

MEMOIR  
OF  
ISRAEL ATKINSON,  
TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS PASTOR OF THE BAPTIZED  
CHURCH OF CHRIST AT EBENEZER CHAPEL,  
RICHMOND STREET, BRIGHTON,  
BY R. HODDY.

(Editor of the "Gospel Herald  
"SALVATION IS OF THE LORD.")

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## **PREFACE.**

THE following brief Biographical Sketch has been written at the request of Mr. Atkinson's surviving children, who thus desire to show their filial regard to the memory of a beloved Father, and to comply with the wishes of the Church at Brighton, over which he so long and so usefully presided as Pastor, who, with many other Christian friends that knew him, would like to possess such a memorial of one whom they esteemed very highly in love for his work's sake.

The materials used in the compilation of the Memoir were such as are indicated therein, and that exclusively so, the writer not having had any personal acquaintance with our departed Brother beyond that of one half- hour's friendly conversation in the whole course of his life.

The work thus assigned him in the providence of God he has endeavored to perform to the best of his little ability, from motives of love to the cause of Christ, respect to the memory of a godly, faithful minister of the Gospel, and regard to the filial feeling that prompted the request for its execution. May the result prove acceptable to spiritual readers, and glorifying to the God of our salvation.

R. H.

Barnsbury,

August 9th, 1882.

PART I .  
EARLY LIFE AND CALL BY GRACE.

*"Before Thy hand had made The sun to rule the day,  
Or earth's foundations laid,  
Or fashioned Adam's clay,  
What thoughts of peace and mercy flowed In Thy dear bosom, O my God '  
"A monument of grace,  
A sinner saved by blood,—  
The streams of love I trace Up to the Fountain, God;  
And in His sacred bosom see  
Eternal thoughts of love to me."*

"THE hand of God is without doubt in all history. Sparrows are the objects of His care. And if the life and motions of the smallest of the lowest creatures are under His care and control, reason teaches us that the events of a man's life must certainly be under His providence. For myself, I have no doubt that every unit of mankind which has ever existed, however inconsiderable, has, even to the minutest circumstance of its life, occupied the mind and employed the providence of the Most High. If this thought surprises at the first blush and if on mature consideration the surprise heightens to astonishment, as reflection ripens, conviction will deepen; and while we may be led to admire the marvelous greatness of His sustaining working and managing power, this deepened conviction may lead us, with veiled faces, to adore Him who emphatically is God over all. It is my most solemn conviction that the God whom I worship

*' Over-rules all mortal things,  
And manages our mean affairs.'*

I shall therefore endeavor to catch and lay before you the signs of his wondrous over-ruling and management in my little history. While some men are contriving by the aid of science, falsely so called, to shut God out of His own world, it will be my object, religiously believing in His universal presence and government, to acknowledge Him everywhere."

These are the words of him to whom the following pages relate, being a part of the prefatory remarks to an "Autobiography" which he began to write, intending it for the sole use of his children, but of which he completed only a very small portion. The words form a befitting prefix to such an undertaking, and it is earnestly and prayerfully desired that the feeling and principle they express may pervade and guide the mind of the compiler in drawing up an account of the life, labors, and dying experience of the man of God whose utterances they were. It is a matter of great regret that he did not carry out his intention, and thus have given his children the whole of his "little history," as he would have rendered it with a so much better result than any one else could possibly do; — a result that would have been as gratifying to many others, if put in print, as the perusal of the MS. would naturally prove to his own near and dear ones. As, however, that cannot be, the following Memoir, drawn up from such materials as were available, it is hoped may prove in some degree interesting and acceptable to those of the living Church of God who may read it, and more particularly so to the members of the Church and Congregation among whom he labored in word and doctrine for so many years.

MR. ISRAEL ATKINSON'S birth into this world took place on June 30th, 1817, in the parish of Great Eversden, Cambs. He was the firstborn of a family of six children, all of whom are now deceased, Mary Atkinson, who was a member of a Baptist Church at Hornsey, the last survivor, having died, at the age of 59, a few months after her brother, the subject of this sketch. Of the others, Jane died at the age of 25 in 1844; John and Harriet in early childhood; and Ann in infancy. Nothing is known of his ancestors beyond the generation immediately preceding that of his parents. His father's father was a native of Belchford, near Horncastle, in Lincolnshire, and was by occupation a wood-sawyer, which calling was followed by his son, and by his grandson, the subject of this Memoir also, for some years.

His mother's father, Mr. William Rich, was, it appears, a truly godly man, a small farmer, living at Edgehill, Kingston, Cambs., whose wife was likewise a partaker of the grace of God; an exemplary pair, who lived and walked their Christian profession in a very devout and blameless manner. Israel passed some time in his infantile years under

the roof of this worthy couple, and what he saw and experienced there filled his young and impressionable mind with feelings of loving regard and deep veneration for them, and a vivid remembrance of their manner of life remained with him as a pattern of what a godly man's household should be. His own words respecting his maternal grand-parents, written many years after their decease, are these:—"Of him and my dear grandmother I have the most pleasing recollections. I saw him for the last time when I left the shelter of his roof for London, in 1825. My grandfather was to me, as a man, amiable, and as a godly man, venerable. As a child, I loved and venerated him; as a man, I now cherish his memory with deepened sentiments of affection and esteem."

Mr. Rich's devotional habits are described by his grandson in the following words: — "His occupation calling him out early in the morning, there was no opportunity in that part of the day for family worship; but, sleeping in the room adjoining his bedroom, I can recall the very tone of his voice, which I frequently used to overhear when he was pouring out his soul to God before entering on the business of the day. When the day's work was over, at a given early hour of the evening, the family were brought together for evening worship. Every member of the family read a portion of the Scriptures, and I, having learned to read very early, read my portion also, my place being usually between my grandfather's knees. He himself read last; then he engaged in prayer, and afterwards we retired to rest."

The family, it appears, consisted of the father and mother, two sons and a daughter, and for the time being of little Israel, the grandson, then about three or four years old. One of the Lord's-day morning engagements was as follows:—"We were all brought together for prayer before leaving home for the public worship of God at Great Eversden meeting. This service was always observed in a standing posture." This practice of asking the Lord's blessing at His house immediately before leaving their own on the Sabbath morning was a very common one among godly people at that time of day., i.e., sixty years ago, and is probably not altogether out of fashion now ;—let us hope not.\*

*\* The compiler of this Memoir well remembers a similar practice in the household of a godly farmer at Hundon, in Suffolk, where he sometimes stayed a few days when a child.*

*The family had about a four miles' journey to get to their place of worship. When all were ready to start, and the conveyance at the door to take them, the good man of the house, with his family standing round him, in a few earnest petitions devoutly implored a blessing on the services of the day, for journeying mercies to and from the place of meeting, and especially "that our minister may be enabled to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us."*

Mr. Rich was a deacon of the Church at Eversden, and after attending the morning and afternoon services there, usually went to one of the surrounding villages to hold a service in some friend's house, and to speak of Jesus, and it appears was much owned of God in those engagements. Such a man would naturally take a great interest in his little grandson, who, it appears, was a somewhat precocious child, and able to read at a very early age, even in "the Testament long before he attained the age of three years." His grandfather one day, astonished at his proficiency in reading the Scriptures, expressed his belief that the Lord had sent him into the world for some great end, and with his hand placed on the little one's head, referring to his name, solemnly repeated the words of Dr. Watts :—

*"Israel, a name divinely blest,  
May rise secure, securely rest;  
Thy holy Guardian's wakeful eyes  
Admit no slumber or surprise. "*

The good man's forecasting's of his grandchild's future were probably somewhat formulated by the numerous questions little Israel was accustomed to put as to the meaning of what he read, not being satisfied to read it merely as a lesson, but always wanting to know its import, making many enquiries thereabouts, which his relatives did not always find it easy to answer.

During his residence at Eversden, Israel attended for a very short time a school kept by Mr. Golding, the minister of the chapel where his grandfather was a deacon. Here his early aptitude for learning quickly gained him considerable pre-eminence among his

schoolfellows. And this "very short time," it would appear, was all the regular schooling Mr. Atkinson ever had, his future scholastic attainments being the result of his own unaided efforts in far mature years. Mr. Golding, the pastor and schoolmaster, appears to have thought much of his little pupil, and to have been somewhat proud of him, and—what was rather injudicious on his part—adopted measures that made the little fellow proud of himself, and excited the envy and dislike of his schoolfellows, for he placed him on a form, and, addressing the older scholars, extolled his proficiency as a pattern and a reproof for them. Mr. Golding, however, was an excellent man; as a pastor his labors were much blessed, and the Church at Eversden experienced a revival under his ministry, which was no doubt helped on much by the godly zeal and assiduous labors of the good deacon, Mr. Rich, who exercised that office about fifteen years, viz., from 1814 to 1829, the year of his death. Mr. Gilson, the successor of Mr. Golding, wrote the following obituary of Mr. Rich, which appeared in the Evangelical Magazine for 1829:—

"On Wednesday, Sept. 3rd, 1829, died William Rich, of Edgehill, deacon of the Church of Christ at Great Eversden, Cambs. He died in his sixty-fifth year, full of faith and good works. He was one of whom it may be truly said, 'He feared God above many.' Though moving in a humble sphere in life and destitute of the advantages of a liberal education, he was possessed of those talents which eminently qualified him for the station in the Church to which Providence called him, and which rendered him a very useful man.

"The season of his youth, like that of too many, was passed in the ways of the world and sin. He appears to have received his first saving impressions about his twenty-eighth year, and to have received them while listening to the reading of a pious friend. From the time when he became a Christian to the termination of his mortal career, he was remarkable for his deadness to the world, his devotedness to God, his attention to public means and ordinances, his love to the souls of men, and his solicitude for the prosperity of the Church at large. He possessed a very respectable talent for public speaking, which talent he employed in testifying around his own neighborhood of the grace of God ; nor did he, as many can witness, do this in vain.

"In the year 1798 he united with that Church of which he afterwards lived and died a

member, At that time the Church was in a very low state, but it was his happiness to live to see the little one become a thousand. In 1814 he was unanimously chosen to the office of deacon, the Church being at that time under the pastoral care of the late excellent Mr. Golding. This office he continued to the time of his death to fill with credit to himself and to the advantage of the Church.

“He had been gradually declining during the last four years. About the middle of last Spring he evidently regarded his end as approaching. In the month of June he officiated for the last time at the Lord’s table, when, after the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, he arose and, in a weak but solemn tone of voice, delivered a short address to the Church, exhorting them to be constant and diligent in attending the means of grace, observing, ‘I am about to put off this my tabernacle, and probably this is the last time I shall here meet with you.’ He was present at the next administration of the ordinance, but was too feeble to hand the elements. Very soon after this he became confined to his bed. His pastor frequently visited him, and found him in general calm, resigned, and happy. On one occasion he said to his pastor, ‘O sir, I find religion all to me; Christ is more to me now than a thousand worlds.’ On another occasion he said, ‘I am very comfortable, blessed be God. I have had a sweet meditation this morning on these words: “For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.” I know that I love Christ, and believe that He came from God; and, blessed be God, I know that He loves me.’ During his illness he frequently manifested great concern about his Eversden friends, and on one occasion, after enquiring of his minister how they all were, he said, ‘Remember me to them, and tell them that they who will have heaven must fight for it. The Christian life is a warfare; I have found it so, but my warfare is accomplished.’ The last time but one that his minister visited him, he found him suffering under great bodily weakness and much pain. His impression was that he should not see another day on earth, but he was tranquil and resigned, and could say, I am in the Lord’s hands; His will be done/ He appeared much refreshed and comforted by some remarks that were made on the words of David: ‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.’ The last time his minister saw him he was evidently very weak, both in body

and mind. He complained of the weakness of his mental powers, particularly of his memory, observing, 'I cannot think of divine things as I wish.' On the words of Paul being mentioned to him, 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' he said, 'Light affliction! I had forgotten that—light affliction!' This he repeated several times. When his pastor rose to depart, he took him by the hand and said, 'You have greatly refreshed my mind by your visits. The Lord bless you, and thank you for all your kindness.' He then, with all the strength he had, offered up a prayer for himself, minister, children, and friends, and said, 'Farewell! The Lord bless you.' His departure from this world was without a struggle or a groan. So peacefully did he expire that his friends thought he had fallen into a gentle sleep; and so he had—fallen asleep in Jesus. The Lord's-day following the interment of his remains, his death was improved by his pastor, Mr. Gilson, to a numerous and deeply affected auditory from words selected by the deceased in {Luke 12: 32}, 'Fear not, little flock,' " &c.—W. G.

