

II.—Baptists at Outwood.

IN the secluded parish of Burstow, Surrey, adjoining the Sussex border, is a wooded hill with a beautiful common appropriately named Outwood. There is no village: a few cottages and two windmills by the common, several farm-houses and residences near, and some old moated mansions at the foot of the hill, suffice for its sparse population. Even now, three miles from a railway station and approached by narrow lanes and bye-roads, its growth is slow.

The rise of the "Turners Hill and Horley General Baptist Cause" in the latter half of the seventeenth century, with its meetings gradually extending from West Hoathly, in the south, to Oxted on the north, and from East Grinstead to Charlwood in the west, soon touched this district and attracted some of its people to spiritual things, amongst them John Tasker, a young blacksmith who, in 1710, when about twenty-four years old, began to preach at Outwood. He grew in wisdom and gifts. In 1718 he published a pamphlet, "An examination of Mr. Stoke's argument for Infant Sprinkling." In 1733 he became Elder, as their ministers were styled, of the General Baptist Meeting at Horsham; published several more controversial treatises, and acted as "scribe" or secretary in matters of Church business till his strenuous life ended in 1768.

There was no regular meeting at Outwood, but in the zealous years of the early eighteenth century, the General Baptists preached at houses opened by friends at Horne, Smallfields, Wetherhill, Nutfield, Ridge Green, "Ivy House" Bletchingley, Oxted, &c.; places near enough to attend for people who regarded all their scattered meetings as parts of one local Church.

In 1760, on the death of Griffell English, their then leading minister, the General Baptist meetings, long held at his house, ceased at Turners Hill, and Horley became the titular headquarters.

Meetings were also held alternately at Brother Richard Holliday's, "Cogmans," a farm-house still standing at the foot of Scots Hill near Outwood, easy of access to the remnant of the little flock there, but in 1771 some "Scandalous Reports" led to its being transferred to "Shepherds," (Nutfield) at the bottom of Outwood Common. This soon after became the venue of the quarterly meetings, and at the end of the century

appears to have been the only place where Sunday services were maintained. Farmer Hale lent his best room. A pond adjoining was partly paved and steps built for baptisms. House and pond still exist, but steps were removed some years ago.

Dim traditions of the baptisms and meetings were remembered by the old people of Outwood, and the history of the declining cause is recorded in its Minute book, some items of which are:—

May 20, 1800. "It was agreed to meet for Public Worship at Shepherds half an hour before eleven in the forenoon and that then any Minister present do begin the service."

May 28th, 1820. "Brother Wm. Beal was Chosen to serve the Office of Elder. Brothers Rich, Ridly, John Hale and David Sergent was chosen to serve the Office of Deacons. They were accordingly Ordained to those Offices. By Sampson Kingsford Messenger in the presence of us nine as underwritten. . . ."

At a quarterly meeting March, 1822, "Agreed to establish Church Discipline and government according to the New Testament. Agreed that Brothers Richard Ridley and Joseph Apted do visit those members who do neglect public worship and the Communion, as by list given to know their reason." And June, 1822, "Agreed that we wish the members that had not attended will bring their grievance or reasons with Christian love in the Church."

Oct. 8, 1826, at Shepphards.

"It is agreed that if any person shall bring or apply to the church to dedicate a Child to the Lord, that it be adopted according to Christ receiving children, but to use no name."

An old printed leaflet announces the proceedings of the yearly meeting of the London and Southern General Baptist Association. Held at Horsham, Sussex, September 12th, 1832.

The churches represented were:—

Portsmouth, Chichester, Billingshurst, Crawley, Cuckfield, Ditchling, Godalmin, Horsham, London—(Trinity Place and Worship Street), Nutfield (Surrey). W. Beal. (These soon after declared themselves Unitarian.)

"That the thanks of the Association be given to Mr. Briggs of Bessels Green for recommending Mr. Baker of Riverhead to assist at Nutfield and for endeavouring to revive the cause there."

To offer ministerial help to a weak cause, seventeen miles distant by road, is an instance of fraternal sympathy. To have no nearer help shows how weak the cause had become.

The last entry is June 9th, 1833.

"Propper Notice had been given for Church meeting to be held this day in the forenoon, but as there were only five

members present, namely:— Brothers, William Beal, Pastor, John Hale, Deacon, George Steer, and Sisters Mary Hale and Sarah Streater. The pastor thought proper to call another meeting in the afternoon.

W. BEAL, Pastor,
Zachariah Baker, Visitor."

In 1842, Mary Hale died, aged 68, and in August, 1846, John Hale, aged 77, and were buried at Nutfield Churchyard.

