Strange things sometimes occurred. One day a few musical friends from the chapel were practising new tunes in Mr. Hake's house, when one or two began to cough. This coughing spread until singing became impossible. Great was the concern of the younger brethren when Mr. Hake himself, normally a talented singer, was reduced to making a few spluttering noises. Brother looked at brother with watery eye. What was the cause of this strange affliction? At last someone thought of going down to the

kitchen to make enquiries. There a young brother was discovered in the act of sprinkling cayenne pepper on the top of the hot stove for the delectation of the servants. It is not recorded whether Mr. Hake recovered his breath in time to utter some Scriptural epigram suitable to the occasion!

A few miles from Barnstaple lies a stretch of moorland known as Coddan Hill. This wild and beautiful piece of country rises eight hundred feet above the nearby sea-coast. Those who tackle the stiff climb to the top are well rewarded for their exertions by the glorious views they obtain. Once, when he had come to the summit with a party, Mr. Hake proposed that the Doxology should be sung. And so there, amidst the grandeur of Creation, the voices rang out in perfect harmony—until the last note, when one brother's voice suddenly failed. But at that very instant one of the sheep browsing on the hillside bleated, and the note was exactly the one needed to complete the harmony. "God sent the sheep to complete our joy," said Mr. Hake.

Since Hake and Chapman were both great Bible students, it was rare that either could puzzle the other by a reference to Scripture. But on one occasion Chapman greatly perplexed his brother by a remark consisting of only two words. It happened when they were both staying in Exeter. They had been asked to address the young ladies at Crediton Grammar School. There had been a hard frost, but as usual, they walked. The distance was fairly considerable in view of the bad state of the roads, which were covered with ice. And after a while, their conversation, which had enlivened the journey, seemed to come to an end. Presently Hake commented that it was remarkable that they had come

so far without any slips. But all that Chapman replied was: "Remember Gideon."

Hake was greatly puzzled by this remark. He could not perceive the force of it. But he determined to say nothing and work out Chapman's meaning as he walked along. What had Gideon's experience to do with their present circumstances?

In his mind he traced out the course of Gideon. He remembered how the angel of the Lord first appeared to him and told him that he was to be the deliverer of Israel. He remembered the story of the fleece, and the dream of the cake of barley bread. He recalled how the army was reduced to the three hundred men that lapped, and how victory came to Israel when the trumpets were blown and the pitchers broken. But still he could see no parallel in all this to their present circumstances. Following Gideon's story still further, he brought to mind how the men of Israel offered Gideon the kingship, and he refused, saying: "The Lord shall rule over you." Here again, Gideon had acted rightly.

But as he thought of the end of Gideon's life, he saw the force of the remark: "Remember Gideon." For although Gideon refused the crown, he asked to be given the golden earrings which had been taken from the Ishmaelites, and of these he made an ephod. "And all Israel went a-whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house" (Judges 8, 27). Right at the end of his course, Gideon slipped and fell. What an illustration of the words: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

Hake had a happy knack of teaching. Some of his sentences are full of marrow. Here are a few examples:

- “Believe not your eyes if they contradict your ears, provided it be God that speaks.”
- “There is no willow on which to hang your harp in the holiest of all, and that is our proper dwelling-place.”
- “I carry my library—66 volumes—in my pocket.”
- “Let us be ever drinking the milk of the Word, the sincere milk, without any printer’s ink.”
- “If our circumstances find us in God, we shall find God in all our circumstances.”
- “When considering your faults and inclined to dejection concerning them, don’t talk with yourself—don’t keep bad company. Talk with the Lord.”

The weekly Bible readings were held at Mr. Hake’s house. On one occasion he was reading from John 15. He presently came to the seventh verse:

“If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

Pausing at this point, he turned to one of those present and demanded: “Brother—, would you like always to have your own way?”

There was an awkward silence. Brother— made no attempt to reply. He shifted uncomfortably in his seat. Perhaps qualms of conscience disturbed him.

“Well, I would!” exclaimed Mr. Hake frankly. “And this is how we can have it—‘If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you...’”

People of all classes stayed at New Buildings. A wealthy American lady and her husband were on holiday at

Barnstaple and stayed at one of the best hotels in the town. The lady heard of Mr. Chapman as one of the most interesting characters in the neighbourhood, so she called on him. In conversation she happened to mention that she found her room at the hotel very noisy and was unable to sleep by night. "Then stay with me!" cried Chapman, and sure enough she and her husband had all their belongings moved to his quiet cottage.

One visitor was the Rev. H. B. Macartney, M.A., who describes his visit in his book "England, Home and Beauty." He had heard much of Mr. Chapman and wished to see and hear him for himself. "I learned," he wrote, "that he was pre-eminently holy; a man who rose early, and prayed much, and always walked with God. I was told that he always spent Saturday apart; that the day was passed in communion; that no exercise was taken, except indoors at the lathe; and that a visitor who had once been obliged to break in upon his solitude beheld his face as it had been the face of an angel."

Macartney was greatly impressed by his first meeting with Chapman and Hake. "At last," he says, "Mr. Chapman entered, a strong-built man of about seventy, with grey hair, beard and moustache, the very image of Moses; and Mr. Hake followed, taller, but more bent, old and thin, and suffering. He reminded me of Aaron, the saint of the Lord. Such a kindly welcome from both the brothers, and then I listened to know how a man with such a reputation for holiness would converse—how he would differ from other men. A baby in a young mother's arms commenced to cry lustily, and I was rather annoyed at the interruption. Both Mr. Chapman and Mr. Hake spoke to the mother with the greatest concern and

tenderness, and soon her baby slept. This was my first lesson there in the art of love.”

In the days that followed, Macartney learnt many of the lessons which this “University of Love” taught so aptly. He saw that love and patience pervaded the whole atmosphere. He saw how truly the word “brother” expressed Chapman’s attitude to his fellow-believers. He observed that Chapman “waited like a lover” on Hake, and “the language of Canaan spread like a silver veil over the whole body of their conversation.”

Macartney describes how he first heard Chapman speak. “After tea we wrapped up again and went out to a cottage meeting, and for the first time I heard Robert Chapman expound the Scriptures. Deep called to deep as he warmed to his subject. The impression made on my mind is almost all that I can remember, as I took no notes; but as his Bible closed I felt like an infant in the knowledge of God, compared with a giant like this. Returning home I was confounded that he, instead of I, was taking the place of infant as we walked together. He sought to know all that I knew of God, and so I believe it is always with him, as if his visitors knew more and loved more than he.”

From Macartney’s diary we take the following interesting extracts, which throw further light on life in New Buildings as seen by a visitor:

“Tuesday, December 10th. We all retired to rest about nine o’clock last night; for the hours at New Buildings are particularly early—breakfast at seven, dinner at noon. Mr. Chapman always retires at nine and rises at four. From four o’clock until twelve he is principally occupied with God. It was laid on his heart very soon

after his affections had become fixed on better things, that the world stood in great need of intercession, and that intercession was to be peculiarly his vocation; therefore his first and best hours are given to prayer. Devotion does not, however, in any way interfere with the energies of life. He preaches to 800 souls every Sunday; he undertakes pastoral work; he attends to the minutest bodily and spiritual wants of a stream of visitors, some of whom stay for an hour, some for a month; he is the mainspring of a great evangelistic and Bible work in England and Spain; he corresponds with men like George Müller, and with seekers and workers in various parts of the world. Nor is he shut up during those first eight hours. For instance, it was his practice, till quite recently, to go round to every door and take away the boots of his guests, to clean them with his own hands. He called me at my own request at five. I was awake and waiting for his step. He put his venerable head in at my door just at the hour, lighting my candle and giving me for my morning portion: 'As for God, His way is perfect.' A little after, he came to guide me to a little sitting-room, where a chair and warm rug were placed beside a table furnished with a reading lamp, and just in front of a lovely fire..."