The last time young Israel saw his excellent grandfather was when he left the shelter of his roof for London, being then about eight and a quarter years old. A journey to the metropolis, even from a distance of about fifty miles, was at that time a somewhat serious and troublesome affair, especially for persons in humble circumstances; — far different to what it is at the present time, when the whole country is intersected by railways, which are available to any one at the rate of one penny per mile, and for young children at half that amount. Mr. Atkinson, in the description of the journey in his MS. Autobiography, gives a vivid representation of the experiences of the road undergone by lowly travelers in those days. His father had been some time in London, and had sent for his wife and family to join him in the metropolis. There were five children, Israel being the oldest. He thus narrates the circumstances attending the journey: — "My mother had no means to pay coach fares, [*\* \* Which would have been, for the distance journeyed, about ten shillings each outside, and double that amount inside the coach.*] and we therefore went by stage wagon—that is, a wagon proceeding by regular stages at given times in the common carrying business. Wagons of this description were employed at that time and years later to carry all kinds of goods from most of the market towns of the kingdom

to London, and it was by these conveyances that the poor who required to travel usually went from place to place. On the Old North Road, about forty-seven miles distant from London, near to the present railway station of that name, stands the 'Golden Lion' Inn. About half a mile from this hostelry, due east, stood Edgehill (the place of his grandfather's residence). About the middle of one Thursday night—and a dark night it was—my uncles, James and David, took my mother and her five little things, with the little luggage she had, in a cart up the miry drift way to the 'Golden Lion,' to await a north country wagon that stayed there on its journey to London. We had not waited long before the rumble of wagon wheels was heard by those whom custom had made familiar with the sound. 'She's light to-night,' said one of the men as the wagon approached, judging from the sound; 'you'll have lots o' room,' and so we had. But this was one of the baiting places by the way, and the time allowed for resting and feeding the horses was from two to three hours. Having a strong liking for horses—most boys, I suppose, have—I, who had been used to the sorry steeds with which the work of my grandfather's little farm had been done, was excited in no small degree with this, to me, splendid team of six, and was not a little busy in helping to unyoke and bait them. I soon installed myself in the good opinion of the Waggoner, and had the satisfaction of being elevated to the dignity of driver occasionally, and, as I walked by the side of the horses, whip in hand, could conceive of nothing in the world more dignified or desirable. Our first stage was to Buntingford, a distance of sixteen miles; the next stage was to Hoddesdon, which we reached towards Friday evening. From thence we came to London, where, at the 'Three Cups,' in Aldersgate Street we arrived early on Saturday morning; so that the whole journey of forty-seven miles was performed in about thirty hours."

Let not those who read this recital say in their hearts, "The former days were better than these." In the matter of travelling they certainly were not. Besides the actual inconveniences experienced, there was the possible one of not being able to get even this slow and uncomfortable vehicle, for had "she" (the wagon) been heavily laden, and not "light to-night," the poor travelers would not have been able to pursue their journey for, probably, two days—perhaps a week—until the next wagon on that road, wending its sluggish way to the metropolis, arrived at the stage nearest their dwelling.

Arrived in the great city—which at that time was about a fourth in size and population of that which is now spoken of as the “metropolitan area”—young Israel opened his eyes with wonder and astonishment at the marvels that met his vision. The place, “ even as it then was, fairly dazed his young mind,” and the sense of wonder with which everything he saw impressed him was retained in his memory until many years afterwards. Poor lad! His first experiences in it were of a very sorry and embittered kind. Arrived at the place where the wagon put up in Aldersgate Street, no kind friend was there to meet the poor mother and her five little ones, to help them on their way to their ultimate destination and future home, about four miles further on westward. The husband and father, an intemperate and consequently an unthinking and selfish kind of man, had made no arrangement of the sort to welcome the wife of his bosom and her babes, or to assist them in finishing their long and weary journey. And when at length they arrived at the London home, what a reception was accorded them! The first words that fell upon Israel’s ears from his father’s lips, after a separation of some months, were comprised in a savage expression of anger to his mother for bringing him with her. The horrid utterance produced a sinking of heart in his young frame that he never forgot; so different was the kind of language and the manner of treatment from that he had been accustomed to from his godly and affectionate grandfather, whose peaceful home he had just left, where he had been nurtured with the greatest tenderness and care, that the poor child may well have been horror-stricken at so shocking a contrast.

Such was his entrance on his London home, and subsequent experiences of London life were not, in his case, of a very gratifying character. His country dress and countrified dialect made him a butt for the ridicule of the boys of the neighborhood, which he found hard to bear. The casting aside of his Cambridgeshire attire did not save him from their persecutions. One day, however, receiving from one of his tormentors a severe stroke from a stick on a sensitive part of the body, he was provoked beyond all endurance, and gave his cowardly assailant a good thrashing, which, being a strong and well-grown child, he was able to do. So the boy got what he richly deserved and Israel thenceforth pursued his street amusements in peace; for the cowardly fellows, from a wholesome dread of the consequences, now ceased to molest him. Other troubles, however,

awaited him at home, for, shortly after their arrival in London, all four of his brothers and sisters were stricken down with small pox. Two of them died of that dreadful disease; he himself was mercifully spared its infliction altogether. Soon after the passing away of this calamity it was deemed necessary that Israel should be usefully employed, and at the age of eight years and a half he found himself as an errand boy trying to find his way about the streets of London. Probably he was unable to do so to the satisfaction of his master, for the difficulties to himself, being a raw lad from the country, were "something to be remembered," and he was not long retained in the service. Then a new trial arose: the intemperate father returned to the country, leaving his poor wife in London with her little ones, to support herself and them in the best way she could. She got employment, however, and that at home, and of a kind in which Israel and his eldest sister could help; and thus a kind Providence supplied the wants of the lonely woman and her little ones, when deserted by their natural protector, and far away from all their friends in a strange place. After a while the father came back to his family; the home occupation ceased, either from choice or necessity, and Israel, not being sent to school, became again a denizen of the streets, where his favorite companion at that time was a poor climbing boy in the service of a neighboring chimney-sweep. These climbing boys are, happily, an institution of the past—so long a past, that it may not be un-useful to describe them, and the dreadful nature of their employment. Some poor forlorn orphan child of tender years, generally from the workhouse, was bound apprentice to a sweep, to be instructed in the art of climbing chimneys, that being the method of sweeping them at the time most generally in use. What the poor little fellows suffered in getting accustomed to their difficult and unnatural work is hardly conceivable, especially when placed with an unfeeling master, as was often the case. To ensure the work being thoroughly done, the poor child was required to reach the top of the chimney-pot, and there to rattle his brush and shout, "Sweep!" Not infrequently the little sweeper got stuck fast in some part of the chimney, and means had to be used to extricate him: sometimes the taking out of the bricks at the part where he had become fixed, and in repeated instances to find the poor little sufferer dead when got at. This barbarous system continued for many, many years, until at length, about sixty years ago, a humane master chimney-sweep, of the name of

Glass, residing in Moor Lane, Cripplegate, London, a Wesleyan, and also a total abstainer, invented a contrivance by which the work could be done without the aid of children. Subsequently the Legislature interfered; the use of the climbing boy was made penal, and the horridly cruel and wretchedly degrading practice was discontinued.

With this last allusion to the street companionship of his boyish days, Mr. Atkinson's fragment of Autobiography terminates. He would at that period be about nine years old. It is matter of regret that he did not persevere in and complete his intention of giving his children a history of his earlier life. Probably the pressing duties of a pastor's engagements and other matters prevented him doing so. Some of the incidents related above, it should be stated, are from a letter written to him by his mother, in which she gives him a brief account of his early childhood and youthful days. Her statement commences thus:—"You were a fine grown, healthy child, and walked alone at one year and one month; at one year and six months you began to read; and at two years old you could read easy lessons tolerably well; and long before you were three years old you could read the Testament, which you were seldom satisfied to read as a mere lesson, but wished to know its meaning, asking questions that I was unable to answer." Probably this motherly description of her boy in his earliest days will interest other mothers who may read it, particularly those who knew Mr. Atkinson in subsequent years.

At the age of fifteen years and a half Israel was apprenticed to a wood-sawyer, the occupation of his father and his father's father. His master, however, proved to be a wicked and cruel man, and, unable to endure his hard treatment, being often kept without sufficient food to eat, he left him after about fifteen months' service, and found his way to Cambridge, where probably he was able to find employment, having resided there some time with his parents in earlier life. He remained at Cambridge two years, when he returned to London, at which time he would be about nineteen years old, and the great change had not as yet been wrought in him. The way in which the Lord began the good work in his soul was a little remarkable. Shortly after his return to town, his father, still but a young man, was taken seriously ill, and on one occasion, being visited by his brother-in-law, Mr. John Rich, a son of Israel's godly grandfather before named, and also a gracious man, Israel was present, and with his uncle knelt by the bedside of

the sick man, whose sickness proved to be unto death. Mr. Rich poured out his heart very earnestly and fervently on behalf of his poor brother-in-law, and also on behalf of his young nephew, who at that time was living a very worldly life, fond of company, cards, the theatre, and the like, and had never from the heart prayed for himself. It was felt by Israel to be a very solemn season, and the fervor and earnestness of his uncle's petitions on his behalf deeply impressed his mind with the most serious apprehensions as to his own state before a holy and heart-searching God. His poor father, who died shortly afterwards, let us hope obtained mercy in answer to the earnest wrestling of his godly relative for his salvation, for his friends had reason to hope he died a true penitent, trusting in the merits of Him who is able to save to the uttermost, his dying language being :—

*"Myself into Thine arms I cast;  
Lord, save, oh, save my soul at last! "*

In the case of the young man it proved the commencement of a new life. Israel went home and prayed earnestly for himself, the substance of his first prayer being, "O God, make me like my uncle." The distress of his mind, intensified by the death of his father, was for a time very great. He would run by a high wall or a passing heavily-laden wagon, fearing it might fall and crush him to death, and he be eternally lost. How long he remained in this state, or by what means pardon and peace came to heal his broken heart, is not known. But his heart was healed, and there was joy in heaven over a repenting, believing sinner. There was joy on earth too among his God-fearing relatives and his friends. His excellent grandmother, Mrs. Rich, sent him a letter of joyful congratulation from Cambridgeshire, in return for one in which he had informed her of the happy change. This letter from his grandmother, which he carefully preserved, is dated February, 1837; therefore it is concluded that our good brother passed from death unto life in the year 1836. It may be remarked, by the way, that this instance of a two-fold blessing accompanying a visit to a sick and dying man, to pray with and for him and his attendant relatives and friends, presents a great encouragement to Christian people who know and feel the importance of the salvation of precious and immortal souls, to go and do likewise.

About this time he became united in marriage to a young person with whom he had become acquainted at Cambridge, who, like himself, at the time of their first acquaintance was not a serious person. The Lord, however, was graciously pleased, shortly after their marriage, to change her heart also. On bringing his young wife to their home in London, she became desirous of being taken to the theatre, in accordance with a promise he had given her some months before. This promise, he told her, he now felt himself unable to fulfill, on account of the alteration in his views and feelings which in the meantime had taken place, explaining them to her with the assurance that, although not yet fully satisfied that he was a real Christian, he was nevertheless spoiled for the pleasures of the world. This conversation, it would appear, made some impression on the mind of young Mrs. Atkinson, leading her to think somewhat about the salvation of her own soul. Some little time after this Mr. A. began to stay awhile downstairs after his wife had retired to rest, for the purpose of reading and praying by himself, not liking, or fearing, to ask her to unite with him in the exercise. One evening, however, he was very tired, and expressed a wish for her to retire; she not immediately doing so, he repeated the request, on which she came to his side, and, embracing him, burst into tears, saying, "Let me stay with you to-night, dear." What followed may easily be imagined; thenceforth they walked together in the ways of God and to His house in company. They were led to attend the ministry of Mr. John Foreman, at Mount Zion, Hill Street, where Mr. Atkinson was received a member on June 4th, 1837, and Hephzibah, his wife, on August 6th in the same year. Here they found a happy home among a circle of endeared Christian friends, with whom in sanctified association they took sweet counsel. How happy and sacred are those days of our early fellowship with the spiritual family of God, in a peaceful and loving, united Christian church, under a faithful, Christ-exalting, God-honoring ministry; when our friends appear the best people in the world, and Christ the best of all friends; when all around in the church appears as a garden of the Lord, as a field that the Lord hath blessed!

Besides the advantage of having a man like Mr. John Foreman for pastor, whose ministry, though plain and homely, was eminently sound and discriminating as to doctrine, and at once searching, comforting, and encouraging in the experimental aspect

of its teaching, Mr. Atkinson had, at this early period of his religious training, the high privilege of frequently listening to the thoughtful, correct, and deeply instructive discourses of Mr. John Stevens, then in the ripest and most matured stage of his ministerial career, and justly looked up to as a father in Israel, and a prince among preachers and expounders of the deep things of God. Regularly at the week-night lecture at Salem Chapel, Meard's Court, and occasionally on the Lord's-day, might he be seen earnestly listening to the weighty sentences and well pondered utterances, as they fell from the lips of that deeply taught man of God. Mr. and Mrs. Atkinson, in addition to their Mount Zion friends, had also the benefit of taking spiritual counsel with a very intelligent Christian woman, Phebe Jackson, by name, a member at Salem, of about double their own age, whose dwelling adjoined theirs, and with whom they companionised; who, from long and attentive listening to her pastor's ministrations, was well qualified to assist the young couple in understanding the things of the kingdom of God, which Mr. Stevens and Mr. Foreman set before them. Those were happy days for our brother, and no doubt very important ones too, in laying the foundation for his future usefulness in the Christian ministry, by informing his mind and settling his judgment in regard to the truths of the everlasting Gospel, which he was shortly to be called to preach. Speaking of this period of his life many years afterwards in a letter to a friend, he said, "The peculiar pleasures of those early days never returned to me and mine." So it is in most earthly associations; the earlier pleasures are generally the purest and best. It will not be so in heaven; there the bliss will not be subject to mutation.