W. Beal, the Elder, latterly styled Pastor, is mentioned as living at Turners Hill, in May, 1857.

So this church, after an existence of well-nigh two centuries, passed away; none of its plants had taken root, but while the old cause was fading, its early influences had not been in vain. Men and women had been impressed by spiritual truth and soul-needs, and as local means of grace became dim, they sought help elsewhere.

Early in the nineteenth century a little company of these attended and joined the Baptist Church at Dormans Land, five miles away, and also carried on meetings at Outwood.

In this vigorous Church was a young man, a schoolmaster, whose ministerial gifts and sympathy led him to go over and preach at their meetings at Outwood, and very soon, encouraged by success and perhaps warned by the "house-church" experience of the Old General Baptists, they set about building a chapel.

No time was lost. At a meeting held at Dormans Land on 12th May, 1834 to consider the propriety of erecting a place for public worship on Outwood Common, it was unanimously agreed that such an object was desirable, and "the undersigned agree to undertake the work by advancing Twenty pounds each at the Interest of 4 per cent. If the said sum shall not prove sufficient they engage to raise the remainder. Mr. James Stanford to be Treasurer, Mr. John Westcott, Secretary, and with Messrs. Everest and Woodhams form a Committee."

So a chapel was built and opened for Divine worship, August 29th, 1834. The cost of the building and land was £225.

A meeting was held in the new chapel September 13th, 1835, and a letter, (here abridged), agreed on.

"To the Church of Christ of the Particular Baptist denomination at Dormans Land.

Dear Christian Brethren,

We the undersigned residing so far from you and in Gods Providence having a place of worship erected near to us where the Ministry of the word is regularly and faithfully dispensed with a view of joining ourselves into a Church . . .

with perfect harmony and christian feeling we request you to give us an honourable testimony to our withdrawing. . . .

Yours in gospel bonds signed by James Illman, Henry Payne, Wm. Stripp, Driver Rushbridge, Thomas and Eliz. Lucken, Richard and D. Carpenter, Sarah Illman, T. Arnold, E. and M. Russell, F. Francis, John Westcott."

On November 6th, a gracious, but carefully worded, reply was sent by the Dormans Land Church signed by Geo. Chapman (Pastor), Jas. Stanford and Obed Woodhams, Deacons.

At a meeting, Sabbath evening November 22nd, at 5.30, the letter was read, also "the declaration of the faith and practice of the baptised Church of Christ meeting at Outwood, in the parish of Burstow, Surrey, made on Lord's day the 22nd November, 1835—the day of their constitution as Church of Christ."

After a preliminary sentence the declaration is made under ten heads, briefly thus :

1. We believe there is but one only living and true God.
2. The Scriptures are the revealed Will of God.
3. God made man upright but Adam fell.
4. God did elect and predestinate a certain number of persons in Christ to eternal salvation.
5. Christ was set up from everlasting on the heads of Gods elect people.
6. Christ took the nature of his people and was obedient unto death.
7. All whom God hath accepted shall be called and sanctified.
8. Christ will ever have a Church on earth and it is the duty of Gods people to unite and walk in his commandments.
9. It is appointed unto men once to die.
10. We believe there will be a Resurrection both of the just and unjust and that God will judge the world in righteousness.

Then follows . . . The Solemn Agreement entered into by all who join this Church.

1. We believe it is our duty to walk in holiness and brotherly love, pleasing to God, comfortable to ourselves, and lively to the rest of the Lords people.
2. To make conscience of praying for each other. To bear and forbear.
3. To strive together for the faith once delivered to the Saints.
4. To support and strengthen the hands of our Minister and Deacons.
5. That the Lord will help us to press forward in such separation from the world as we are called to.

Finally Hebrews xiii. 20-21.

Then follows a list of fourteen "admitted at formation," and a number admitted in the years following.

The church was formed and "the pastor addressed the members from John xiii. 34. The hopeful spectators from Gen. xxiv. 31, and the congregation at large from Exodus xxxii. 26."

On January 3rd, 1836, a Church Meeting was held. Alas! the serpent had got into this new little Eden: "it was reported and proved that Brother X----- was on December 26th seen very much intoxicated; causing scandal and reproach. In May the applications of two women candidates were deferred; one on the ground of differences between her and her husband, and the other "strong objection on account of frequent intoxication."

In those days when beer was thought to be a necessity, drunkenness was a sadly common cause of trouble in many a church. Here Brother X----- after admonition, exclusion, and reform, fell again and again, "the unlovely spirit he manifests" also causing concern and trouble for some years, until he was eventually dismissed. Other cases occurred—one a Deacon, another "at the Bell Inn, on a Sabbath afternoon, conversing and betting with the worldly company there," causing public reproach by outsiders and sorrow to the little Church— anxious to use discipline rightly, yet patiently and lovingly, as the minutes show, to lead the transgressors to repentance and a better mind, and to restored communion.