"Wednesday, December 11th. A text was given me, and my candle and fire lighted yet earlier this morning. Prayers and breakfast ended, I visited Mr. Chapman's workshop; carried away a bread platter, cut by his own lathe, took farewell of good old Mr. Hake and some of the other guests, and while a large party accompanied Miss Hanbury to the train, we walked together by a lonely road to the station. This was the most profitable time I have yet had. I asked him many questions about

the Christian life, and got the broadest, most comprehensive answers. I told him of a dear friend of mine, a perfectionist, who said he had got back to Adam's state—no sin in him, but only the possibility of sinning if he did not watch. 'Adam's state!' he said with vehemence. 'Back to Adam's state! I would not change places with Adam before the fall, for a hundred thousand worlds!' Speaking of prayer, he said: 'When I bow to God, God stoops to me.' Speaking of wholehearted service, he said: 'As the father and child do all that they can to please each other, so I do all I can to please God, and God does all He can to please me.' On the subject of gaining the mastery over besetting sins, he was very positive. He said: 'Give yourself to attacking the filthiness of the spirit more than the filthiness of the flesh—pride, selfishness, self-seeking, etc.—these are the ringleaders; aim at them. Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the King of Israel. While you are occupied in gaining the victory over little sins, great sins will be occupied in gaining the victory over you. When great sins are overcome, little sins fall with them.' Thus we reached the train—in falling snow and bitter cold, but our hearts were full."

The happy partnership between Chapman and Hake continued until 1890 when the latter fell asleep at the great age of 95. At that time Chapman was 87. His account of the event is given in the following words:

"On Tuesday morning, November 4th, my beloved fellow-labourer, Brother Hake, joined us at our early breakfast hour, 7 o'clock. In the afternoon he rendered loving service by bearing me and others company to the station to cheer a visitor who was leaving us. We returned together, held in my room our usual Tuesday

afternoon prayer-meeting, in which beloved Brother Hake took fully his part. At our tea-table, at 6 o'clock, we had a goodly company of young disciples of Christ, to whom Brother Hake spoke joyfully on the words: 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.' The meeting afterwards began with 'We go with the redeemed to taste Of joy supreme that never dies.'

"All who sang, and some who heard outside the room, felt that the singing was heavenly, the deep bass of the dear aged one perfecting the harmony. After prayer, the first Psalm was read. Brother Hake took occasion to draw contrasts with the walking, standing and sitting of the first verse. 'Enoch walked with God; Elijah stood before the Lord; David sat before the Lord.' After he had thus for about an hour been the brightness of the assembly, his speech failed, but with support he walked to his bedroom. A dear young brother (Idenden) in faithful love sat up with him. I joined them about 4 in the morning. Brother Hake grasped my hand, and held it until he could hold it no longer, and breathed out his spirit to the Lord at 7.10."

After Hake's departure, Chapman collected some of his letters, and made extracts from his notes on Scripture, publishing the resultant volume under the title "Seventy Years of Pilgrimage." This venture showed the value he set on Hake's ministry, for he had published next to nothing since his youth.

Chapter Thirteen Unfailing peace

At 87, Chapman was still taking his early morning walks. Just as the residents in New Buildings in earlier days had seen a young man striding off into the country before dawn, so those who now lived there, and were early enough astir, saw the old gentleman set out, wearing an Inverness cape, and carrying a lantern.

More and more as the years drew on, he was occupied with prayer, and with the writing of letters to God's people. To Henrietta Soltau he wrote when he was 94: "I cannot but rejoice with you in your resolve to see fellow-labourers in China. They all, with dear Brother Hudson Taylor, have ever been in my heart at the throne of grace. Go, and the Lord be with thee."

Since Chapman's views were not entirely those of Henrietta, or of Hudson Taylor, this letter is another example of the sincere love and patience which marked all his dealings with others. To many who lived and worked with him, he represented the true spirit of the Brethren movement. They felt that the intentions of the 1830's were carried out in practical detail in his life.

Some who had turned away in disgust from the fleshly strife which had marred the witness of some assemblies, were drawn to New Testament principles by Chapman's loving words and example. History has shown that "Brethren-ism" is the worst of all "isms," for it takes the sublimest truths and makes them the tools of party strife. But the true principles of Brethren, as worked out in Chapman's life, compel the admiration of all spiritual people, and, for that matter, of many unconverted folk.

Chapman hated false doctrine with a perfect hatred. On the great foundation truths of the faith he was uncompromising. But he never read heresy into the words of those who were innocent of it. He was particularly gentle with younger brethren, and nothing that he ever said to any of them was known to discourage, or to check the development of their gift.

On minor issues he held that any breaking-off of fellowship was a sin. His views on prophecy differed considerably from those of most of his “Brethren” contemporaries—as his little-known book “Suggestive Question” reveals—and he did not completely agree with Hake on some matters of interpretation. But this was never made a subject of bitter contention.

The question is sometimes asked: “To what extent is it possible to maintain a New Testament fellowship and ministry, and apply New Testament principles, in the present day?” Certainly the fact that believers—including pastors, teachers and evangelists—are split into so many groups, does not make it easy to do so. But the ministry of Chapman shows what can be achieved where the practice of love goes hand-in-hand with the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

As the 19th century drew to a close, Chapman became almost a legendary figure in the minds of many Christians. He was the grand old man of the Church. He had been intimate with Darby, Cronin, Groves, and a host of others who had long since passed into glory. He had begun his ministry at Barnstaple two years before C. H. Spurgeon was born, and Spurgeon died eight years before the turn of the century. His knowledge of men and affairs within the Church of Christ was unparalleled.

His experience was deep and rich beyond measure. Men spoke of his great holiness with awe. Amazing stories were told of his undaunted faith; of times when he had risked everything for God; of a day when he had stood waiting on a railway platform, confident that an express train would stop to take him to his destination, and how it did stop, to the amazement of the stationmaster and booking clerk, who had thought him mad. Stories such as these, perfectly authentic, caused men to glorify God, and led some to set out on the life of faith.

When George Müller passed away, the news was received by a Christian lady staying at New Buildings. Knowing Chapman's sincere love for Müller, she was afraid to break the news to him. What was her surprise to find the revelation anticipated by the question: "Has Mr. Müller gone home?" Receiving a reply in the affirmative, the aged saint bent his head, reflecting on the event. After about five minutes, he quietly said: "It is not for any man to judge his Master, but I was saved five years before George Müller, and I think I should have gone first." A few days later he picked up his pen and wrote to a friend: "My friendship, ever growing, of more than sixty-six years, with our dear departed brother George Müller, will by-and-by be perfected. How precious! We shall bear the image of the Heavenly (Adam) as we have borne the image of the first Adam. I mourned for myself until the earthly house was in the grave; then I rejoiced with him and his proving how far, far better it is to be at Home with the Lord than to remain below."

