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Seeking a Change.

PASTORATES in the seventeenth century were often lifelong, as with Spilsbury, Knowles, Kiffin, Bunyan, Caffin. But occasionally men were willing to consider a call elsewhere. The Church to which the man belonged considered that it had a right to be consulted, and a right to refuse a dissolution; the case of Hardcastle at Jessey's church is well-known. The letters following are rather exceptional in that they show a man anxious to leave his Church, and show his offer to go elsewhere being sent round among sister churches. The whole negotiation indeed led to nothing, but the situation is remarkable.

Richard Adams had a career that was singular in a few respects. When John Tombes was at Bewdley chapel before 1650, he trained young Adams for the ministry, and Adams obtained the living of Humberstone in Leicestershire. Being ejected thence in 1662, he retired to Mount Sorrel, and seems to have maintained himself by teaching. To this the justices did not object, but when he kept conventicles in his house, he was fined a shilling a day. In 1669 he was reported, in 1672 he took out a licence for Congregational worship. From Tombes he was not likely to be imbued with any very sturdy Baptist principles, but in Leicestershire there were many General Baptists. So when, in 1688, John Clayton died, the Shad Thames church in Southwark arranged with Adams to become pastor. There had been trouble in this church during 1687 as to the laying on of hands, which had necessitated an appeal to the Assembly. But with the arrival of Adams, the church quitted its old friends, and in 1689 sent him and two delegates to the Particular Baptist Assembly. The aberration was but momentary; it promptly returned, while Adams in October 1690 was ordained assistant to Kiffin at Devonshire Square.

When Kiffin died in 1701, Adams remained sole pastor, and undertook a general re-organisation, when it was agreed that singing might be allowed after the morning and afternoon services, provided business and the Lord's Supper were not interfered with.

Mark Key had by this time joined the church, and created a peculiar situation; he had been a member and minister at White's Alley General Baptist church, but had left, had been at Reading, and after a period of trouble as to Calvinism, had evidently swung over in his opinions. He was first appointed to exercise his gift here, then invited to move his lecture from Rope-makers' Alley and assist Adams for part of the day. Wapping invited him. This church asked him to stay, and then resolved to accept his transfer from White's Alley if he were in full standing there still. Warwick next invited him, and the church refused to let him go. Petticoat Lane invited him, and he refused. All these invitations were between February 1702-3 and January 1704-5, yet not till December 1706 was Key ordained as assistant to Adams.

Meantime Adams had had his own troubles. Richard Adams junior had been expelled in July 1702 for joining Mr. Payn's congregation; there had been friction in May 1704 about the revival of the London Association, when he actually did not sign the minutes; money ran short on July; men were leaving the church; and one visitor from Hooknorton insisted on preaching, though the church refused to call him to the ministry. Twice in 1705 was Sister Adams censured by the church, he naturally not signing the minutes; and a third time in 1707. In 1706 the trouble about the Association surged up again, and two meetings in April and May were repudiated by a larger meeting, when Adams and Key rallied 19 members. So low had the great church fallen.

It was under these circumstances that Key was ordained, and Adams felt he could honourably look round for a change. Now in 1704 the Particular Baptist of Portsmouth Common had obtained a meeting-house, by the enterprise of Edward Parsons, shipwright. He bought from Joshua Whitehorne, a tallow chandler, and from Henry Seager, gentleman, two pieces of land on West Dock Field, and out of stone from Netley Abbey, built a meeting-house, 32 feet square. One of the leaders among these Baptists was a glazier, named Thomas Whitewood, and through him Adams opened negotiations in June, 1709, to see if the church was ready for a minister. The letter went in the first instance to John Howe, a London man who had gone down to Portsea, and who, fifteen years later, himself preached here. Portsmouth was not desiring a pastor yet, and the letter was sent on to William Knight, of Broughton. No one was wanted here, and it went on further to John Bunny, a butcher of Whitchurch.