January 3rd, 1836. "It was agreed to commemorate the death of Christ according to his instruction and command for the first time in this Chapel on Lords day, January 31, 1836, and as no ordained Baptist Minister in the neighbourhood could be obtained they unanimously requested brother Westcott to preside, who, although not ordained as Pastor yet considering their peculiar situation they hoped would be deemed a sufficient reason for their departing from the order usually observed by the Churches of their Denomination."

The good man was duly ordained nearly ten years after, as we learn from the Minute book and this bill:

"The Anniversary of Outwood Chapel will be held by Divine permission on Wednesday, 11th June, 1845, on which occasion Mr. J. Westcott, the minister, will be publicly ordained to the Pastorate of the Church in that place by the Revd. J. Smith of New Park Street and the Revd. J. Cox of Woolwich.
July 31st, 1836.

"The baptistery being completed; on Lord's Day afternoon in the presence of a crowded and attentive assembly, the accepted candidates were baptized, viz.:—E. and L. Leigh, Mrs. King.

Mr. and Mrs. Norman and these the same day together with Mrs. Tanner who had been baptized several years ago by a 'General Baptist,' were received into the Church by giving to each the right hand of fellowship they having previously signified their approval of the Church's declaration of faith and doctrine."

Next September "Mr. Sargeant who had been many years a member of the General Baptist Society expressed a wish to be admitted to the Particular Baptist Church at Outwood." He gave an account of his change respecting doctrinal truths, and his entire dependence on the finished work of the Saviour.

The Minute Book records life and progress, also frequent candidates for baptism, and the careful consideration of each case as they came personally before the Church.

October 8th, 1837. "NOTE. Mr. Nicholls of Godstone had the use of the Chapel; preached in the morning and then baptized five of his flock." In the May following, he baptized eight more. Chapel crowded.

Mr. Nicholls was minister of Pains Hill Chapel, south of Limpsfield Common, one of several built by a Society for taking the Gospel to the dark parts of Surrey and Sussex. He exercised a remarkable ministry there for some years: the chapel being filled; many driving from a distance. His health failed and he died, and his grave is in Dormans Land Chapel ground.

1837. Agreed to pave a path from the gate to the chapel porch. Also to plant spruce firs on the Chapel ground.

October 6th. "Members present at a church meeting who neglect to express their thoughts at the meeting shall not dissent afterwards in private. Members absent from the Lords Table two months in succession shall account for their absence."

May 3rd, 1840. A conversation was held on the subject of instrumental music in divine worship, also as to regulations for Burial Ground and additional stabling.

September 17th. Two members of the Independent Chapel at Reigate applied for baptism.

In 1846 the question of putting the premises in Trust was decided.

February 21st. "Sister S——of Copthorne, having expressed a desire that her infant should be by the minister publicly presented to the Lord by prayer, it was submitted to the consideration of the Church and after considerable consultation it was put to the vote, twelve against seventeen in favour, several neutral."

Samuel Westcott, the minister's son, became a member. He afterwards took over his father's academy near Lingfield, and

in 1860 moved it to the "Eagle House," Mitchan. He joined the Brethren and after a long godly life, died in Yorkshire.

May 30, 1847. "Miss Hale of Shepherds was proposed and on June 6 unanimously accepted and baptized." (A happy reminiscence of her parents' hospitality to the old General Baptist Cause in its last years).

Many entries refer to efforts to reduce the Chapel debt and Mr. Joseph Stanford and others' kind help. The last entry in this Minute book is October 1847, when seven candidates were baptized and received "making 24 during the year."

The entries throughout are carefully and regularly kept in the beautiful handwriting of Rev. John Westcott. A truly gracious spirit pervaded the conduct of the Church meetings, and reveals the desire of those believers to "maintain the honour of His name," and help others on the way to heaven. Its members and adherents included not only those of humble class but some of local importance, also residents of the ancient moated mansions of Burstow Lodge and Smallfields Place.

In December 1847 is an entry as to contemplated enlargement of the chapel.

From the formation of the Church in 1834, one hundred and thirteen members have been admitted, and at this time it numbers one hundred, of which twenty-nine have been received during the present year, and such is the general attendance that the congregation has not seat room and the place is most uncomfortably crowded. At a meeting held 24th November, it was proposed to double the size by removing and rebuilding the north wall, and to meet the expense by (1) An appeal to the Church for promised contribution. (2) To the congregation. (3) To Christian friends in neighbouring places.