Before proceeding further with Mr. Atkinson's personal biography, it may not be out of place to give here a few particulars respecting his uncle, to whom, under God, he was so greatly indebted, as we have seen, in the matter of the awakening of his soul to the vast importance of personal godliness. There is something significant in the circumstance that the first cry of the nature of earnest prayer which proceeded from the alarmed young man's lips should have been, "O God, make me like my uncle!" Mr. John Rich, it appears, was a truly excellent and godly young man (he was not more than six years older than his nephew), and one who was filled with an ardent desire to be instrumentally useful in the salvation of his fellow men. He was a member of Mount Zion, Hill Street,

and at the time of the death of his brother-in-law, Mr. Atkinson's father, had probably been so several years. He would, therefore, be well known to his friends as a consistent, earnest Christian young man; and that he was all this the following account given of him by his pastor, Mr. John Foreman, will show. It is taken from the Gospel Herald, to which periodical the young man contributed articles, the signature to which was Johannes.

Addressing the Editors, Mr. Foreman says, "Your esteemed correspondent, and my own beloved son whom God gave me in the faith of the Gospel, is gone to possess the promise of eternal life. Dear Johannes, alias John Rich, was the son of William Rich, of Great Eversden, Cambs, who was fourteen years a deacon of the Independent church in that place. And about eight years ago our beloved Johannes came to London to seek a livelihood, and, having an uncle a member of the church at Mount Zion Chapel, he attended the worship of God there. Not liking the doctrines, for they were, as he called them, too high for him, he went to hear brother Comb at Soho Chapel, and there he found it the same, and so he soon left him and went to brother Stevens, at Salem Chapel, and there also he found it the same. Thinking therefore all places in town alike, being a stranger in London, he thought he might as well attend with his uncle, having been always accustomed to attend a chapel. And so he came back and attended regularly, and in the course of a little time the Lord turned His gracious hand with regenerating power upon his soul, and he became prayerfully concerned for his immortal welfare, and some little time after he was baptized and united with us in church fellowship; and so he continued with credit to his membership until he breathed his waiting soul into the hands of his loved and desired Lord. The first text with which the Holy Spirit fully met his case in wounded, weeping condition, and overwhelmed his poor soul with a sense of the merciful kindness of God, and the saving excellence of the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord, was the following:—

'That I may win Christ.' That sermon he never forgot, and the savor of the text never left him to the end of his days. And the following text and subject were greatly blessed to him also, shortly after he joined the church: — "Oil for the light "; and this text likewise abode with him to the end of his days. From this time he had a most fervent desire to be of some use to others in and by the truth which had been made of so much value and

importance to his own soul; and under this feeling he had a very strong inclination to labor in the ministry of the Gospel, and to be a missionary to some heathen part of the world, where Christ is not named. He applied to be employed as a foreign missionary, but was disappointed, to his great grief. Still, believing the Lord had ordained him to the work of the ministry, he replied to a notice in the Gospel Herald for a home missionary in the county of Cambs as a candidate for that situation, and was called accordingly to go and speak before the committee, and he did so, but did not succeed. He was afterwards introduced to speak a few times at Hanslope, in Bucks, and that with so great acceptance, that the people earnestly desired his constant labors. Now, when it appeared on the one hand that a door was opening according with his expectation and desire, on the other he was beginning to sink under the weakness and evident symptoms of confirmed consumption. Hard reading at every leisure moment to acquire a knowledge of languages, in which he made unusual progress, had undermined his health and constitution, he having a weakly frame. About three weeks before his death he lost his speech for almost three days and two nights, during which time he made signs for pen, ink, and paper, and wrote down for his funeral text, "That I may win Christ." When his speech returned, he exclaimed, ' Peace, peace, I am going home to glory! ' and similar to this he spoke out, like one that had seen something of the glory of God, about a week before his death, and at the end of that week the lily was gathered. Thus lived and died your esteemed correspondent and my beloved son in the faith of the Gospel, Johannes, alias John Rich, February 12th, 1839, aged 28 years."

PART II.  
CALL TO THE MINISTRY AND FIRST PASTORATE.

*"When Jesus appears, a fit preacher to make,  
A vessel elect he appoints ;  
A man form'd on purpose, the labour to take,  
The Spirit distinctly anoints.*

*"Such minister opens the law, to make plain The guilt and defection of men;  
To prove human righteousness empty and vain,  
For justification from sin.*

*"The Gospel's great message is put in his heart;  
The door of his lips is made free;  
The Spirit assists him in every part,  
To publish the gracious decree.*

*"The heavenly tidings are life to his soul;  
He feeds on the truth he sets forth;  
From his heart, as a fountain, the doctrines roll,  
Like rivers that water the earth.*

*"To open the depths of God's wisdom and grace Is ever his sweetest employ;  
While God, the great Comforter, helps him to trace The streams of salvation with joy.*

*"Of covenant blessings, their channel and spring,  
He frequently preaches with force;  
And Christ, as Jehovah, as Jesus and King,  
Shines out through each public discourse.*

*"The blood and the righteousness dwell on his thought,  
And drop from his lips with great pow'r ;  
While new-born disciples in wisdom are taught  
Their Saviour to love and adore."—Stevens.*

BUNYAN tells us, in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, that Christian and Hopeful in their journey "came to a delicate called Ease, where they met with much content; but that plain was but narrow, so they were quickly got over it." So it is with most of the Lord's people; their occasions of calm repose are but brief, and seem to pass but too quickly away. Mr. Atkinson's happy days at Mount Zion were not to be of a very long continuance. The Lord had work for him to do which required his removal from those pleasant and spiritually profitable associations in which he and his young partner in life were favored to spend the early days of their espousal to Christ. Early in the year 1841, his health failing him, he was directed by his medical adviser to go into the country, as the necessary means for restoring it. This advice he followed with a heavy heart, and left his beloved circle of friends and the ministry at Mount Zion, and other Christian associations and privileges, to reside at a small village in Huntingdonshire, called Houghton, where he wrought at his occupation with returning health. Here he became acquainted with the late Mr. David Irish and the friends at Warboys, where Mr. Irish was many years pastor. His new friends saw that in him which induced them to believe he was designed for usefulness in the Lord's cause, and requested him to undertake services at the preaching stations in the neighboring villages. This he consented to do. His first effort was at a place called Woodhurst, his text being "Salvation is of the Lord." His experiences on that occasion were of a very peculiar and, to him, a mortifying description, which he thus describes:—"Completely unnerved, sight failing me; an apparently huge substance rising in my throat, choked utterance; entire bewilderment; my efforts speedily closing in indescribable disappointment and mortification." The friends, however, who heard him thought better of his performance than he did himself, and encouraged him to persevere and renew his efforts, which he was thus induced to do, and after continuing them for some time, he wrote to his pastor, Mr. Foreman, informing him of what he had become engaged in, and of the dreadful sensations attending his first attempt at public speaking. The good, kind-hearted man returned a very encouraging and sympathetic reply, informing his young brother that he, Mr. F., had long thought the Lord would one day open his mouth to speak in His name; and, after giving an account of his own similar early experience in the ministry, and a number of

very fatherly, judicious counsels, closes with the following words :—" This you have as a testimony of my great regard for you, and desire for your future welfare and prosperous success by the blessing of God in all that, by the disposing will of God, you may be called to put your hand to. My equal Christian love to your dear partner. God bless her with yourself and the dear babes! My love to all friends in the truth with whom you may meet, to whom for Christ's sake my name is no offence, and by this token believe me to be, dear brother, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, yours truly and very affectionately, J. FOREMAN." Dated December 3rd, 1842.

During the period that he was engaged in these itinerating labors he was sometimes greatly tried in providence, as appears from a circumstance thus related by him in a letter written to a friend many years after its occurrence:— " Nine and twenty years ago I was deeply tried respecting temporal matters, and my heart was overwhelmed within me. Myself and my dear wife and our darling little ones were brought to a piece of bread, even literally—to the very last piece of bread, without knowing how or from whence we could obtain another loaf for our sustenance. By a singular concurrence of events I happened—our haps are God's providences—I happened, I say, to be passing through Elsworth on my way to Bowen. Knowing the minister of the place, I made him a call, and he kindly invited me to stay to dinner with him. My hunger gave force to his invitation, and I accepted it. He then pressed me to preach in the evening, it being Tuesday, their usual week-evening service. I objected that I had then never spoken in a chapel, and that I was on my way to see an aged grandmother in affliction, and what else I could think of; but he would hear none of my excuses. At length I submitted, but said nothing of my peculiar circumstances, only that, being out of work, I had taken an opportunity to make that journey. I remember the text was, 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me,' but I remember nothing of the sermon. I carry the ring of the man's voice in my ears to the present time, when he, immediately after the last word was off my lips, rose and said to the few friends assembled, 'This young man you have been hearing to-night is out of employment, and if you have a shilling to spare, I have no doubt it would be of great service to him.' I had not—and I think he had not—on going to the chapel the remotest thought of his saying anything of the kind. The sum of £ 1 15s. was collected.

To me this was salvation, but it almost turned my brain. Next morning, instead of pursuing my journey, I returned home. I went by a footpath to Conington. Had any body seen my antics as I went over those fields, they would in all likelihood have said I was drunk or mad. I talked, pinched myself, counted the money again and again, and I know not what besides, to assure myself that I was not dreaming—that the thing was real. My heart glows now with the remembrance.”

The letter in which this is written is dated September, 1871, and the experience it records of the Lord’s providential dealings with his servant is similar to those we read of in the lives of our Puritan forefathers and others who trusted in Him. The time of the occurrence of the circumstance thus narrated would be the year 1842.

After continuing for some months in itinerating engagements with increasing acceptance, the friends at Raunds, in Northamptonshire, hearing of Mr. Atkinson as a young man of promising abilities, invited him to supply their then vacant pulpit. Mr. Thomas Field, their former pastor, had recently left them, and they were, as a church, in a low, unsettled state; but an earnest spirit of prayer was in exercise among them, and they were pleading and wrestling with the Lord to send them another under-shepherd. In a letter to Mr. Atkinson from their late pastor, replying to some enquiries respecting them, they are somewhat quaintly described as a people “that love pure truth, plain truth, and can hear well, pray well, and sing well; and these are great blessings and comforts to a minister.” Their first invitation to him to preach for them was in July, 1843, at which date they had “heard of him some time ago, and should have written before, but did not know his name or residence.” The invitation was accepted, and renewed and again accepted, and again so, until, in January, 1844, he received the following invitation, “with a view to the pastoral office”:—

“Beloved Brother,

“ We, the Church of Christ at Raunds, having been favored with your services for the space of five months, gratefully viewing the hand of the Lord in your first coming amongst us,— solemnly professing our satisfaction and growing attachment to your ministry, and anxiously ‘ longing for you in the bowels of Jesus Christ,’ do hereby, in the name of the Lord, present our request that you would continue amongst us ‘ to break the bread of life,

' with a view finally to take the pastoral office over us.

"A more unanimous call could not by any church be presented; prospects more promising might be held forth. You know our poverty; we deeply deplore it; this only places us in a position more fully to discover the good hand of God towards us, which we hope you with ourselves will be enabled to watch.

"The disarrangement of our circumstances the past eighteen months prevents us from stating what little we should be able to raise as a remuneration for your services ; this we will try to ascertain before your present engagement closes. To the care and direction of the Great Head of the Church we commend our beloved brother.

"Signed, on behalf of the Church,

" WM. ARNSBY,

" THOS. CLARK, § Deacons.

" JONATHAN NICHOLS, J

" Raunds, January 1st, 1844."

Viewing this invitation in a mere worldly light, it presented no very great inducement to a young man with a wife and little family to accept it. But the congregation had increased, and a decided and growing attachment to his ministry had arisen, and a cordial union was reciprocally felt; so that when subsequently a formal and direct call to the pastorate was given him, Mr. Atkinson, after prayer for divine direction and consultation with friends, thought it right to accept it. The ordination services were held in due course, and are thus described in the Gospel Herald for May, 1844 :—

"On Thursday, April nth, 1844, Mr. Israel Atkinson was ordained as pastor of the Particular Baptist Church at Raunds, near Thrapstone, Northamptonshire. Mr. C. Drawbridge, of Rushden, commenced by reading and prayer. Mr. J. A. Jones, of London, stated the nature of a Gospel church, and received from the pastor a truly interesting account of his conversion to God, and of his call to the work of the ministry, with a clear statement of his views of Gospel truth, in doctrine, experience, and practice. Mr. John Foreman, of London, delivered a most impressive charge from { I Timothy 4: 10.} "Take heed unto thyself and the doctrine," &c.; and Mr. David Irish, of Warboys, Hunts, spoke

most affectionately to the church from {I Thessalonians. 5:12}: "We beseech you, brethren, to know them who labor among you and are over you in the Lord," &c. The congregations throughout the day were large, the spacious meeting-house being densely crowded, and the deepest interest was taken in the solemn services. It was indeed a time of refreshment from the presence of the Lord. May much prosperity attend the union! "

It was a memorable day for the church, for which some had very special cause to bless God, the relation by Mr. Atkinson of his call by grace being blest to the saving conversion of several. The cause prospered under the ministry of our brother, and many were added to the church during his pastorate of about five years, and peace and unity prevailed among the members, with some interruption, it appears, occasioned by a few towards the close.