Chapman continued to preach until he was 98, though other brethren took turns with the Gospel service. One Sunday, just a few weeks before his 98th birthday,

Grosvenor Street Chapel was packed to hear him. He preached for an hour-and-a-quarter, and afterwards showed no signs of fatigue. Those who saw him in the pulpit on that occasion were amazed by the vigour with which he proclaimed the good news of salvation. There was a mental freshness and a spiritual power behind all his words. "The guiltiness of the Pharisee, not less than the guiltiness of the drunkard," he cried, "is to be measured by the greatness of the sacrifice at the Cross of Christ. When you consider the third chapter of Romans you will find that in verse 19 the Spirit of God makes every mouth stopped and all the world become guilty before God. As I read this I call to mind what is written in the Gospel according to Luke, of the two men who went up to the temple. One said: 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are.' He boasted of his righteousness. But the other smote upon his breast, and his words were: 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' The poor man accepted this truth. As in the eye of God he was guilty, so in the eye of his own conscience he was guilty, condemned and lost. But he went justified. How justified? Because he made God his refuge; because he made the crucified Lord of glory a resting-place for his conscience. Let me say—I have said it times out of number from my early days when I first believed in Christ—that while in this land there are, alas! alas! there are drunkards going to hell on the filthy side of the broad road, yet there are others who, like the Pharisee, go to what they call 'The Church' and to religious meetings, but they know not what is here taught—'guilty before God!' Oh, no! But how precious the truth. For if you look into the 23rd verse of the 3rd chapter of Romans: 'For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'—what follows? Why, 'Being justified freely

by His grace.’ How so? Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.’ What is meant by the blood of Christ? It should be read of Him that the blood of the body was not shed until the Lord of glory was enabled to say: ‘It is finished.’ After the soldier that brake the legs of the men crucified with the Lord saw that Christ had died already, what did he do? Not a bone of him must be broken! The Scripture was fulfilled. The soldier pierced the dead body of the Saviour, and out came blood—significant of the one perfect sacrifice for sin. Therefore, when you read or speak of the blood of Christ cleansing from all sin, you must take heed to bear in mind ‘It is finished,’ that is, the atonement, the sacrifice complete. In affection and love I warn all who have not received Christ into their heart, not to suffer your conscience to go to sleep by the teaching of Satan. Multitudes are in that state, especially in this so-called religious land and in neighbouring lands, particularly the North of Ireland. Beware of going to hell the clean side of the broad road. Let me say in regard to the poor sinner, the self-condemned, self-aborred sinner, that he is more welcome to Christ than Christ to him.”

When he reached his ninety-ninth birthday, Chapman received congratulations from all over the world. The press took note of the occasion, because as one reporter wrote: “He has been regularly engaged in religious work in the same town for over seventy years—a record that no other preacher in the kingdom can approach.”

The same reporter wrote: “Mr. Chapman is a man of scholarly attainments, and as a Biblical student his fame is widespread. Save that his memory is not so good as it was, his faculties remain unimpaired. He can converse

fluently in half-a-dozen languages, and he can still read without the aid of glasses. Last November Mr. Chapman had a serious illness, but he entered upon his 100th year in excellent health. Mr. Chapman is accustomed to retire to rest between 8 and 9, but he rises at 3.30, when he takes a cold sponge bath. He has a light breakfast, reads, meditates, and prays until 6.30, when he takes a walk, sitting down with his household (in New Buildings) to breakfast at 7. In the course of each day he gets through much correspondence, and finds exercise and recreation in working a lathe. Just before his birthday he made several wooden platters to present to his friends. The effect of preaching some months ago was found to tell upon the venerable leader, and he has not occupied the pulpit since, but he has continued to conduct the weekly Bible readings which are regarded as a precious privilege by those attending them—and the members of the meetings are drawn from all parts of England and from many distant countries. A gentleman who recently stayed at the 'house of rest' in New Buildings writes: 'Mr. Chapman is "given to hospitality" according to the Apostolic injunction, and entertains Christian people of various denominations, and especially missionaries and other Christian workers. No one can more heartily say: "Grace be with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth," and it is said he lives as his departed friend, George Müller, did, without any settled income, but simply by "faith in the Lord." And the Lord, His dealings and His Word, is the main topic of conversation at his table. He rejoices to talk about the Lord at his home as much as he does at his chapel. No one can estimate the influence that has been exerted by the saintly life and beautiful faith and glorious example of Robert Chapman. And not the least of Barnstaple's

claims to distinction is that she has been identified with the unique life-work of this scholar, saint, author, and preacher."

Among the messages that reached him on his 99th birthday was one from a relative, Captain W. D. Chapman, himself of advanced years, and a believer. His reply was:

"My dear Relative—Your letter of love for my birthday found me highly accountable to God our Heavenly Father, because of freedom from all bodily infirmity and the peace of God reigning within.

"We both of us are highly accountable as living witnesses to the unseen Lord Jesus Christ.

"Affectionately yours in Christ Jesus,—R. C. Chapman."

When Queen Victoria died in 1901, Chapman could say that he had prayed earnestly for her from the day of her accession. The Jews were also constantly in his prayers, together with a vast number of correspondents, missionaries and others. This ministry of intercession continued to the end.

Great changes had taken place in Barnstaple since the day when he had walked down the High Street looking for simple lodgings. The town had increased in size and importance, and there was much less ignorance of the Gospel. Undoubtedly his 70 years' ministry had improved the spiritual condition of the place. In Spain and Ireland, too, there were many fruits of his work and prayer, and workers and people in those lands thought with gratitude of this great man who had shown himself their brother, whilst many assemblies, and countless individuals all over the world, some of whom had never

seen his face, praised God for one whose wise and loving counsel had guided them through times of difficulty.

At last in 1902 the end came. Early in June that year he was taken ill, but after giving some initial cause for concern, his condition improved, and on June 12th he seemed to be well on the road to recovery. Yet that very day things took a grave turn, and before nine in the evening he was with his Lord.

Throughout these days of illness he was full of peace. When asked one morning how he was, he replied: "God is dealing very tenderly, very lovingly, with me." And another time he said: "I can lie quiet now by faith." His most frequent word was "We know not yet what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He now is."

His last words were: "The peace of God that passeth all understanding ..." Yes, peace had marked the whole of his Christian experience—unruffled, uncomplaining peace! From the day when he first found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, he had lived in the enjoyment of Divine peace.

Large crowds attended the funeral, which took place at Barnstaple. Christians were present from all over the country. Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, and Anglicans mingled with Brethren at the graveside of him who had taught them by word and example that all born-again people were brethren and sisters in Christ.

Though he had never swerved an inch in his belief and practice regarding the worship and government of the church, they knew that he had loved them all, and had sincerely mourned the lack of unity of judgment

amongst God's people. They felt that they had lost a brother indeed.