Then follows a list of about 100 promises, two of £5, seven of £2 or £3, nigh twenty of £1, the remainder 10s. downward to "Dame Bashfords" 1s. and one humble sixpence. A few outside friends also contributed, and several gifts, such as "six loads of stone," cartage &c., helped the good cause. The account of "Expense in Enlarging Chapel" is a striking contrast to present-day building prices.

The cost of Outwood Chapel was:—

The part erected in 1835	£225
Vestry and Cottage added 1836	£125
Chapel enlarged in 1848	£145

The original entrance at the east end was built up and a new one made on the south side, the pulpit removed to north end. When later the congregation declined, the north end was screened off, and now forms a schoolroom.

In the midst of so much success and an earnest effort for its continuance just completed, a sad event was at hand, which the contemporary chronicler thus narrates.

"As in nature the finest day does not always last, but is often the precursor of storms, so was it in the history of this little church. It pleased the wise Disposer of all events to remove from them their evangelical and much-loved Pastor, who preached but once in his enlarged sanctuary; and thus the little flock were left, not only to mourn their loss, but to struggle without a pastor's counsel and a pastor's aid, in the midst of difficulty, and with a debt just incurred. Since his decease the church have done their utmost; being but a poor people, have only been able to reduce their debt about £58: that is, after paying unavoidable expenses in the conveyance of supplies from London, &c., &c."

John Westcott's death, October 7th 1848, at the age of forty-two years, was a serious loss. "Supplies from London, &c.," were not easy to get at such a remote place and the stipend of a Pastor impossible. In 1849, Joseph Hatton came under an engagement to supply for three months. He was a young man, son of the minister of Temple Street Chapel, Wolverhampton, attached to the "Gospel Standard" School of Strict Baptists. The three months ended with variance and no further invitation, and he, with about fifty of the church, and some of the congregation, commenced services in a barn that was lent, and attracted a considerable following of outsiders. In 1851 a chapel was built at Smallfields where, until his death in 1884, he carried on a successful ministry.

With lessened numbers and means, the little cause passed through twelve years of patient continuance with the help of lay preachers and some friends from Dormans Land and Redhill.

The Minute Book of this period is lost. In 1863 Mr. Thomas Green, of a Kentish yeoman family, who had held lay pastorates at Turners Hill, &c., came to reside at Outwood in business, and at a Church Meeting October 4th 1863 was invited to supply the pulpit for three months. He was transferred from Forest Row church and at the Annual Meeting at Outwood, January 13th 1864, became the pastor and filled that office faithfully and diligently till his death on November 18th, 1910.

The Minute Book records eighty Sunday scholars in 1864. After September 1864, there are no entries except one in 1900, when at the Annual Church Meeting thirteen were present.

A register of members, imperfectly kept, gives the names from 1835 till 1919.

There were periods of encouragement and success during

Mr. Green's ministry. At one time the week-ending prayer meetings held at farm-houses attracted large numbers and were thought worthy of mention in a leading religious paper.

Amidst the difficulties of present-day rural causes, with the help of lay preachers and the gracious perseverance of some earnest adherents, the light is kept burning and the holy fire still maintained.

The grave yard surrounding the chapel, skirted by the beautiful common, has been in use for near ninety years and its tomb stones and wooden grave rails—the latter much decayed, record the names of the departed, young and old; some with pathetic verse or incident. The graves of its ministers and their kindred are on the east side. The headstone of one of the former reads: "In memory of the Revd. John Westcott, Minister of this Chapel for thirteen years, who after a course of eminent usefulness departed this life Octr. 7, 1848 in the forty-second year of his age.

Also Hannah (his wife) Jan. 27, 1892 aged 86 years."
Inside the Chapel is a tablet to Revd. T. Green.

T. R. HOOPER.

A Modern Estimate of Calvinism

IT is impossible to read Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* without acquiring a deep admiration for the author. There is a majestic quality about this massive work which wins approval even where it does not carry conviction. In its primary form the work was comparatively small in bulk—514 octavo pages containing six chapters dealing briefly with the themes of the Apostles' Creed—but Calvin continued to expand, elaborate and reconstruct his work until within a few years of his death. The argument reveals a rich mind, almost as familiar with Patristic as with Biblical writers, moving with certainty among the ultimate problems of religion. It is the work of a logician, an intellectualist, although there are not wanting illustrations which suggest that now and then Calvin's heart "escaped from the control of his head." The systematic theologian occasionally gave place to the preacher, concerned less with consistency than with the earnest appeal of Divine truth. Calvin reared a noble edifice of thought: the dominating unity of his theology was projected, so to speak, into his presentation of it, and the result is a marvel of system and order.