While Mr. Atkinson was at Raunds he lost his firstborn, Israel, which was a sore trial to him, as the following extracts from his diary will show:—"Feb. 14th, 1849.—Oh! How shall I record it? My boy, my firstborn, at ten and a-half years is taken away from me this morning. I would say as Job did. 15th.—Dull in mind, and thinking of my loss. Abraham's speech with God my comfort. 16th.—Dull, doubly so. Oh for submission, acquiescence, assurance, and prayerfulness! 18th.— Lord's-day. Buried my dear boy's body. Brother Trimming preached. Very uncomfortable. No exercise. How sinful am I, O Lord! " These brief entries show how deeply he smarted under this painful bereavement, and how difficult he felt it, with the strong affection of a parent, to bow with the due submission of a Christian to this dispensation of his heavenly Father's hand.

Shortly after the death of his child, he appears to have come to the conclusion that the time had arrived for him to leave Raunds, the reasons for taking which step are set forth in the following letter addressed to the church, dated March 9th, 1849 :—

"To the Particular Baptist Church of Christ meeting for Divine Worship at Raunds, Northamptonshire.

"Grace be with you all always, plentifully, and at such a time.

" Believing the events of the providence of God to be, in harmony with His Word, the hieroglyphically expressions of His dispensatory will with His people personally, and the

particular events thereof to be to each particularly His law to them, for their individual judgment and course in the world, most safely, hopefully, and comfortably to be pursued ; I, after much prayer in simplicity and sincerity, as far as I know my own heart, or may be considered to know it—after much deliberation, with anxious solicitude to weigh matters justly— after having also sought and received the counsel of others, my seniors in age and godliness, have been led to the conclusion that it is the will of God my pastoral relations to you as a church of Christ should be at an end. A combination of events has led me to this conclusion, some of which, perhaps, it will be necessary to state.

“First. I have beheld with concern the evident decrease of our attendance for some time past on Lord’s-days, and the Thursday evening meetings have been to me peculiarly distressing.

“Second. While my labors have been commended to you, and my own soul has been encouraged by a degree of evident usefulness, which, perhaps (God knoweth), has not discontinued even to this day, yet the sphere of my labor is limited, and the degree of my usefulness is small.

“Third. While I make no doubt my friends, both of the church and congregation, have done and are doing to the amount of their reasonable ability for my comfortable and creditable support, and they deserve this honorable testimony from my hands ; yet you are aware it has been necessary for me to engage myself with the world in a manner that, I must say, has prevented me from pursuing studies which to me are important, and has, to a certain extent doubtless, impoverished my soul. I have no doubt I entered upon it by the leadings of Divine Providence. Of itself, and in its own nature, it has been and is a great mercy, and as such I trust I am thankful to God for it; but, coupled with the want of a divine blessing and peace in the church, it becomes a burden.

“Fourth. The above events, especially the first two, barely reconciled my mind to a continuance, and it having been therewith of late pretty widely published that there were objections in the minds of some to my ministry, and two of those deacons of the church, has completely decided the business. I shall attempt no vindication of my ministerial course; if it is not self-defensive it is indefensible. My deficiencies have been evident, but to none more than myself. I have no retractations to make; I am the same man as when I

received the pastorate at your hands by your unanimous suffrages; and I have confidence and a good conscience that I have not shunned to declare, according to the ability God has given me, all the counsel of God. I have accepted no man's person, coveted no man's gold, nor sought yours but you; I have not goaded the poor nor flattered the rich, nor have I conferred with flesh and blood when I could for your advantage make a sacrifice. With some I have been too accurate and learned, with others inaccurate and wild; but God is Judge, and the day will declare it.

"Being, therefore, led to conclude by the above events, with some others of less importance, that such is the will of God, I do hereby resign into your hands, with grief I will not attempt to express, the pastor ship of you as a church, at the same time earnestly entreating God to send you one who shall every way exceed me in universal qualification for and discharge of the office.

"If any are glad, I hope it is in the fear of God, and if any grieve, I more; it is the breaking up of associations than which I never knew stronger or dearer. I leave, or am forced away from the scene of my early labors with regret, and from friends who, in the Lord, are dearer to me than my own flesh.

"I should not like to hurry away, nor should I like, and hope I shall not be hurried away as one uncared for, un-pitied, unloved. I therefore give you with my resignation notice to leave the pulpit at the expiration of three months; or, if you would rather have it so, say two months. Should, however, a door be opened to me in the providence of God to preach to a destitute people during that time, I shall rely hopefully on your kindness to allow me to serve them. To conclude.

The past care of my good Lord to me in His providence being of such a character as to challenge my utmost confidence, I have cast myself hereby again upon His arms most fully, because the honor of His name and the verity of His promise claim my fullest trust. I know not whither I shall go, but I hope in God. I am watching His hand, and waiting His will, and willing to do it, as being the way of His favor. Suffer me to ask your prayers; I will not say you have mine.

I have chosen to cast myself completely upon the kind providence of my all-wise Guide and all-gracious God, though I might have done otherwise, as that I may have

thereby scope to see and opportunity to remark, value, and follow the leadings of His hand, and that I might cut off all occasion of being suspected of being governed by unhallowed motives—that I might abstain from the very appearance of evil, and publicly appear to be at least what I trust God has made me—an honest man.

“Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Ever so prays  
“Your Brother in the Lord, in much affliction and grief, “ISRAEL ATKINSON.

“ Raunds, March 9th, 1849.”

This letter of resignation was taken into consideration by the church on Lord’s-day, March 18th, and the following reply returned:—

“March 18th, 1849.

“The Church of Christ at Raunds, of the Particular Baptist denomination, to our beloved Pastor, Israel Atkinson,

“Dear Brother,

“In consequence of your resignation of the pastoral office tendered to us, bearing date March 11th, 1849, and requesting of us in writing the result of our church meeting this day, we submit to your inspection and consideration as follows.

“ After stating in a few words the cause of our meeting together’ and first attempting to humble ourselves before Almighty God, and imploring His blessing, presence, and direction, we considered ourselves perfectly at liberty to request you to resume the pastoral office over us.

“After a solemn appeal to the church present, we desired they would act uprightly and in the fear of God, who searcheth the heart, and by no means dissemble in His presence, but desired if there were any one present who did really wish for your removal from among us, they would then hold up their right hand to the Lord, again reminding them thus: ‘Now pray do not refuse to act conscientiously.’ Not one hand was lifted up.

“We then proposed that those who had manifested any dissatisfaction were at liberty to state their case, to which it was replied that so far from their having any ill feeling or design to you-ward, they could solemnly appeal to God that they had never once come under your ministry without first seeking the Lord’s blessing thereupon ; and as to any controverted texts, they had no wish whatever to have any contention. This remark arose

purely from this morning's discourse.

"We then proposed, in like manner, that those who really did wish and desire your stay would act in the like upright manner, and desired they would, in the fear of God, hold up their right hands to the Lord. Every hand was lifted up.

"The meeting was conducted in a manner becoming a professed church of Jesus Christ.

"It now rests, dear brother, with you to consider whether this be the voice of the Great Head of the Church by us.

"Signed on behalf of the Church,

WILLIAM ARNSBY,

WILLIAM KNIGHT,

THOMAS CLARK,

JONATHAN NICHOLS,)

§ Deacons."

It would appear from this letter that they were very unwilling to part with their pastor; but, at the same time, it may be remarked that no hint is given respecting any increase of maintenance, by which his mind should be relieved from the burden of secular employment, which he had told them he found so difficult to bear in conjunction with that of the Christian ministry. Probably they considered themselves unable to do more towards supplying his temporal needs than they were already doing. From certain entries in his diary, however, in which he very feelingly, although uncomplainingly, refers to his circumstantial trials, it is very evident that he had suffered much from the inadequacy of his income. To this letter, after some weeks' delay, Mr. Atkinson returned an answer which was in accordance with his former communication, and having received an invitation to minister to the church at Carmel Chapel, Woolwich, he removed from Raunds with his family to his new sphere of labor on Thursday, November 1st, 1849.

His ministry at Raunds was attended with much of the divine blessing. His coming among them was the means of healing divisions, and promoting union, peace, and love; and the testimony of divine truth borne by him was blest of God to the multiplication of their numbers, and the church, upon the whole, at the close of big labors, presented a greatly improved aspect, compared with that at the commencement. His leaving was a

sore trial to the greater part of the church and congregation, but the reasons given by him in his letter of resignation fully justify the step thus taken.

Concerning his removal to Woolwich, we find the following record in the Gospel Herald for November, 1849:- "Carmel Chapel, New Road, Woolwich. — Mr. Israel Atkinson, late of Raunds, Northamptonshire, having been engaged for a period of five months in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the above place with some degree of success, the friends have invited him to continue his labors amongst them for twelve months, with a view to a settlement. Our brother Atkinson has accepted this engagement."

Mr. Atkinson was accustomed, from an early period of his ministry, to note down his engagements and exercises in a diary. A few extracts from that record at this period of his life may here be given:—

"Jan. 1st, 1846.—Rose at 7. Employed the morning in reading Latin. Informed of the death of Mr. Grindon, of Sharnbrook. 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.' Employed in the afternoon in studying my subjects for Lord's-day. A text dropped into my mind about 10 in the evening, which now, O Lord, I entreat Thee make serviceable for Lord's-day evening.

"Jan. 2nd, Saturday. — Rose at 7. Employed in studying my subjects. Felt considerable confusion mixed with some sweetness. Feelings varied in prayer, now wandering and anon a wrestling with some comfort and hope of the Lord's presence on the following day. In the evening felt some pleasure at the mercy-seat.

"Jan. 3rd, Lord's-day.—Had but little enjoyment in preaching, especially in the afternoon, and came away from the house of God with a heavy heart. Shine, dear Lord, again on Thy dull clod, and let Thy beams reflect from him to others. Had a little sweet nearness to God in prayer at home at night.

"Jan. 3rd.—Rose at 6, Was struck this morning with a sense of ingratitude. Thanks to Thy name, O Lord, that Thou hast not suffered me to live insensible. Thanks for the all-cleansing blood of Christ. Felt a little sweetness at the mercy-seat in the evening.

Jan. 8th, Friday.—Rose at 6. The Lord dealt mercifully with me in leading my mind to some subjects for Lord's-day. Surely the Lord is a present help in time of trouble. Had a

comfortable evening. The Lord be praised.

“Jan. 10th, Lord’s-day.—Had, on the whole, a comfortable day in the pulpit.

“Jan. 17th, Lord’s-day.—Severely cold day; but few people at meeting. Had a very uncomfortable day, and much tormented with the toothache. Come, dear Lord, and remove from me that which hinders communion with Thee and usefulness in the church.

“Jan. 21st.—Read a chapter in the Septuagint and a chapter in the Latin Testament. Went to prayer-meeting in the evening; had a middling time. A comfortable time before the Lord at home.

“Jan. 29th.—Busy studying my subjects; read a little Latin at night. Have lived ten years a married life. The Lord be thanked for the blessings accruing from the relation.

“Feb. 6th.—Studying all day for the morrow; was happily blessed with orderly thoughts; had comfortable expectations.

“Feb. 7th.—A good time in the morning in the pulpit; a hard time in the afternoon and evening.”

These brief entries, taken from many others of a similar kind, show that our departed brother endeavored to give full proof of his ministry, lived near to the Lord, and was above all things solicitous of obtaining divine help in the solemn and important work in which he was engaged, and for the bestowment of the divine blessing upon it. Some few “Occasional Thoughts,” which appear to have been written about the same period, are worthy of being transcribed for their weight and worth:—

“God for Christ’s sake and with Christ gives me all things freely, but He gives me nothing cheaply. Every favor is given as freely as sunshine, but at a cost as immense as the life of His Son. With this thought I would be deeply impressed when I pray, finding there is a danger of falling into a mischievous feeling that mercy is as cheap as it is free—a feeling that dishonors the Giver of mercy, lessens the value of the gift of mercy, and prevents the receiver of mercy from realizing experimentally the preciousness of mercy received.”

“My sins and the Lord’s mercies are innumerable; a particular confession of the former or acknowledgement of the latter is therefore absolutely impossible. What then? Why just this—Because it is impossible to be particular, there is great danger of being

very general, and of the whole business dwindling down to something very easy-going, very cold, and very formal."

"To me to flee to the Cross is habitual. Merciful God, never let fleeing to the Cross become a habit only."

"Are you allowed a holy boldness at the throne of grace?—Use it freely and thankfully; but take heed— between warranted boldness and presumptuous impudence there is but one step.

" How assiduously and pertinacious some professing Christians are found endeavoring to disprove the doctrine of a proper satisfaction for sin by the sacrifice of Christ!

Are they then willing to go to heaven on dishonorable terms? For my own part, I must be properly just to be happy."

"The sanctified man says he hates sin, and so he does; but his heart will often ache with a consciousness that this his saying, to be the truth, ought to be a good deal qualified."

"The best answer to the question, 'What is sanctification in the experience of a Christian?' is found in the expressions about sin recorded by, the sanctified in the Scriptures, such as these: — 'I hate vain thoughts.'—'Behold, I am vile! '—'O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? '—'Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me; '—or what, in other words, is the substance of these expressions, a holy antipathy against sin, a holy sorrow for sin, a holy desire of purification from the sense of sin, a holy shunning of evil men and things, and a holy concern to be saved from the commission of sin."

"If we are under the necessity of proving to ourselves by arguments the lawfulness of any amusements or pleasures, and of strengthening our arguments by the usages of others, we may generally be pretty sure the devil has specially retained the corruption of the will to litigate against the honest convictions of the understanding, in order to obtain judgment in the conscience in favor of licentiousness. A good thing very seldom requires an argument to prove its worth to a good man."