Among those who spoke at the funeral was Dr. Henry Soltau, for the famous Soltau family had spent years under his ministry. It is remarkable that the grave in which Chapman was buried was that where his fellow-worker, Miss Paget, had been buried forty years previously. The plain white stone says simply:

GOD IS LOVE

—

This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners —

IN MEMORY OF

ELIZABETH PAGET who departed to be with Christ

16th March 1863

Aged 80

—

ROBERT C. CHAPMAN

Born Janry 4th 1803

Departed June 12th 1902

—

If hundreds paid their last respects to him that day, what multitudes of spiritual children must have greeted him over yonder! Irish orphans, Spanish peasants, redeemed sinners from the slums of "Derby," and from every class of society. It was aptly written:

"Oh, what a welcome from the friends of years,

Dear, aged Father-brother, thou wouldst have
Within the gates of pearl! The golden street
Would echo and re-echo with their song—
'Ten thousand welcomes, aged pilgrim, home!'
For nigh a century thine arms and heart
Were opened wide to welcome every saint
Who loved the name of Jesus Christ thy Lord.
Those whom thou didst embrace, embrace thee now,
And many more besides...

God's peace
Kept calm thy heart, and showed upon thy face
'Mid many a storm; till, with thy latest breath,
'Peace, passing understanding, God's own peace,'
Told out the unruffled peace which dwelt within!"

The modern Christian, looking back upon the life of
Chapman from a distance of some years, may well
ponder whether God has not given us the example of
such a life to serve as a witness to the true nature of
New Testament Christianity. One fact is clear:

"Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the
greatest of these is love."

A Selection of Choice Saying of Robert Cleaver Chapman

Love

“God is love” (1 John 4:16). His children please Him only so far as they are like Him, and “walk in love” (Eph. 5:2).

True heavenly love has its life and root in the cross of Christ; it has the single eye, and is its own recompense; endures ingratitude, and survives indifference and contempt; has quick sense of wrongs, but is ready to forgive; and covers a multitude of sins. The love we speak of is meek and lowly; behaves itself wisely and edifies; bearing with the foolish and self-conceited, while it shuns their folly. This holy love is the durable work of the Spirit of God: it proves faithful in wintry days; and, ever ready to “rejoice with them that do rejoice,” adds gladness to their days of sunshine.

If we would so love all saints as to please God, we must bear in mind that their names are written in heaven and on Christ’s heart; otherwise we shall love some because they are lovely, and dislike others because of their blemishes.

We only know the heart and thoughts of others by proof of word or deed. If a brother wound us, we should first hear him, and hear him thoroughly, before we judge him to be in fault; but in many cases we may find ourselves not less to blame than our brother.

The “more excellent way” is love, which beareth all things, hopeth all things, imputeth no evil. Nevertheless, if love see a fault, love will reprove in faithfulness the

fault it sees. I say sees, for love is discerning, and love is faithful. I cannot but deal in such faithfulness with all my brethren, and entreat them to smite me in like manner, which, indeed, is to anoint my head with “excellent oil” (Ps. 141:5).

If we delight in God’s glory, we shall delight to honour those whom God honours, and shall ourselves be no losers thereby.

Christian Communion

We need one another; are dependent on one another—not as fountains, but as channels of blessing.

When mutual intercession takes the place of mutual accusation, then will the differences and difficulties of brethren be overcome. (Job 42:8-10.)

The infirmities of our brethren are fair occasions for our patience and long-suffering: let us have grace for each opportunity.

The hearts of true believers crave a fellowship which will last—a fellowship in the Spirit with each other, because of common fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Humility is the secret of fellowship, and pride the secret of division.

If Christ be not the bond of friendship and of communion, and if His blood be not the life of love, how quickly may indifference take the place of warm affections, and how easily may close friends turn to stubborn adversaries, through the clashings of self-seeking and thwarted pride, of man’s native fickleness!

In John 17 and in Ephesians 1 we see what the Church is in the sight of God in Christ—what it ought to be in its ways; and would be, did we not grieve the Holy Ghost, which is given to us to lead us into all truth, and to glorify Christ in us. But the Church has not been true to her heavenly calling; she has forgotten her dignity; she has lost her strength; the grey hairs are here and there upon her, and she knoweth it not. (Hos. 7:9.)

The fellowship of believers ought to be like the fellowship of the Father and the Son: any differences of judgment, therefore, which arise between two members of Christ about the truth of God should be a cause of humiliation, but not of strife and separation. God would soon make His children of one mind, did they steadfastly set their faces toward the Mercy-seat, seeking unity according to 1 Corinthians 1 and Ephesians 4:5.

It is sweet to talk of Jesus with our brethren, the children of God: but how much sweeter is it to talk with the Lord Jesus Himself!

If there be but a shadow of disunion between us and any brother or sister, let us not give ourselves rest until we bring about a reconciliation; let us search out what in our own ways may have caused the breach, and seek after a communion with our brother like that of the Father with His dear Son. We should, moreover, watch against everything in us that may wound or grieve our brother, so that we may be wise to prevent breaches of fellowship; observant of 1 Corinthians 13; our ways fashioned by the love that behaves itself not unseemly, and which faileth not. Nor shall we be skilful to heal breaches, if we be not watchful to prevent them.

The secret of lasting fellowship is that Christ is the life of it. He maintains, rules and sanctifies its mutual tender love and confidence, which will grow more heavenly the more we are like Christ, the more we abide in Him. When He comes in His glory, what joy will it be to remember former friendships, and see Jesus Himself, the spring and the stability of them all!

Suppose all the saints in a town met together in one place, with no outward sign of division; yet, if it were not the common aim to be of one mind with God, and with Christ, the Spirit would still be grieved by divisions of heart and judgment.

The communion of the members of Christ with each other is by the Holy Ghost, who, dwelling in them, gives them fellowship with the Father and with the Son. The oneness of mind between the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, is the spring and pattern of the one new mind that should be found in, and mark out, the members of Christ.

Unless we have a spiritual understanding of this divine unity, we cannot rightly grieve for the divisions of God's people. By looking into this glass, we discover the nature and the guilt of schism and divisions.

Dealing With The Faults of Others

If we would wisely reprove the flesh in our brethren, we must first, after the Lord's example, remember and commend the grace in them.

Those who are much acquainted with the cross of Christ, and with their own hearts, will be slow to take the reprover's office: if they do reprove, they will make it a

solemn matter, knowing how much evil comes of the unwise handling of a fault.

Let us begin by searching ourselves, if we would be profitable reprovers of others.

Much self-judgment makes a man slow to judge others; and the very gentleness of such a one gives a keen edge to his rebukes.

In reproving sin in others, we should remember the ways of the Holy Spirit of God towards us. He comes as the Spirit of Love; and whatever His rebukes, He wins the heart by mercy and forgiveness through Christ.

To forgive without upbraiding, even by manner or look, is a high exercise of grace—it is imitation of Christ.

If I have been injured by another, let me bethink myself—How much better to be the sufferer than the wrongdoer!

The flesh would punish to prevent a repetition of wrongs; but Grace teaches us to defend ourselves without weapons. The man who “seventy times seven” forgives injuries, is he who best knows how to protect himself.

If one do me a wrong, let me with the bowels of Christ seek after him, and entreat God to move him to repentance.