This church sent an invitation to Adams, at Pittfield Street in Agnes la Claire, near Hogsden, and on 25 August, 1709, Adams

sent his reply, direct to Whitchurch. For reasons indicated in this reply the affair came to nothing. He stayed on, but in 1712 was pensioned off on £12, to preach once in two months; and he died so unostentatiously that the date is uncertain, whether 1716 or 1719.

The letters are reproduced from the transcript made by Miss Marion Cox of Whitchurch; the originals being now in the Regent's Park library, in the custody of our President.

Beloved Brother How,

yo^{rs} of the 18th June Instant I have recd & give you kind thanks for yo^r care in my business. as to the Isle of wight I am quite of from them. If they thinke M^r Sealey a fitter man for them than my selfe, they may freely take him for me. I have a desire to live in the countrey, and have good reason for it, and if you know a people that I may be suitable for, If they will send for me & beare my charges I will goe to them & stay one or 2 Lords dayes wth them, and when wee come to have some understanding of each other wee shall better know how suitable I may be for them, & how agreeable they may be to me in judgm^t & temper I am under noe necessity of Imposing my selfe on any people, but I can truly say my earnest desire and prayer to God is that he would place me (If I should remove) where I may be serviceable to the Interest of Christ the few [a hole] I have yet to live. If I serve a people it is highly reasonable they should allow me something according to their ability, but I shall easily convince them I am not covetious. I should be very willing that they should be at liberty to choose another when they please, and I shall be willing to be at liberty to leave them if I see cause. I know that the most grave serious Brethren & sisters of the congregation will be loath to leave me, but they know in their consciences, that I have good reason to part with them. Mr. Cox I understand hath beene in Towne, Mr. Keyes told me, he was to meete him at a place appoynted. I have some reason to thinke that

my proposall made in my letter to you is returned to London.

I desire you to speake to Brother whitewood & tell him I desire him when he has any money to send it me. He may returne it by Mr Gawler. Let Brother whitewood place the charge of my letters to you, to my accot. If comissioners should come downe to portsmouth according to act of pliament, I desire that either Brother whitehorne or Brother whitewood will let me know if they see occasion. My Christian Respects to you & all friends I am

yo^r Brother & fellow Labourer
in the Lords worke
Rich: Adams

London June 27th 1709

If I should be sent for I should be willing to pay some part of the charges my selfe.

[To the Baptists at Whitchurch]

Deare Brethren

I have recd yo^r first and 2^d letters. About the time I recd yo^r first It pleased the great disposer of all things to remove my deare & loving wife from me by death, w^{ch} hath made a great altera^on in the scene of my affaires, she was a good companion both in a temporall & spitull accot. I would have gone wth her into any part of England where I might have had a prospect of serving Christ & his Interest she had a great desire to live in the country where she might enjoy the benefit of a good ayre, but now she is gone where there will be noe complaynt for the want of these outward comforts. I have met with some abusive carriage from some few in our congrega^on some of these few are brought to see their mistakes I am willing to goe out of the Noise of London, but I now forsee it will be difficult to come of regularly from the congrega^on, I have onely, as yet, opened my mind to one

of the chiefe of our brethren (a deacon) who told me he would never consent to my removing I gave him some good reason why I desired to remove & desired him to consider what I have said & discourse with our other two Deacons concerning this matter when I have consulted wth some of our chiefe Brethren I shall be capable of giving you a satisfactory answer. The Lord direct you and me in this great affaire. My Christian love to you all. I am

yo^r Brother in the faith &
fellowship of the gospell
Rich Adams

I would be willing to take a Journey to see you, but that will signifie little unless I can pceive that the Church will be content to pt wth me

The Ejected of 1662 in Cumberland and Westmoreland.

Mr. Nightingale has in the press two volumes running to 1400 pages, to be published by the Manchester University at 28s. This is the fruit of some years of research.