"Much is said, and with good reason, of seeing an object from the best point of view.

Christ crucified is the grand object exhibited in the Gospel, and there needs no hesitation in affirming this to be the most important object ever presented to the mind's eye of man in any age. To those who can appreciate it at all, it possesses an unspeakable interest and charm from any point of view; but perhaps it is never beheld with so all-absorbing an interest as it is at the foot of Sinai, just on the edge of Hades."

"When the Lord Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He put 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,' first in order before 'Give us this day our daily bread.' This order of prayer, under the influence of a detestable selfishness, how frequently do we invert! "

"God commands us by the Apostle to love the brotherhood. In some instances this precept is very easy; some have a natural loveableness, which, being beautified by grace, irresistibly constrains the willing affection of every Christian heart. In other instances the precept is difficult, and in some it would be simply impossible, on account of their natural repulsiveness, were it not for the grace of God in them, and were it not to be observed for Christ's sake. These try love, and it is pretty certain the test will often be too strong if the motive, for Christ's sake, be forgotten. It should always be remembered that is the motive for forgiveness among the brethren. It may often be impossible to forgive them for their own sakes—never impossible for Christ's sake. 'Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' Here, indeed, is rule, motive, and example. And then, for the after conduct, the rule is, ' Be ye followers (imitators) of God as dear children, and walk in love.' Not forgive and despise, forgive and abandon, but forgive and love, forgive and walk in love with them for Christ's sake, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you, and still walks in love with you."

"God by an act of sovereign grace laid the iniquities of His people on the sinless Surety, and perhaps there is not a surer evidence of interest in that wondrous transaction than for the sinner to be found doing that by faith which God has done by love."

"Fine words make miserable sermons and worse prayers. Simplicity and truth, if we would have our sermons and prayers heard, must be the elements of both."

"Christ and His disciples, Christ and His Church are embarked in the same ship; the safety, therefore, of His people and of Himself is identical."

"When the spirituality of the holy, just, and good law of God, in the exceeding

broadness of its equitable requirement, is experimentally realized, however exemplary a man's character may be, and whatever pretensions he may make to superior morality, it will reduce him, in his own sight, to the level of the very vilest of human kind, and manifest him to himself to be a child of wrath even as others?

### PART III.

#### MINISTRY AT WOOLWICH.

*"A glorious temple is the Church,  
And Christ the corner-stone;  
Jehovah has declared it such,  
And there has fixed His throne.  
'Tis reared with infinite expense,  
Adorned with heavenly skill;  
Is now God's chosen residence,  
As once was Zion's hill.  
Hither the saints with joy divine  
Their grateful offerings bring;  
And here their tuneful voices join  
To praise the eternal king."*

THE friends at Woolwich, in consequence of whose invitation Mr. Atkinson removed to that town, had not at that time become formed into a church in Gospel order. The origin of the cause, which subsequently so grew as to become a flourishing interest, was as follows :—In the year 1848, a few friends residing at Woolwich, members of different churches, were led to meet together for prayer and consultation as to their future course in respect to observing the ordinances and public worship of God. After a series of happy and profitable meetings, it was agreed that two of their number, brethren Topley and Carmel, Woolwich.

Brain, should take a chapel in New Road, Woolwich, then to let, called Providence

Chapel, the taking of which had formed a principal matter in their petitions and conference. The place was taken and opened as their meeting-house for the public worship of God on October 31st, 1848, the name being changed to "Carmel Chapel," as indicating their hopefulness in regard to future results by the blessing of their covenant God on the undertaking. The following statement respecting it appears in the account of the opening service given in the Gospel Herald of that year:—"This place was built about fifty years ago, and the truth has been proclaimed within its walls nearly the whole of that period, and there are many living witnesses that the Lord has blessed His truth to their souls in this chapel; but during the last few years it has been in the hands of the Primitive Methodists. Our prayer to God is that He will now build up this waste place, and that what is spoken of Zion may be fulfilled here—that this and that man was born in her." The opening sermons were preached by Messrs. W. Felton, J. Wells, and W. H. Bonner, from {Psalm 132: 13, 14, 15, 16; Psalm 17: 8}, and {Philippians 1: 18}, respectively. Each discourse was felt to be very appropriate to the occasion, to the joy and rejoicing of the hearts of the living family of God present, and the blessing attending the services of the day was felt to be an earnest of future spiritual prosperity, and that their "meeting place would answer to the name given it—Carmel, and in very deed prove to be the vineyard of God by His blessing upon the word preached there— Christ and Him crucified as the only way of salvation." The church was formed on Lord's-day, January 13th, 1850, when Mr. Atkinson having preached as usual in the morning, the formation services were conducted by Messrs. J. A. Jones and J. Foreman in the afternoon, Mr. Atkinson having previously read a portion of the Word of God and offered a prayer suited to the occasion. The church having been duly constituted, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was celebrated, Mr. J. A. Jones presiding. Mr. Foreman preached in the evening from {Psalm 133: 1}. The number of persons thus banded together in church fellowship was between twenty and thirty.

Mr. Atkinson was one of the early supplies at this place, having preached there two Sabbaths in January, 1849. From the first he and the friends at Carmel appear to have been very much taken with each other, for we find on the occasion of the first visit an entry in his diary stating that he was very cordially received, and the people seemed to

enjoy the word, although he notes it was "a hard and sapless time" on one occasion to himself. On his departure for home he remarks that the friends were very kind, and much good feeling was manifested. Subsequently he supplied the pulpit about five months, and eventually accepted a call for twelve months "with view to a settlement." On his arrival with his family as their minister for twelve months, we find this prayer recorded:—"November 2nd, 1849.—O my God, make Thou for me a tarrying place here till Thou shalt call me to my home ! " This, however, was not to be, nor did he ever become pastor at Woolwich, although he ministered the word of life to the friends about four years in all.

We may here transcribe from his diary a few entries relating to his exercises of mind in studying on Fridays and Saturdays for his sermons, and in delivering them on the Lord 's-day afterwards; those marked a referring to the former, those marked b to the latter. They are taken from the latter part of the year 1849, and after he had removed to Woolwich, and show with what earnestness, diligence, and prayerfulness he labored to bring forth things new and old out of the Gospel treasury, as a good and faithful steward of the household of faith :—

"(a) In study most of day; anxious with some hope. —In study all day; slow progress; but little opening. Some sweetness at the throne. Left study at 9.

"(b) Preached morning and evening from {Psalm 105: 3}. Prayer in morning hard, preaching moderate; evening, comfortable in prayer, preaching hard and dull. Leave me not, O Lord!

"(a) In study with hope, bless the Lord!—In the study; got to the subject late, but felt some opening. Left at 8 with some hope and comfort.

<sup>66</sup> (b) Moderate time in morning from {Psalm 18: 2}, first clause. Plans disarranged for evening. Preached from {Ephesians 2: 13}; a tolerably favored time. Sanctify and bless, O Lord!

"(a) In study all day; a little nervous.—In study all day; precious time in thought; nervous and confused, but hopeful for the morrow. Thine is the power; exercise it, O Lord!

"(b) Strange time in pulpit all day; miserable and cold. O that God would turn again my captivity!

"(a) Some pleasure in my subject for Lord's-day.— A tolerably good day; good time in prayer. Bless Jehovah!

"(b) Preached morning and evening from Romans. 11: 2}. A very good day. O my God, let this be as an earnest only! Bless and sanctify.

"(a) In study; some pleasure in thought.—A good day; comfortable in prayer. Left study about 7; some doubt.

"(b) Preached in morning from {John 1: 29}; moderate time. A good time at night from {Revelation. 5: 6}. Blessed Lord, Thou hast dispelled my fears, exceeded hope; now bless.

"(a) Subjects fixed in the mind.—In study all day.

"(b) Preached in morning from {Isaiah 41: 17}, moderate time; evening, from {Luke 13: 3}, better time. Bless Thy word; give enlargement.

"(a) Close in study all day; middling success ; middling time in prayer ; little melting.

"(b) Morning from {Acts 16: 30}; evening from 31. Tolerable time in morning; miserable at night. Met with friends in afternoon; good meeting."

Entries relating to his study and pulpit experiences were made in his diary with much regularity from nearly the commencement of his ministry up to the close, a period of about forty years. The Lord had called him to the work, and he studied to approve himself to Him that so called him with much meditation and prayer, endeavoring with all faithfulness rightly to divide the Word of truth, seeking constantly the teaching of the Holy Spirit to guide his mind into the meaning of that Word, and His gracious aid in delivering it to his flock in public. These written mementoes form a history of his inner life as a servant of Christ and of the Church for Christ's sake, and abundantly evidence the sincerity and spirituality of his character as a man of God and a minister of the Gospel of the grace of God. We will quote one more of these entries here; it is of a rejoicing kind, and rather more extended than most; and having done so, pass on:—

"January 6th, 1850, Lord's-day.—Preached in the morning from {Isaiah 40: 5} ; a good time. Jesus Christ, the representative glory of Jehovah, personally considered. Evening, {Psalm 147: 11}; comfortable time. Good is the Lord. Ebenezer."

Shortly after settling at Woolwich, Mr. Atkinson published a pamphlet entitled "The

Grave Question Considered," the occasion of which publication was this: Mr. Cox, a Baptist minister in the same town, doubtlessly a good and godly man, but one whose views respecting the manner of addressing the unconverted had recently become altered from his former ones as to the manner of preaching the Gospel to unconverted persons, had issued a tract in defense of his newly acquired notions, entitled " A Grave Question for all Preachers of the Gospel," the question being, " How does God address the unconverted in His holy Word I " Mr. Cox's original views on this matter, it would appear, were similar to those held by Gill, Brine, Skepp, Stevens, Foreman, and other good men, which, from his early training, Mr. Atkinson had been led to adopt as coinciding with the Word of God. With Israel Atkinson there was no medium between right and wrong, no middle path between truth and error; with him right was right, wholly and entire ; wrong was wrong, without mitigation ; truth was truth, to which alteration, improvement, or admixture were impossible or inadmissible; error was error, insufferable, intolerable, and indefensible. Conceiving, therefore, that Mr. Cox had put forth views that were "erroneous and mischievous," and considering also that his manner of remark was somewhat insulting and defiant towards those with whom he formerly agreed on this matter, Mr. Atkinson deemed it his duty to reply to Mr. C.'s tract. The title of this reply, given in full, will further explain the subject of discussion, it reading as follows :—" The Grave Question Considered: being a reply to Mr. J. Cox, showing that indiscriminate commands to spiritual exercises and indiscriminate invitations to spiritual provisions are not authorized by the Word of God. By Israel Atkinson."

This question as to how unconverted sinners should be addressed by the ministers of Christ in preaching the Gospel of the grace of God to them has given rise, as is generally known, to much controversy. No doubt many a godly, conscientious servant of the Lord has felt his mind much exercised on this matter, especially if, having read the controversial productions on both sides of the important question, which are both numerous and profound, he had been unable to determine for himself the path of duty in this respect. On the one hand, there is the command of the Lord to "preach the Gospel to every creature"; that direction is full, clear, and imperative. On the other hand arises the question, How is the Gospel to be preached?—exegetically and declaratively or

exhortatively and invitatorily, seeing that men in a state of nature are dead in trespasses and sins, and that our Lord Himself declares that no man can come unto Him without divine drawing? It is noteworthy that the Apostles give no directions on this matter in their epistles, either to churches or individuals, and it would appear that the Holy Spirit considered the instruction to be gathered from the Gospels and the Acts, together with the sentences in the book of Revelation relating to it, sufficient to guide His servants therein. As with most things, however, in which the human mind is called upon to take action, good men, preachers of the Word, have gone to opposite extremes in this matter, some declining to address unconverted persons altogether, whilst others, over-exhorting them, so to speak, have gone far beyond the lines of Scripture and common sense in addressing them. Which of the two extremes it may be best to avoid is, perhaps, difficult to say; as a matter of fact, where there is most exhortation conversions preponderate in number, whether genuine and lasting or only superficial and temporary, may perhaps be in accordance with the character and style of the exhortations used. The proper and scriptural mode of preaching the Word of God would seem to be that adopted by the late Septimus Sears, as set forth in his own words in his Memoir, page 159 :—

*“This was the method the Holy Ghost led the Apostles to take in their ministry :—they were led, first, as we see in the Acts, to warningly deal with men about their lost state as sinners, and the only way of escape from the wrath to come, and to urge upon them the necessity of ‘repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,’ and to direct awakened ones to Jesus as an able and willing Saviour. The Holy Ghost having applied these truths to the leading poor sinners to feel their ruin, and to fly to the Lord Jesus for refuge, they were led in their epistles to believers to trace their calling up to their redemption by Christ and their election and blessing in Christ before all worlds.”*

It requires but little consideration on the part of those conversant with the Holy Scriptures to decide as to the accuracy of this representation of apostolic preaching and teaching.

Mr. Atkinson’s pamphlet gives evidence of a mind accustomed to think closely and to reason logically, also of extensive reading, and that he had applied himself very diligently to the improvement of his mental powers and the acquisition of those educational endowments which in early life he had not the means of obtaining.