We partake in the guilt of an offending member of Christ, until we have confessed his sin as our own (Dan. 9), mourned over it, prayed for its forgiveness, and sought in the spirit of love, the restoration of the erring one.

If our tongue have been betrayed into speaking contemptuously or even slightly of an absent brother, let us quickly say, Alas! we have wounded Christ.

If in love I speak to a brother of his fault, it is because I hate the sin. If I speak of it with backbiting tongue, it is self-pleasing that moves me.

If under the law, when the bond was only in the flesh, the Israelite must not suffer sin upon his brother (Lev. 19:17), how much less should it be suffered under the Gospel, which binds the saints together spiritually and eternally!

The figure of the mote in the eye shows what skill and tenderness he has need of who would be a reprover to his brother. Who would trust so precious a member as the eye to a rough, unskilful hand?

The Lord loves to manifest peculiar tenderness towards those who have been brought low, even though it may have been through their own folly. "Go ... tell His disciples and Peter" (Mark 16:7).

Evil-Speaking

We shall not escape the tongues of others, unless we first escape from self-love and self-flattery. No sword so sharp as the tongue.

Only the bridling of the heart can effectually bridle the lips.

The backbiter is one who maliciously speaks evil of others; the babbler does so through lack of the thoughtfulness of love.

Church Discipline

The discipline exercised by the Church of God should be a picture of our Heavenly Father's character.

A sober mind, a tender heart, a watchful spirit, should mark those who put away the evil-doer.

All God's corrections and judgments are designed to bring to repentance. So likewise any censure pronounced by an assembly of saints, while manifestly righteous, should be as a medicine to restore, that the spirit may be saved in the day of Christ, (1 Cor. 5:5.)

Paul says not to the Corinthians, when he reproves their evil: "lest my God should humble you," but "lest my God should humble me among you"; not "lest I should be wrathful and cut off many," but lest I should "bewail many which have sinned" (2 Cor. 12:21).

My brother, defiling himself, is my own hand touching pitch. In this mind we are like Christ, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and is able to succour the tempted.

In how many instances, alas! where sharp or bitter reproof is given, heavenly wisdom would deal in tenderhearted counsel and admonition.

Colossians 4:10, is a testimony that Mark was restored and stablished after having forsaken Paul and Barnabas. We find him not with Barnabas, but with Paul, who had so gravely judged his fault. "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee" (Prov. 9:8).

Let us imitate our Lord in His pity toward those who have erred from His way; thus we best discountenance their sins, and help them to make the confession that obtains forgiveness from God. Carnal severity hardens

the heart which might be won by heavenly tenderness and compassion.

In the fellowship of saints' assemblies are many joys and many comforts. It is not, however, a bed of roses; for it is in the intercourse of that fellowship that the infirmities and faults of believers especially appear. In the Church's best state there was always the flesh to be subdued, and Satan resisted. Hence "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, even also do ye" (Col. 3:13).

Judgments of offences should be such as to commend themselves to the common conscience. All are accountable to God for those judgments.

The love of Christ filling our hearts, we shall be keen-sighted to discern, whether in ourselves or others, whatsoever pleases not the Lord. This love, and this love only, will enable us to maintain the order and discipline of the house of God, so as to be approved by the Son of God, the Lord of His own house. We shall thereby, while observing the laws of Christ as to offending brethren, be raised above the fear of man that bringeth a snare; and, what is higher still, be free of false love, which spares the rod when God would have us smite. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness" (Ps. 141:5). "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Prov. 27:6).

Christ And The Church

"How precious, also, are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" (Ps. 139, 17). This is the language of Christ, the Head, regarding the members as

one with Himself. The Epistle to the Ephesians is the beating out of this piece of gold.

Never take a winding path to look for acceptance with God—go straight to Christ; but when you would look at the children of God, look well at Christ first, and then see the saints in Him.

Christ calls Himself the Husband of His Church, because the bond of marriage is the closest and tenderest of all human ties; and to show the purity of His love, He calls her at the same time His sister. His tenderness delights to take occasion by the infirmities of His spouse. She leans on him, not only for support, protection and guidance, but also and chiefly for communion; and leaning is melted into adoring love, which is to Him as spiced wine. He sees His own image in the Church, and this is among His chief joys.

It was the Bridegroom who bare the sins of His spouse in His own body on the tree. What other burden will He not bear? Even the troubles that our own folly brings upon us are occasions to His love, if we do but cast the burden upon Him; but if we do not judge ourselves, He knows how to chasten us to bring us to self-judgment, that He may comfort His mourners with His immeasurable grace and love.

The lonely, the mournful, the friendless, the tempted, the dejected, the despised, the forsaken, the outcast, Christ will wait on each one of them, whatever his case, as though that one were His only charge. By this exact and special oversight of each member of His body, how precious, how lovely, how glorious, does Christ appear!

If Christ will not be satisfied with His present glory at the right hand of God without having His Church, the

members of His body, with Him, how can we be content without Him in this valley of the shadow of death, this present evil world?

The candlestick in the temple was a type of the Church. It was for the high priest to supply the oil, to trim the lamp, to watch and tend it; the light must be ever brightly burning.

The ruin of a kingdom is a little thing in God's sight, in comparison with division among a handful of sinners redeemed by the blood of Christ.

When the body is in perfect health, there is a noiseless, perfect co-operation of the members; so was it with the Church at Pentecost, and so it ought to be with us now.

To reform the Church of God we should always begin with self-reform. Schisms and divisions will increase so long as we begin with reforming others. Wisdom is only with the lowly.

Every kind of self-pleasing is rebuked and put down in the second chapter of Philippians; but, alas! the Church of God in these days is more like the carnal, puffed up, schismatic Corinthians, than the lowly saints of Philippi, whose fellowship in the Spirit made glad the heart of Paul.

The new creation is God's delight; of that new creation Christ is the Head; as one with the Church, Christ stands before God.

The Church, the body of Christ, cannot rise above its present low estate, until there be a conscience in the members of fulfilling each one his office in the body.

While I mourn over schisms and divisions in the Church of God, I justify God, and bless Him for the wisdom and equity of His discipline: He gives us to reap as we sow.

The titles given to the Church in Scripture bespeak heavenly unity, such as “the body,” “the vine,” “temple of God,” “a holy nation,” “a chosen generation,” “a royal priesthood.” Such words set forth the Church of God as a witness for Him in the world; but the names which have been invented by men are names of sects, and declare our shame.

The Church of God is a field that needs double ploughing.

Christ ever enjoys perfect communion with His Father; He craves also communion with us His members (Rev. 3:20); and when this is denied Him by our ways of selfishness, He turns to the Father, and finds joy and rest in communion with Him. The mourners in the Church of God over its low estate must in like manner betake themselves to the Father and the Son, for fellowship by the Spirit, when they cannot find what their hearts long after among their brethren.

The ark of God at Jordan went before the people—was in their midst—followed after. Christ is the leader, the rereward, and the glory in the midst of the Church; their life, and bond of fellowship.

As Christ is the brightness of the glory of the Father, so is the Church the brightness of Christ’s glory. He, as the Sun of righteousness, sheds forth, through the Church, the beams of His light.