This book, written at about the age of 33, appears to have been his first literary production, excepting an article or two previously contributed to the Gospel Herald. The following extracts are fair specimens of the work:—

“Let my reader distinctly remark, the question is not what God necessarily requires of the fallen creature according to the law, as law, nor as it is a covenant of works, but what He Sovereignty commands to the fallen under a new dispensation. The necessary commands of God, as Creator and Lawgiver, according to the law, and as it is a covenant of works, are, and must be what they were. No change in the creature, involving a loss of ability, can abrogate that law or diminish its claims, nor can the creature’s obligations be lessened. As a creature, though fallen, he is still liable to its demands, and, as a sinner, he is exposed to its curse. But the reasonableness of all this must be fetched from the perfect adequacy of the creature in his original state to render perfect obedience. Mr. Cox will not care, I imagine, to call those commands of which he speaks, in the manner in which he speaks of them, necessary commands. Then are they arbitrary commands—commands which might or might not be?

“Every arbitrary command of God is necessarily reasonable, and every such command is possible, or it cannot be reasonable. This is a self-evident truth, and a first principle. No arbitrary command can be reasonable which is impossible. Every impossible command is foolish or tyrannical, or both. No such command can be of God. To command arbitrarily an infant to act like a man, a man like an angel, or a natural man like a spiritual man, would be imperious madness. Every arbitrary command of God must be suited to the capacity of those commanded; His divine reasonableness forbids the contrary.”—Page 13.

“Command a broken-hearted sinner to believe! The character of God and the catalogue of his deep crimes, the claims of the law and the clamor of his conscience, raise, enhance, and confirm a tormenting fear in his heart that his ruin is irremediable and his destiny destruction! Rather pursue that more ancient way, though almost antiquated, the apostolic way, preaching ‘Christ and Him crucified.’ Exhibit how the holy excellencies of the Most High are vindicated, and how sin is punished in the sinless Substitute for the penitent sinner’s exemption, exoneration, and exculpation. Let it be

fully set forth that, through the divinely-sealed and voluntarily self-sanctified sacrifice of that divine Victim, the raised up ire of inflexible Justice is appeased, a finishing end is made of sin, death is swallowed up in eternal victory, the policy of hell non-plussed and its power vanquished, life immortal is brought to light, and the sanctified are perfected for ever. Let also those sweet encouragements be trumpeted forth which arise from the permanent purposes, precious promises, glorious precedents and omnipotent power of Jehovah, and from His unmentable, full, free, and everlasting grace and mercy to the worthless and miserable penitent criminal. And thus, though the profane will scoff and the proud professor sneer, the Gospel will be preached, the Holy Ghost will bear witness to His own truth, Christ will be exalted, God our Father in covenant will be endeared, the case will be met, the poor sinner will be prostrated in humility and absorbed in love, sin will be hated, spirituality promoted, and the Church of God gladdened.”— Page 29.

During his residence at Woolwich, being so near London, Mr. Atkinson had frequent opportunities of intercourse with the good and godly ministers of the day, and of hearing them preach. These opportunities he much enjoyed, and the references to them in his diary, though very brief, are interesting. Thus, on the Good Friday of 1850, he goes to Mount Zion, Hill Street, Anniversary, and returns home with his “dear old friend, Murrell, has a comfortable tea-meeting at Carmel and a very good sermon.” On another occasion he goes to Greenwich, and hears Moyle and Milner. Then, on a certain Lord’s-day he himself preaches at Mount Zion— texts, {Jeremiah 1: 20}, and {Isaiah 41: 9}; has very good times, and a very warm reception from his old friends there. Then, at Deptford he meets with several ministers, and feels peculiarly happy in the company of Sedgwick. Shortly afterwards he hears C. Smith at Enon, Woolwich, who “preached singularly but made some telling remarks”; from G. Moyle, on the same occasion, he hears a good, solid sermon. On other occasions he hears Murrell and Gittens comfortably; meets Milner, Meeres, and Felton at a friend’s house, after which a good meeting at the chapel but for “fidgetty Felton.” “A good tea-meeting and dear old brother Murrell preaches us a very sweet spiritual sermon in the evening.” At Deptford he hears a somewhat popular young minister, recently settled in London, and prays for him thus in his diary:—“Keep him from his friends, good Lord.” At another place he hears a very poor sermon from the

same minister and a very good one from Foreman. He was also himself frequently called out to engage at anniversaries and similar occasions, amongst which he records that he read and prayed, November 4th, 1851, at the formation of the church at Mount Zion, afterwards Mr. Hazelton's. The reference to this part of the service in the printed account of the origin and progress of that church reads thus: — "Mr. Atkinson read part of {Ephesians 4., and very affectionately implored the divine blessing. " These engagements seem to have been in general pleasant to himself and acceptable to others.

It was whilst living at Woolwich that Mr. Atkinson was called upon to part with his beloved companion in life, who died March 22nd, 1852, after an illness of ten weeks, resulting from a confinement intensified by her taking a " bad chill " about a fortnight afterwards. This bereavement was a sore trial to the good man, who thus expresses himself in relation to it in his diary:—"How solemn my bereavement! A wife—the dear wife of my youth—the desire of my eyes and the comfort of my life taken from me at a stroke! How great, too, this bereavement! The smart of loss is pungent but passing, but the heavy pain of bereavement grievously presses and abides. O my God, ease my poor mind, I beseech Thee, of the dreadful anxieties I feel relative to the present and future, and inspire in my poor heart confidence in Thy divine providence and character." The event itself is thus recorded by him:—"Monday, March 22nd. — At half-past two o'clock found the hand of death on my dear, dear girl; she dropped a few words and fell asleep at about five." Of the following week he states that it was "a most disconsolate week. My dear friends superintended the whole of my affairs, and took, indeed, the whole charge. Bless them, my Father; Thou canst reward them, I never." His Woolwich friends on this trying occasion—as, indeed, they appear to have been during the whole of his stay with them—were most kind and sympathizing. Referring to the week before the death of Mrs. Atkinson, when her end was evidently drawing very near, we find the following entry, in which also special allusion is made to their sympathy:—" A most dreadful week of anxiety and distress. My dear wife waxing worse and worse, leaving me utterly without hope. But oh! How blessed to have God to trust in and make supplication to, and to have dear friends to sympathize in distress! These I have in a very uncommon degree.

Blessed be God." Mr. William Topley, at that time a deacon at Carmel, now filling the same office at Zion, New Cross, writes thus respecting Mrs. Atkinson and her decease : —"She was a consistent Christian, a humble follower of our Lord, and respected by all who knew her; cheerful and kind in life, happy and resigned in death, but she was not sensible for three days before death. Our brother Atkinson felt his loss keenly, but was enabled to preach a funeral sermon for her." Mr. Atkinson's diary record of the day on which this sermon was preached reads thus:—"Lord's-day, April 4th, 1852.—Preached this morning from {Psalm 46: 10}, and in the evening from {1 Corinthians. 7: 29, 30, 31}. Was mercifully helped all day. Accept the thanks of a worm, O Lord! " Reference to the passages named will at once show how appropriate they were as foundations for discourses adapted to the solemn and, to the bereaved one especially, most trying dispensation.

Mr. Atkinson's ministry at Woolwich was much appreciated by his hearers, and the church and congregation increased in numbers; but he never became their pastor, although twice requested to do so, viz., in February, 1851, and January, 1852. It appears he preferred taking the pulpit by temporary engagements until the path should be more clearly opened before him by divine Providence, for although his labors were being blessed, he desired greater usefulness, and, if it were the will of God, in a larger sphere. Eventually he wrote to the church in December, 1852, informing them he should leave at the expiration of his then existing engagement, which resignation of his ministerial position among them was accepted with considerable regret. His feelings respecting this change in the sphere of ministerial labor are thus expressed in his diary :—" Accept my best thanks, O Lord, for the ministerial aid and success afforded to the least of all Thy servants, and now that I am about to remove somewhere, do Thou guide my every footstep, bless me with the richest of Thine enriching blessings, and make me more richly and extensively a blessing to my generation. Guide me by Thy counsel; let me know Thy will certainly, love it heartily, and do it cheerfully."

A few days after sending in his resignation, he received a letter of invitation from the church at Saffron Walden, to supply them for six months with a view to the pastorate. That church, knowing the temporary nature of Mr. Atkinson's several engagements at

Woolwich, had repeatedly invited him, unanimously, affectionately, and earnestly, to a probationary service with them, having on several occasions since the death of their pastor, Mr. Player, heard him as a supply with great satisfaction.

Their letter to Mr. Atkinson on the present occasion displays so much correct Christian feeling and godly sincerity, that it may be interesting and edifying to readers to transcribe it here :—

*“The Baptist Church of Jesus Christ assembling for Worship at the Little Meeting-house, London Road, Saffron Walden, Essex, unto Israel Atkinson, Woolwich, Kent, Preacher of the everlasting Gospel of Christ: Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied.*

*“Beloved in Jesus, the covenant Head of Zion,—Once more we, a destitute and widowed church, desire united to solicit you to come amongst us six months with a view to the pastorate over us in the Lord, in the event of your leaving Woolwich. We, beloved, have hitherto patiently waited, and we trust have been prayerfully watching the providence of our God. And since it has pleased Him to keep from us any one of His servants to whom we, as a body, can unanimously say, ‘Come among us,’ but our brother Atkinson, we hope that it is from Zion’s King that we are by necessity compelled again to invite your consideration to our widowed condition, as well as from our cordial approval of your visits amongst us. We have abundant reason to bless God for the favors already received and for the preservation granted; though we confess we feel a need of the labors of a man of God, his advice and his counsel, and ministerially to bring forth the bread of eternal life, that we may grow, and not go back into a barren and cold condition. Our sincere desire for you, beloved brother, is that the Lord may direct and make you an instrument of much good to His body the Church; that you may be instrumental in bringing many vessels of mercy to embrace salvation by the blood of the Lamb, and be favored to continue to feed them with the pure Word of truth. May He give many seals to your ministry; supply all your temporal needs according to His super-abounding goodness, so that you may have to praise His dear Name with a cup running over with blessings. Should it here afterwards appear that it is the will of Zion’s King that you come to Walden to preach the everlasting Gospel of Christ, may He bring you forth continually*

*in the fullness of the blessing of that Gospel. To His disposal we cheerfully commit you, whether you stay at Woolwich or come to Walden, with united prayer to Him that He may direct us and you in the way that is right in His sight. For we are fully satisfied that His blessing cannot be expected but by constantly trusting all in Him. As far as we are able to see at present, we cannot but think it to be the hand of the Lord in our movements towards you. We also desire to express our warmest attachment to the truths you have already set forth before us, of which many of us can certify it has been refreshing to our otherwise sorrowful hearts. Now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory, we desire humbly to ascribe all glory and honor, dominion and power, for ever, amen. We cheerfully subscribe ourselves, yours in Gospel love.*

*"Signed the 26th of December, 1852, by the Deacons on behalf of the Church, and in their presence,*

*"W. A. NICHOLS, "JOHN BAYNES,  
§ Deacons."*

This invitation Mr. Atkinson declined, but went to Walden and served the friends there one Lord's-day in the following month. Other invitations followed, including a unanimous invitation to the pastorate; these were likewise not accepted. His reply to the last named was as follows:—

*"To the Particular Baptist Church assembling for the worship of God in the London Road Chapel, Saffron Walden, Essex,*

*"Beloved Brethren,*

*"Having received your kind, cordial, and unanimous invitation to become your pastor, I have aimed to lay the matter before the Lord, whose I am, and whom I am desirous to serve where and where in so ever He may appoint, and will approve and bless. Conscious of my deficiencies, I feel humbled before God and grateful to you on account of the cordiality and unanimity of your invitation, and I cannot but notice with pleasure that, as a church, you are so much of one heart and mind.*

*"I am sure you are aware of the importance which attaches to your invitation, and therefore that you will be well prepared to sympathize with me in the importance I attach*

to my reply, and respect my convictions. It is a maxim with me that no pastor ought to throw up his pastorate without sufficient reason and a full persuasion of mind, guided by the Word and providence of God; and therefore, by parity of reason, that no man ought to accept a pastorate without sufficient reason and a full persuasion of mind, guided by the Word and providence of God.

"I trust you will receive it in the same spirit of Christian love which dictated it, when I say, in answer to your invitation, that I have not that full persuasion of mind that would be necessary to induce me to receive the pastorate of any people, relative to your kind invitation.

"What may yet be hid in the purpose of our God we must necessarily leave to His providence to unfold. Should it, however) appear to my mind satisfactorily, at a future time, that it is the will of God I should be your pastor, I will not confer with flesh and blood, but will regard the instruction immediately and cheerfully with that ability my God shall give me.

"While, however, I cannot at present accept your invitation to become your pastor, I have no desire to think no more of it. And, if it is agreeable to you, and you should be desirous of such an arrangement, I will (D.V.) supply for you during the month of July.

"I commend you, dear brethren, to God and to the Word of His grace. Watch and pray. 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come ; it will not tarry ' beyond God's appointed time ; and when come, will not be beside His intentions, however much it may cross our wishes. His will is best, and His way will at once accomplish and expound His will and secure our own welfare. God bless you! So prays "Your willing Servant in the Gospel of Christ,

"I. ATKINSON.

"May 18th, 1853."