As without Christ the perfections of the Father were not manifested, so the glory of Christ was not shown until

His body the Church, which is His fulness, was manifested. But the Church does not shine by native excellency; she is made up of those who, being by nature vile and of the earth, are created anew by the Spirit of God. The life, beauty and glory of the Church are all from Christ her Lord derived. Whereas Christ is by nature the brightness of the Father's glory.

The Calling of The Church

The Church is not only quickened by Christ but quickened together with Him... If this truth were received into the understanding and affections, and lived upon daily by the children of God, their very garments would smell of myrrh and frankincense, with all the powders of the merchant; and their conversation would bespeak their heavenly calling in Christ Jesus.

To rise above the first Adam we must live in the last Adam. We shall then be able in spirit to use the language of the 8th Psalm, and have all things under our feet.

Our life is in Christ: therefore, it is eternal life; for Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."

God's design was not only to save us from hell, however great that salvation, but to make us His sons and daughters, in order that we, with Himself and the Lord Jesus, the first-born from the dead, might dwell for ever in our Father's house.

True love has its source in Christ Himself. It is therefore bold in defence of His truth, and knows no man after the flesh when His honour is to be maintained or defended.

We have three chief characters to sustain—child of God; a soldier; spouse of Christ. We have to feast; to fight; and to sing. Christ has won the victory. We gather up the

spoils; and though so doing we must fight, the victory is ours, and its fruit.

To have the Lord Jesus revealed to us by the Spirit of God is enough. It sufficed Stephen amidst his persecutors, and suffices us amidst all our difficulties and adversaries, amidst all trials, great and small.

God's people are His witnesses; they are the light in this dark world: they should therefore be so filled with the Spirit as to be Christ's epistles, known and read of all men.

The Church has spiritual, heavenly, eternal life in Christ, her risen Lord, the last Adam. His pierced side is the fountain of life to us, His spouse.

We are under the law of God's love and grace in our new relation as children; we are under obligation to Christ as first-born among many brethren; and as His members, to obey Him as our Head.

We have often the words members of Christ upon our lips; would that they were always accompanied with reverence and love.

Colossians 2:14. The forgiveness of God is like the God who grants it—everlasting, all-comprehensive, immeasurable... No possibility of condemnation. The bond that was up against me is now nailed up, as it were, in the court of justice for the protection of the debtor... I owe my whole self. Let Christ dwell in my heart, to guide every glance of the eye, every thought of the mind.

How strange would it seem to us to see a prince in sorry garments seated on the ale-bench in company with common men! How much greater the inconsistency

when a child of the living God, a king and a priest unto God, degrades himself to fellowship with the unregenerate!

In order of time we were in the first man Adam, the man of the earth, first: but not so in order of purpose and degree; according to this we were in the last Adam, the second man, the Lord from heaven, ere we fell in the first.

Every flock bears the mark of its owner; so the sheep of Christ have their mark, even poverty of spirit; each one is a poor needy sinner, self-judged and self-condemned, according to the justice of God.

For a child of God to talk of his heavenly calling, and not to walk according to it, how sad a sight! The moment I am born of God, I am in the world in a new relation; I am a crucified man: and that I am such should be evident to all around.

God holds us accountable for what we have, and not for what we have not. If I have only ten minutes to read the Word, do I employ those ten minutes according to my accountability?

Many believers, though they live in New Testament times, walk in the Old Testament spirit.

Prayer

It is a high place that is given to the prayers of saints in 1 Timothy 2:1-2. If Christians only knew how their prayers for kings and governors are heard in heaven, they would not be meddlers with this world's politics.

Every wish that the Holy Ghost breathes into the soul of a believer is a voice which enters into the ear of God.

It is well for a child of God to pray for himself, but a more excellent thing to pray for others. God honours the spirit of intercession.

We are too apt to set God a time and a way of answering our prayers; and even when our prayers are answered, we are often surprised and ready to faint. If we desire much communion with God and with Christ, we must not be surprised if the Holy Spirit comes upon us as a keen north wind, revealing our own corruption and evil to us: when it comes, let us not say, How can we bear this? But rather be thankful for God's wise answer to prayer.

If we have not the spirit of supplication and thanksgiving, let us begin with the spirit of confession.

When we pray, let us be sure God is hearing us. If we asked help, kindness, favour, from a fellow-man, it cheers us to observe the kind attentive look: let us by faith regard our unseen Saviour and Priest, and settle it in our hearts that our prayer is received; the answer will come in the best time. If we cannot comply with God's just demands to be singing and triumphing with Christ above, He will listen to His unbelieving, groaning children. He bows down His ear to hear their cry.

When the Word of God enters the conscience, men pour out their hearts indeed to the Lord.

Our need of Prayer is as frequent as the moments of the day; and as we grow in spirituality of mind, our continual need will be felt by us more and more.

In order to have power with God in Prayer, there must be an undivided heart; if we would come boldly to the throne of grace, we must come obediently.

Daniel made prayer and meditation of the Scriptures the chief business of his life; yet, if we consider the circumstances in which he was placed, we shall see that few ever had greater obstacles than he in the way of seeking God.

God gives, as a wise Father, prized benefits to His supplicating children.

When we ask for more communion with God, are we willing to part with all that hinders? Let us take heed that our ways agree with our words when we come to the Mercy-seat.

It is a great help to us when we see that our prayers and our labours are to be as the grain of wheat falling into the ground. If we look for death and burial first, we shall be able to go on in patience; and in due time shall assuredly reap an abundant harvest.

We ought to go to God with our matters as altogether His.

How great is our favour and power with God! For we are kings and priests unto God—His sons and daughters by adoption and grace. Let us take heed that we grieve not the Spirit who sealed us unto the day of redemption; and nothing will God deny us. (John 15,7.)

The best testimony that Stephen bore was his last: not when preaching and working miracles, but when he pleaded for his persecutors; for then he most resembled the Lord Jesus in patience, forgiveness and love.

When some peculiar pressure is upon you, be like Queen Esther, whose first request was the king's company. In each trial "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and all other things shall be added: your

seeking first the removal of the trial shows that you need the continuance of it.

We must not look on that only as Prayer to which our lips give utterance: the wish of the believing heart is counted prayer by God; it is the smoke of the incense which ascends in silence before Him.

If a path be overgrown with moss and briers, it is difficult to trace it; if well-frequented it is plainly seen. Our pathway to the fountain of Jesus' blood should be ever well-trodden by our confessions.

Unbelief lightly esteems both our own prayers and those of others.

We can never draw nigh to God in believing Prayer but the answer will be more than we had grace to hope for. Expectation from God is a precious fruit of Prayer.

A guilty conscience stops Prayer, but a cleansed conscience makes Prayer to flow.

We may often have the spirit of Prayer without the comfort of Prayer.

Faith

If we act only because our path is clear of difficulty, this is not Faith. Faith acts upon God's Word whatever the difficulty; and to walk by faith brings highest glory to God; but it is a crucifying of the flesh.

To be strong in Faith two things are needful—a very low esteem of ourselves, and a very high esteem of Christ.

The chief excellency of Faith is that it brings us into fellowship with God. Abel—the first spoken of in Hebrews 11—is commended, not because of any great

deed on man's account, but because he worshipped God acceptably. Nevertheless, if we trust God, there is no limit to the power of Faith, whatever the thing to be done.

God shelters the weak in faith from many a storm, whereby the strong in Faith must be proved. (Gen. 22.)

When a man builds house or ship, he takes heed that no beam be strained; so God never overtaxes our Faith, but brings in comfort, knowing our frame, not suffering us to have sorrow upon sorrow, according to Philippians 2:27.

By neglect of God, and forgetfulness of His word and promise, our minds may become blinded to plainest things. Isaac, through self-will and allowing his natural partiality to blind him, would have set aside as nothing the purposes of God concerning Jacob.

When we are especially strong in Faith, we have especial need to watch against unbelief (compare 1 Samuel 26:5, with 27:1); for as the flesh takes great occasion by sin, so by grace; and no one who studies much that profitable book, his own heart, but must know it.

Soon after Abraham had greatly trusted God, he through unbelief denied his wife. Moses, the meekest of men, spake unadvisedly with his lips. David, the humble, forgiving man, was moved to proud wrath by the words of Nabal.

Faith, which always acts according to the mind of Christ, stoops to no unworthy device for deliverance from trial, leaving consequences wholly with God.

A little increase of Faith works great changes of judgment in us, and brings forth the otherwise hidden

riches of the grace and wisdom of God: it stirs His power to do wonders for us, dividing the sea when the waves thereof roar.

Hebrews n, 24. Moses' first great step of faith was the refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Yet Moses mistook the time for delivering Israel by forty years. He was too hasty; right in point of purpose, not in point of time. He was not content with the bare doing the will of God; he would straightway accomplish some great thing. After leaving Pharaoh's house he should have asked of God further guidance. We need guidance step by step. "I (saith the Lord) taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms" (Hos. 11:3).

Faith looks straight to the command in order to obey it, and takes the promise for her support. She pushes on her way, regardless of dangers. Moses must "go forward," though the next step lead the people into the sea. Whatever appearances may say to us, it is by advancing in the narrow way of obedience that we prove the truth of the promises; and the faithfulness, the wisdom and the power of our promise-giving God.

We must not be deceived by appearances but be sustained by promises. When Jacob looked upon Joseph's coat, which had been brought to him, he should have said: "I see the coat that is covered with blood; I hear the report of the death of Joseph; but, Lord, I believe Thy word— Thy promises concerning the greatness and the glory of my son: what Thou hast spoken Thou wilt perform."

It is a great proof of the strength and steadiness of Faith when, diligent in pleasing God, we rise above our obedience to God Himself.

Grace makes light of sacrifices, because of looking straight to Jesus.

Unbelief begets all sorts of evils; Faith prevents and cures them.

Would that the saints of God tried themselves by this test: "How much do I believe?" instead of "How much do I know?"

We please God by trusting Him; trusting His grace, His love, His wisdom; trusting without limit: but it is only by little and little that we come to account our own wisdom folly, and God's wisdom true wisdom—wisdom infinite; then we are able to yield up ourselves unreservedly unto Him.

Faith labours, and holds on, despite of all appearances, and in the midst of all difficulties.

Rather let us look by Faith to Christ at God's right hand, than at the mountain of difficulties before our eyes.

One of the best answers to prayer is to be able to continue in prayer. (See Matthew 15:21-28.)

Faith perpetually cries to God for its own increase.

All things that are within the compass of God's promises are within the compass of Faith.

Let Faith lay heart-sins upon Christ, and there will be no plague spots upon the skin.

Faith waits upon God; but she waits also for God. Jacob (in Genesis 32:9-12) waited upon God regarding Esau his brother: but he did not wait for God. Had he done so, he would not have bowed down (33:3) seven times to his brother: Esau must have bowed down to him (27:29).

God delights in putting Faith to do that which the flesh declares impossible. Oh, how precious a jewel is that resolute Faith which walks with God under all circumstances, wrestling against the powers of darkness, making no bow to the Haman of evil customs, or evil principles!

We cannot be losers by trusting God, for He is honoured by Faith, and most honoured when Faith discerns His love and truth behind a thick cloud of His way and providence. Happy those who are thus tried! Thus saith the Lord: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (Jas. 1:2). Let us only be clear of unbelief and a guilty conscience, and we shall hide ourselves in the rock and pavilion of the Lord, sheltered beneath the wings of everlasting love till all calamities be overpast.

Faith can bear the test of death and burial, and can sing praises to God under any circumstances.

A steadfast purpose to trust God, when He seems, to unbelief, to be breaking promise, betokens a growth in faith. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15).

God often encourages the weak in faith by giving speedy answers to prayer; but the strong in faith will be tested by God's delays.

The prayer of self-will may get its answer, as with the Israelites: "He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. 106:15).

Faith is the good cable that, stretched and strained, does not break in the storm.

Trial humbles the soul and enables it to bear the ripened blessing, and to carry a full cup with a steady hand.

Faith is not discouraged, but holds on in patience, expecting the promised blessing in the fitting time.

What is the food and nourishment of Faith? “My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed” (John 6:55).

To take God at His word is the business of Faith.

Faith can never fail of the reward of perseverance: the Lord delights in persevering Faith.

In trial of Faith, let us take heed to our spirit that we trust God without stint. The soul’s repose in Him is His delight; and He will honour it. Jehovah sitteth King upon the floods, and Faith sits with Him.

The Sins of Believers

The heart of man is a restless deep, ever casting up mire and dirt (Isa. 57:20); but in the sins of God’s children there is a pre-eminence of guilt.

Jonah could not sin himself out of the love of God; therefore, sinning himself out of communion with God, he had the greater guilt.

I count myself more vile than the murderer who suffers death by the hangman’s hand, because the atoning blood of the Son of God acquaints me with myself... That which shows me my forgiveness reveals to me my pollution.

By far the greater part of the sins of God’s children are sins of ignorance. How needful therefore the cry: “Cleanse Thou me from secret faults” (Ps. 19:12)—faults hidden from mine own eye and from mine own conscience! Without atoning blood they would bring down God’s curse on the offender’s head. Oh, let us not make light of sins of ignorance!

The sins of our unregenerate state should indeed be ever before us; but for frowardness, since we tasted that God is gracious, we sin (as natural men cannot sin) against the heart of Christ, against God's love and His Spirit, who seals us unto the day of redemption. The natural man is a rebel against his Maker; but it is against a Father that we, the saved, offend. Forgetting the cross, we go astray. The remedy is true and speedy confession; for we have an Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).

We must be ever waging war with the secret workings of sin. Where it is but in a little measure allowed, God may suffer His child to go further and further in that allowance, until the seven locks are shorn on Delilah's lap.

To be doubting Christ's love, to be limiting His grace, is alike unworthy of us and grieving to Him. The last offence of Joseph's brethren (Gen. 50:15-21) was not the least.

There is no fault in our character that the grace of God cannot cure. It becomes us therefore to give no quarter to the Canaanites. (Judges 2.)

God deals with us after conversion otherwise than before it: He, as a wise Father, has a rod of correction for His children, and smites them when He might let them alone, did they not know His love.

Peculiar temptations bring forth peculiar corruptions, after neglected warnings.