Agreeably with the proposal contained in this reply, Mr., Atkinson preached the Word of life to the friends at Saffron Walden on the five Lord's-days comprised in the month of July, 1853. He also in the previous April supplied, according to engagement, four Lord' s-days at Leicester, where he was likewise well received. But the chain of circumstances

was forming by which he was led eventually to settle at Brighton, the place of his last and longest earthly abode, and most lengthened term of ministerial labor. The first occasion of his preaching at Brighton was on Lord's-day, May 30th, 1852, as a supply in the absence of their pastor, Mr. Joseph Sedgwick. Respecting this day and its engagements he writes thus: — "Beautiful day. At Brighton. Preached in morning from Leviticus xvi. 34; in the evening from {Galatians 4: 6}. Moderate time in morning, better in evening. Well received. Bless the Lord, O my soul! " The next was on January 30th, 1853, when he was "mercifully helped and well received," acting again as a supply for Mr. Sedgwick, who was then laid aside from his work by what proved to be his death illness. Mr. Sedgwick slept in Jesus March 25th, 1853, aged 56. Mr. Atkinson had preached for him again on the previous Lord's-day, when there were "excellent congregations and good collections," and he was again "mercifully helped." Shortly after the death of Mr. Sedgwick, we find him engaged with Mr. Milner in preparing a Memoir of the departed man of God, their mutual friend. Mr. Atkinson, at the completion of this labor of love, thus writes in his diary: — "What a remarkable spirituality and savor characterize the correspondence of poor Sedgwick! I trust that what assistance I have given to this matter of his Memoir will not be lost to me. I have indeed found it to be heart-searching in comfort and reproof. Good Lord, make it a lasting benefit to my soul. Give me a similar, yea, a larger degree of spirituality, savor, and power." He supplied the pulpit at Ebenezer the first two Lord's-days in the June following Mr. Sedgwick's death; and a special church meeting was held by the friends on the 20th of that month, when it was agreed to invite him "to supply the pulpit for three months, that the members generally may be able fairly to judge whether they could give you a further invitation, with a view to your taking the pastoral charge." To this invitation Mr. Atkinson responded, accepting the same as an engagement, which he fulfilled in the months of August, September, and October. Further invitations followed, ultimating in a call to the pastorate, agreed to at a special church meeting held on Monday evening, March 27th, 1854, there being 102 votes in the affirmative and 36 negatives to the proposition.

To this invitation Mr. Atkinson responded in the following terms:—

*"5, Rose Hill Terrace,  
"March 31st, 1854.*

"Beloved Brethren in Jesus,

"I have endeavored to give your affectionate invitation to me to become your pastor that prayerful consideration which so important a matter demands.

"It has been only as solemnly convinced that so was the will of God that I have continued laboring among you through successive engagements until now; and it is only as equally solemnly convinced that it is of the Lord for good, that I, in His fear, and depending on Him, do accept your invitation. Believing it to be of God, I will not, I cannot, I wish not to do otherwise. I accept, therefore, your invitation as a call from God, and do hope and pray you will receive me, as in answer to your prayers, a pastor given you of God.

"Respecting the salary, I am persuaded you have always cheerfully given according to your ability for the support of your pastor and his family in comfort, and am equally persuaded you will still do so.

" Let your prayers, my dear brethren, ascend with mine to the enthroned King of Zion, that His blessing, which only makes rich, may be abundantly shed on me and my labor, that we may enjoy together the refreshing streams from the smitten Rock, as we journey in company through this desert of sins and cares and tears. Ask for me the daily supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that I may be among you a messenger of God, an interpreter of His will, to point ministerially the lost to the way of life, and to lead, as a shepherd, the enfolded sheep into the ever green pastures of God's salvation—in a word, that I may be an able minister of the New Testament, laboriously spending myself in the service of God for your welfare, honestly commending myself by manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and successful by the Lord's blessing in perfecting the saints, in the work of the ministry, and in edifying the body of Christ. Finally, pray for me, that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified.

*I am, my dear brethren, your affectionate brother and, according to your request, your*

*willing servant as pastor in the Gospel of Christ,*

*"I. ATKINSON."*

Referring to this letter the following entry appears in his diary:—"Wrote my acceptance of the church's invitation—one of the most solemn acts of my life. O my God, for Christ's sake sanctify it for every thing of good. Do, my Father, do!" which shows the deep feeling of his heart on the occasion, in relation to the responsibility attaching to the position now entered upon, and the earnest desire of his soul that God might be glorified and His people benefitted by his occupancy of it.

Of the 36 friends who voted in the negative on the question of his call to the pastorate at Ebenezer, 29 withdrew with proper Christian feeling on both sides, and were dismissed in a respectful and brotherly way, to be formed into another church in the same town, which is the one now meeting in Queen Square. Before the close of the year, however, 22 additions were made to the church at Ebenezer, 18 of whom were baptized by Mr. Atkinson, 2 received by demission, and 2 by relation of experience. 12 of the 22 were received into fellowship on Lord's-day, August 6th, and 10 on Lord's-day, October 1st, 1854. Others were offering themselves as candidates for membership before the close of the year, so that the vacant places were soon filled up, and our brother's earnest prayers and anxious desires for the Lord's blessing upon his pastoral engagement at Brighton graciously answered and realized. The whole of the year 1853 had been a period of great anxiety with him, arising from the unsettled state of his ministerial connections; and not having at the time a settled charge, he finishes his diary for that year with these words:—"Another year's journey accomplished. What a year of anxiety, wandering, and grief!—and still a wanderer, having no settled abiding place. Make me in all my goings only to go in the path of Thy commandments, O Lord! Guide Thou my feet, let me follow Thy directions, and grant me the strength of Thine arm and the light of Thy face." Thus in all his ways he acknowledged his God, sought divine guidance for every step, divine support under every trial, and divine help for the performance of every duty.

## PART IV.

### PASTORATE AT BRIGHTON.

*“O Zion! thy Founder, eternally blest,  
Hath decked thee with honors and named thee His rest;  
Hath loved thee and blest thee and crowned thee withal,  
And round thee salvation hath placed as a wall.  
On Jesus she stands, and for ever stands fast—  
The Alpha, Omega, the First and the Last.  
The deep rooted mountains shall sink in the sea;  
This Rock of all ages will never give way.  
The name of the city, which stands o’er the gate,  
The sage antiquarian has failed to translate;  
Imperfect the letters to him may appear,  
But the prophet thus reads it— ‘Jehovah is there?’  
The watchmen, who stand on her walls night and day,  
No bribes shall induce them their trust to betray;  
Allegiance to Jesus they solemnly swear,  
And ‘Watchful and bold’ is the motto they bear.  
Ride on, mighty Jesus, fresh honors achieve;  
The islands are waiting Thy laws to receive;  
The converts of grace at Thy footstool shall bow;  
Thy arm is victorious, Almighty art Thou.”*

ABOUT a hundred years ago there lived in a cottage in Suffolk a God-fearing man, a farm laborer, who was accustomed to go a distance of three or four miles every Lord’s-day to “meeting.” Chapels were called “meetings” in those days, in that county and elsewhere. He was also in the habit of observing family prayer in his house at home, when his daily labor was over. His name is unknown on earth, but it is written in the book of life in heaven, and, according to {Revelation 20: 12}, shall be read out before an assembled world when that record of those who have feared God, wrought righteousness, trusted in

the blood of the Lamb, and from love to Him walked in His ways, shall have been completely filled up. He was jeered at by his neighbors, for they called him an Anabaptist, a Meetinger, a Pogram,\*

*\* A terra in use in Suffolk at that time as an opprobrious epithet applied to Dissenters, the meaning and etymology of which are unknown ; now disused and forgotten.*

and the like; but he was loved of his God, and honored by Him to be the means of the conversion of one connected with whom some issues of importance arose in the kingdom of His grace. Next door to this good man there lived a young man, who was his opposite in character—a sweaver, a tippler, a Sabbath-breaker. The partition between the two dwellings was sufficiently slender to admit of what passed on one side being heard on the other by attentive listening. Under such circumstances there are no utterances more easily heard and understood than those put forth in the slow and distinct tones of earnest vocal prayer. Such utterances, being repeated at regular times, attracted the attention of the ungodly neighbor, and he listened and heard what, under the power of the Divine Spirit, made a deep impression on his mind, and he became a frequent listener to those solemn and earnest tones with increasing interest and seriousness. A longing desire arose in his mind to be made like his praying neighbor, for the difference between them was every way immensely in that neighbor's favor. Then the sweaver was led to appeal to his Maker in a manner far different from that in which he had previously called upon Him. Instead of imprecating eternal destruction on his soul, he began, in reverend and beseeching words, to pray for its salvation. What he thus sought he was mercifully favored to find in due time, as every truly awakened earnest seeker does. He was baptized as an avowed disciple of the Lord Jesus, and subsequently, at the call of God and the church of which he became a member, began to preach the Gospel of Christ. Eventually he was settled in London, as pastor of a church which, when he took the charge, seemed about ready to expire, but which he was blessed of God to be the means of reviving and greatly increasing, so that during his ministry of 26 years 497 persons were added to their number.

In the year 1814, a lad, about seventeen years of age, who from a child had attended with his mother the place of worship where this trophy of divine grace preached the Word

of life, became a broken-hearted sinner, with a burdened conscience and a soul filled with anxiety about its future and eternal welfare. In this condition this child of a praying mother entered the house of God one Lord's- day morning, hoping to find relief for his anguished mind. It was the time for the manifestation of mercy to him, to the joy and rejoicing of his heart. A few words relating to the atonement of our blessed Lord, spoken by the preacher in the course of the sermon, were made the means of setting the young man's soul at liberty, and he was enabled to believe that the Lord of life and glory was crucified for him, and bare his sins in His own body on the tree. The now happy disciple shortly afterwards confessed his Lord in baptism, joined the church, and in a similar manner to his pastor was called to the work of the Christian ministry, and to the pastorate of a church which, from a very small beginning, rose to be a prosperous and considerable community by the blessing of God on his faithful and assiduous labors. We thus are led to see in what a remarkable way God carries on His operations of grace in connection with the dealings of His providence in building up the kingdom of His dear Son. "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." We may certainly trace a chain of connective providences between the prayers of the humble farm laborer in Suffolk and the building up of two Gospel churches in distant parts of the country,—the two ministers above referred to being John Keeble, of Blandford Street, London, and Joseph Sedgwick, whose pastor Mr. Keeble was, and who so successfully labored at Ebenezer Chapel, Brighton, for the long space of twenty-nine years.

For the information of some of the readers of this Memoir, a few particulars of the origin of the cause at Ebenezer Chapel, Richmond Street, Brighton, may here be given. The church was formed on March 21st, 1824, of eleven persons, Mr. George Comb, of Soho Chapel, London, and Mr. William House being present. Mr. House was a laborious and useful minister in his day, and was pastor over a church that met in Enon Chapel, Clement's Lane, Strand, London. Both the church and the chapel have become things of the past, and probably Mr. House, who died in 1835, is now remembered only by a very few; but he was a good man, and wrote and published a volume of evangelical hymns, one of which begins with the following precious verse :—

*“Arrayed in perfect righteousness,  
This soul of mine shall shine;  
My Jesus wrought this wedding dress,  
And grace has made it mine. ”*  
(See Stevens' Selection, Hymn 257.)

Mr. Sedgwick, the first pastor, under whose ministry the cause at Ebenezer commenced, was ordained on the 2nd of the July following the formation of the church, Mr. Comb giving him the charge; Mr. Keeble, who had been expected to give it, being Mr. Sedgwick's pastor, having been called to his rest meanwhile, viz., on April 18th, 1824. The ordination service was conducted in the large room of the Old Ship tavern, where, prior to the opening of their chapel, the church met for divine worship. Ebenezer Chapel was opened on the 13th of April, 1825. Mr. John Stevens, of London, preached in the morning a "solid, judicious, deep sermon "; Mr. Sedgwick preached in the afternoon from the words, " A place for the Lord "; and Mr. Henry Heap, a Calvinistic Congregational minister of Bury Street, St. Mary Axe, London, preached in the evening a "spiritual, lively, and profitable sermon." Here Mr. Sedgwick labored with much success and spiritual prosperity, so that at his decease, in 1853, the church had increased from n to about 150 members, with a large congregation, and was in peace and unity, with a large share of which blessings it has ever continued to be favored.

The ordination services in connection with the settlement of Mr. Atkinson as the second pastor of Ebenezer were held on Wednesday, May 17th, 1854. The proceedings of the day were commenced by Mr. George Murrell, of St. Neot's, giving out the first part of Dr. Watt's version of the 132nd Psalm, which having been sung, and no doubt with much feeling, by the assembled friends, a suitable portion of the Word of God was read from Ephesians iv. by Mr. Thomas Field, then of Greenwich. Prayer having been offered, the second part of the same {Psalm, 132:, was sung, and Mr. Samuel Milner proceeded to state the nature and order of a scripturally constituted Christian church, taking as a text the words in {1 Timothy 3: 15} :—" The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." In the sententious manner usual with that

good man, he described a church as a company of believing men and women, united together in Gospel principles for Gospel purposes. Considering the New Testament to be the sole rule of our faith and practice, he thought those who came nearest to the pattern there set before us were Christian churches, and others who departed from it were the real Dissenters. Having described the organization, ordinances, and discipline of a rightly ordered church, thus concluding his discourse, Mr. M. asked for a declaration by one of the deacons as to the leadings of Divine Providence in regard to the church at Ebenezer and their choice of Mr. Atkinson as pastor. This was responded to by Mr. Gillman, who gave a short history of the rise and progress of the cause under the ministrations of their late pastor, Mr. Sedgwick, and a relation of the circumstances which led to the choice of Mr. Atkinson as his successor, concluding his statement with an expression of his belief that in the future, as in the past, they would be favored with seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, for they had found Him to be with them in their present choice of a ministering servant of His.