The Lord Jesus took loving pains to make Peter acquainted with Himself, and was compelled to humble him by his threefold denial of his Lord, but without

exposing him to the eye of enemies. Overcome by a sudden temptation, he was quickly forgiven and restored. (Luke 22:55-62). Whereas David, who had deliberately transgressed, and who had long been in a backsliding state of heart, was exposed to the people as well as made loathsome in his own eyes. (2 Sam. 12; 16.) When Christ restores a fallen one, He often makes that disciple stronger than before his fall. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). So it will be with those who, like David and Peter, have been wont to follow the Lord fully.

The people of God are in general slack and slothful in searching out sins of ignorance; but if we persevere in the search, asking God to reveal them to us, He will give us very humbling knowledge of ourselves and of our secret faults; with it also blessed comfort and communion, which otherwise we could not enjoy.

Deep And Silent Work

What is most precious in the sight of God is often least noticed by men.

The work of the Holy Ghost is often most mighty when least of its power is seen by the common eye, Judas working miracles, and king Saul prophesying, were not such proofs of the Spirit's power as the tears of Peter after he had denied his Lord.

If we would be strong we must make pleasing God our business: then what adversary can harm us?

Before our knowledge can be of much profit to others it must become a channel of our own soul's communion with God in secret.

How needful is it to take heed to our ways, to seek counsel, not only of God, but of those who are faithful and prudent! Satan watches for our halting, and entangles us by little and little; questionable things first, then things plainly evil. Great sins may spring out of little trespasses.

That confession to others which is frequent and unasked is seldom deep before God.

They are most alive to snares and temptations who by reason of walking with God are most blameless: we rarely see the snare when entangled therein.

David, Elijah and others obtained victories over themselves in solitude, and there had power with God: when afterwards they came forth, how calmly did they undertake the greatest things, and how easily perform them!

How great victory was that which Jonathan must have gained over himself, when he rejoiced to see David raised above him! He discerned the mind of God in David, and had so learnt to delight in God, that he did not see in David one who was to outshine him, but another faithful man raised up for God and for Israel. Not so Joab, who in hellish jealousy slew his kinsman Amasa. (1 Sam. 23:17; 2 Sam. 20:9-10.)

To have nothing and to be nothing, this is riches, quietness, rest.

The Servants of The Lord

Whatever carnal titles of honour men may give to professed ministers of the Gospel, the conscience of the unregenerate will not account them holy men of God unless they be such of a truth.

For those who are to exercise any office in the Church — that of evangelist, pastor—it is not knowledge and utterance only which are needed; but also, and above all, grace and an unblameable conversation. Whilst they be harmless as doves in regard to carnal policy, they should be wise as serpents in respect of spiritual wisdom and prudence, so as to “cut off occasion from them which desire occasion” (2 Cor. 11:12).

It was a small thing with Paul to be judged by the saints at Corinth. Whatever their judgments, he is intent on doing them good, and holds on his course, glorifying God. He labours to restore them to a sound heart and mind. “We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying: for I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would” (2 Cor. 12:19-20).

The servant of the Lord Jesus must be instant in season and out of season, knowing that he is the Lord’s messenger to every one with whom he has to do: ever learning of the Lord; for, seeing that he is to be continually ministering to others, he must be receiving fresh supplies for the God of all grace through all channels. Meditation of the Word and prayer should occupy the chief part of his time. In his public ministry and private conversation, he should aim at heart and conscience, seeking in every way to magnify Christ and abase the creature. In short, he should set the Lord always before him, and so walk in His steps as to represent Him to every eye.

If Paul had much joy in his spiritual children at Philippi, he had much profit, though little joy, by those at Corinth, who by their many evils gave him so great occasion to show the heart of Christ.

Those who walk with God hear His voice and He employs them.

A good workman gains skill by his mistakes.

The Lord Jesus always finds service for willing hearts and willing hands: let us desire only that service for which He has fitted us.

If each child of God, each member of Christ, had due conscience of his own accountability, we should soon see better things in the Church of God. If we be careless in the Lord's service, He will surely require it of us.

Let the servants of Christ put toil and hardship by the side of the recompense, and look well to the state of their hearts, taking heed day by day that they please God: so will they be always rejoicing, though always sorrowful.

The joy and triumph of faith are only to be found in the way of unreserved consecration of ourselves to God, and of diligent service of Christ.

All who labour for Christ shall receive great wages for little toil.

It is our wisdom to account the pleasing God our great reward. If we leave it altogether to His will how and when to give us fruit of our labour, we shall obtain abundantly what, as our chief aim, we do not seek.

Martha would please the Lord in her own way; Mary in her Lord's way. There are many who would please the Lord; but in their own way, for lack of trying their works by the Scriptures: amid much labour they are unspiritual and barren.

From the charge of Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 4:12-16), we gather the true and proper character of the servant of God.

The work of a servant of the Lord demands entire self-denial. "Even Christ pleased not Himself" (Rom. 15:3). He must be the servant of all men for Jesus' sake, that he may be, under His Lord, a leader and a commander of the people: the foremost to suffer; the most laborious in all service; ever caring for others, ever forgetting himself.

Christ

Christ twice passed the angels by. He sank far below them in His humiliation; He rose far above them in His exaltation.

If Christ be the life and beauty of our days of sunshine, so is He the brother born for our adversity; and His love shall gild and strike through the darkest cloud. Having been once a sufferer, He communes with His suffering members, and instructs us to put our trials into a just balance; to call our affliction light and momentary. (2 Cor. 4:17-18.)

Resting wholly on Christ! ceasing wholly from the works of the flesh—is the secret of abiding in Him.

Growing acquaintance with Christ makes Him more and more precious to our souls. If Christ were anything less than unsearchable, He could not satisfy us—could neither fill the heart, nor give peace to the conscience.

The strength of love is shown in great things; the tenderness of love in little things. Christ showed the strength of His love on the Cross by dying and bearing the curse for us; the tenderness of His love when He

said: "Behold thy mother!" "Children, have ye any meat?" "Woman, why weepest thou?"

There was an immeasurable difference between the state of Christ on the Cross when He said, under the terrors of the Judge: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and when He said: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). He could not sink lower than His Cross: we can no more fathom the depths of His humiliation than comprehend the glory of His Godhead. His exaltation answers to His Cross. He cannot rise higher than the right hand of God, nor find sweeter resting-place from His sufferings and His toil than the bosom of the Father. His rest and exaltation we must share, being joint-heirs with Christ; nor will He be satisfied until His members be seated with Him on His throne. Then let this mind rule and reign in us which reigned in Christ Jesus (see Phil. 2:5-15); and since the humble mind, so hard of attainment, must needs go before honour from God, let us be thankful for all God's discipline, however bitter, without which pride will not stoop, nor vain man come to knowledge of himself.

May the fulness of Christ replenish our enlarged hearts day by day. By communion with Him the soul grows more and more capacious, and yet acquaintance with Him makes us feel more and more our own littleness.

Let it be our habit to feed daily upon Christ in secret; thus shall we eat and drink, discerning the Lord's body, in the assembly for the supper of the Lord.

Would we be filled with love towards Christ—let us consider Christ's love towards us in the death of the Cross.