The church and Mr. Atkinson having, at Mr. Milner's request, held up their hands in testification of the acceptance severally of each other as pastor and pastoral charge, Mr. Atkinson made his statement as to his call by grace, call to the Christian ministry, his views of truth, and the leadings of Divine Providence in bringing him to Brighton, occupying nearly an hour in the relation, the recital of which deeply interested his hearers. The ministers present then formally recognized Mr. Atkinson as a brother minister, as is usually done on such occasions among Baptists, by giving him the right hand of fellowship, instead of the "laying on of hands" in use among some denominations. They likewise did the same to one of the deacons, in token of acknowledging the church as a properly organized church of Jesus Christ. Mr. Foreman then addressed a few words in an earnest and affectionate manner to Mr. Atkinson, as to his son in the Gospel, and Mr. Milner concluded the lengthened but most interesting and impressive services of the morning with prayer.

The afternoon engagements were commenced by singing the hymn, "Hark! 'tis our heavenly Leader's voice," and Mr. Murrell read a portion of Scripture from {Acts 20}., and offered the ordination prayer. The hymn, "Let Zion's watchmen all awake," was

sung, and Mr. John Foreman delivered the ministerial charge to Mr. Atkinson from {2 Timothy 2: 7} :—" Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." The charge included a description of a true minister of the Gospel as the servant of the Lord, and the work given him to do as a steward, a shepherd, a sower, a teacher, and a preacher; also directions as to how the materials are supplied by the Lord to His servants with which they are to work. They are not sent to war a warfare at their own charges, but yet are required to meditate, pray, and study, that they may attain an understanding in Gospel truths, and bring forth things new and old from the treasury of the Word. The charge being concluded, the verse—

*"With heavenly power, O Lord, defend  
Him whom we now to Thee commend;  
His person bless, his soul secure,  
And make him to the end endure,"*

was sung, and the service closed by prayer.

In the evening Mr. Gillman gave out the 144th hymn, second book, Watts; Mr. Foreman read three portions of the Word of God, viz., {Romans 12}., part of {Numbers 7.}, and Isaiah xii., and prayed. The hymn, "The burning bush which Moses saw/" was sung, and Mr. Murrell preached to the church from {Hebrews. 13: 7}, an affectionate and impressive discourse, every way suited to the occasion. The hymn, "Shepherd of Israel, Thou dost keep," was sung, and the deeply interesting, solemn, and truly delightful services of the day were brought to a close by a few words of prayer.

Mr. Atkinson's diary memorandum of the day is brief and emphatic:—"Memorable day. The services of this day were solemn, and I hope solemnized by Thee, O Lord." The entry for the following Lord's-day reads thus:—"Preached in morning from {Psalm 90: 17}; evening {Hebrews 2: 3}. Moderate, morning; but an excellent opportunity in evening, and well attended all day. O Lord, give me, I beseech Thee, some really encouraging signs of evident usefulness." A day or two after this appears another, ending with the following ejaculation that God would bless me with hearers who shall love our Lord Jesus Christ! " Then, the second day subsequent, a friend calls to propose herself for membership, which calls forth the following petition;—"My God, let this be a sanctified

beginning of a great work." These prayers were answered, for throughout the remainder of the diary for the year notes of applications for membership recur, and he baptizes eleven persons in July and eight more in September, others are received by dismissing —lovers all of them, it is to be hoped, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Congregations, meanwhile, vary somewhat at times, which "very much breaks his spirits still, he desires not to fear, and prays for confidence and support. Generally he is "mercifully helped" in the pulpit, though at times he has not a good day as to his feelings there.

This year (1854) there was a national Humiliation Day observed on Wednesday, April 26th, on account of the Crimean War, which was kept as such by the friends at Ebenezer, Mr. Atkinson preaching morning and evening; texts, {Isaiah 2: 4, 5}, and {Acts 10: 36}. On August 9th we find him at the ordination of George Isaac at Bond Street Chapel, where he is much struck and very pleased with Cooper " ; that is, the late Mr. John Cooper, for so many years the able and highly respected pastor at Wattisham, Suffolk. On August 23rd the Anniversary at Ebenezer takes place, and Foreman and Milner preach, when "the preaching is moderate, the collections good." On Lord's- day, December 24th, he finds a note " put in his way by his daughter Heph, to tell him of the Lord's goodness to her," which fills his soul with so much joy that he cannot find words to express it. The next morning being Christmas-day, he preaches from {Colossians 3: 11}, and has "a delightfully precious season," and prays that "Jesus maybe increasingly my All in ally The year 1854 is closed up with the following remembrances, acknowledgments, and petitions:—"Another eventful year is gone—numbered amongst the past! In it I have seen the greatest miseries and have realized the greatest mercies. Received invitation to the pastorate on March 27th; was ordained May 17th. Only Thou canst enable me to sustain this position with success. I want to be Thy servant here. Help Thou me. Twenty - two persons have joined the church during the year. More, Lord, more of those who are saved. This year must be ever memorable on account of Thy mercy, my God, to my Hephzibah. This is a new and unexpected obligation. I don't know its greatness; I can never discharge the debt; but enable me, O Lord, ever to think of it, ever to acknowledge it. Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, for Christ's sake. Amen."

The year 1855 opens very auspiciously with him. On Monday, January 1st, a good prayer-meeting at Ebenezer, followed by a church meeting, when "A. B. gives sweet testimony, and my dear, dear H. was proposed. The meeting altogether a blessed beginning to 1855." On the first Lord's-day in the year he receives two persons into membership, and makes the following entry in his diary respecting the services and pleasures of the day: — "Preached, morning, from {Leviticus 17: 11}; evening, from Matthew xiii, 33. Was much favored of the Lord all day. I would bless Thee, my God, for Thy goodness on this the opening Lord's-day of the New Year. Let it be an earnest of help and blessing. And, I beseech Thee, let me not labor without some, yea, many evident signs of Thy approbation, for Thy dear Son's sake. Amen." His beloved daughter, with five other candidates for church membership, gave satisfactory testimony respecting the Lord's gracious dealings with their souls on a subsequent Lord's-day, when he was "almost done ; had the greatest difficulty to proceed. But it was altogether a good day." The feelings of a Christian parent on such an occasion are only to be fully conceived of by those who have been in a similar happy, yet truly affecting, position. To hear his own child tell how the Lord broke and healed her heart must have been to Mr. Atkinson, as a Christian father and a Christian minister, peculiarly affecting, for he was evidently a man of deep feeling and strong affections. The year passes on with much peace and comfort in the church, and many happy seasons in the house of God, at the prayer-meetings as well as at the preaching services. Twenty-one members were added to the church during the year, and its records, as given in the diary of Mr. Atkinson, end thus:—"I have had sorrows and have sorrowed, but the memory of Thy mercies, O my God, ought to shame the thought of them from my mind. I have by favor had some success in my labors, but suffer me not to be satisfied with present things,—more ardency, more power, O Lord. The path of trial is slippery, and I am walking it; keep me from transgression. Whatever evil I may suffer, let me do none for Christ's sake. Amen." The last Lord's-day of the year, like its first, was also a good season with him, the memorandum respecting it being as follows: — "Dec. 30th. —Preached from {Job 42: 6}, and {1 Peter 2: 7}. Had a very highly favored day. Blessed close of the year 1855. O that God would bless His precious Word, and give it a mighty power for good in the mind! "

The year 1856 is commenced with the following very expressive prayer :—" Give me a humble, earnest, ardent, practical, simple dependence on Thee. Nothing is too hard for Thy hand, mighty God, but the kingdom is all Thine own, and the power. Of Thee let me be blessed and a blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen."

The following extracts from their late pastor's diary for the year begun as above may have a special interest for the friends at Ebenezer, but will not probably be unacceptable to other Christian readers :—

"Jan. 1st.—Tea-meeting, and a cheerful one; make it a profitable one, O Lord, for Christ's sake.

"Jan. 2nd.—Met the deacons at H.'s. Spent a comfortable hour. Lord, bless them, and the church and me through them.

" Jan. 3rd, Thursday. — Preached from Psalm xlviii. 14. A very merciful commencement of the New Year. Ardently, O Lord, I beg for Thy kingdom to come.

"Jan. 8th.—Church tea-meeting. Enjoyed a singularly blessed feeling of mind, and was too happy to feel order of thought in my address. O make it a blessing.

"Feb. 1st.—Poor woman called, named H.; seems a very interesting case. This is a blessing. (This was an application for membership. All such visits are specially noted, as being evidences of the Lord's blessing on his labors).

" June 4th.—Peace fete. Went with Sunday-school children. Took H. to see illumination and fireworks. \* Nothing like my God.'

"June 6th.—Three sisters propose. O Lord, grant that they may be found in the book of life. Make them a blessing.

"June 17th.—Attended a public meeting at Town Hall, and heard D'Aubigne and Dr. McNeile, and heard McNeile preach in the evening. The manner of the Doctor and his matter were excellent.

"July 15th,—Wivelsfield Anniversary. Isaac in morning; self in afternoon, from Hebrews i. 8—mercifully helped. Milner preached well in the evening.

" July 28th.—At church-meeting proposed seven persons for church membership. More, Lord, send of such as are saved in Jesus.

"August 27th.—Anniversary. Foreman, morning;

Milner, evening.

"Sept. 4th, Thursday.—Preached from Acts viii. 38. Baptized eleven persons.

"Sept. 7th.—Received eleven into the church in afternoon. Work yet more mightily, and let the enemy be put to silence and the Son of Thy love be glorified.

"Sept. 23rd.—Attended social meeting of Young Men's Christian Association, and was somewhat pleased with the general character of the proceedings.

"Dec. 16th.—Attended a select meeting to consider of public schools in the Protestant interest; appointed on sub-committee."

The annals of the year close with the following striking and important petitionary sentences, which every reader, having a humble, contrite heart, will feelingly say Amen to on his own account:—" Still preserved ; still preserve, O my God. I have wanted, O merciful Father, the morning Lamb and the evening Lamb throughout the year, and I now want the great yearly sacrifice, the blood of Jesus crucified. Thou, O God, I am confident, canst not be satisfied about sin without atonement, neither can I myself. If I cannot realize that my sin is justly designated, openly condemned, and equitably punished, it will be a gnawing worm that will never die in my heart, and a fire unquenchable. But the Cross comprehends all. God in mercy help me more fully to apprehend the Cross. Amen.

Such are the feelings and such the language of those who are taught by the Holy Spirit to realize somewhat of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and who, although enabled by the grace of God to maintain a consistent, righteous, and godly walk and conversation, as did Mr. Atkinson, yet nevertheless, feeling the "plague of their own heart," are conscious of the need of the daily Sacrifice, the cleansing fountain, the sin-atonement blood, and cry daily with dear Toplady—

*"Rock of Ages! Cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."*

In the following year (1857) a day of National Humiliation and Prayer was again held;

this time on account of the Indian Mutiny, which broke out that year, and was of so formidable a character as at one time to threaten the overthrow of the British race in India, and their expulsion from the country. The day was observed on Wednesday, October 7th. Mr. Atkinson preached in the morning from {Joel 2: 15, 16, 17}; evening, {Psalm 149: 2} —texts very appropriate to the occasion. He remarks in his diary that the weather was very stormy on that day, the storm raging all night, and at Brighton a brig struck and went to pieces, the crew being saved by lifeboats. Not very long after this Day of Humiliation the Indian Mutiny was suppressed. As in the case of the national humbling on account of the Crimean War, God, who observes the conduct of His creatures, and takes special notice of nations suppliant at His feet, listened to the voice of supplication and granted the request thus presented. It would be well if nations more frequently observed such days in times of national calamities; but such observances seem at the present entirely forgotten, for it is now (1882) many years since such a day was observed in this country, notwithstanding the succession of bad harvests and other afflictive dispensations that we have been visited with as a nation.

This year Mr. Atkinson lost a child by death—a baby- boy of a few months old, the fruit of his second marriage, which bereavement he refers to in the following terms: —“Tuesday, Feb. 3rd.— My dear little boy was taken very ill at 2 a.m. in convulsions. He continued ill for several hours. Afterwards I thought him dozing and recovering,, but he was dying, and to my utter surprise he died between 12 and 1 o’clock. Mercy, mercy, for Christ’s sake! Wednesday, 4th.— Engaged the most of the day in matters growing out of the death of my dear little baby.”

There were not so many additions to the church this year as in some former ones—a circumstance very common with all Christian churches. All seasons are not alike fruitful either in nature or grace, and no good man’s ministry in the Gospel of Christ is at all times made equally successful in winning souls. The wind bloweth when it listeth, as well as where it listeth. Mr. Atkinson, however, seems to have been very sensitive and anxious respecting this form of usefulness, and was ever entreating the Lord to give “signs ” of His blessing attending the ministration of the Word, and any apparent withholding of the blessing in this direction appears to have much distressed and

discouraged him. Hence we find the record for 1858 prefaced with sundry lamentations ending with the following words:—"To be blessed and a blessing as of old is now my prayer. Lord, hear my prayer, for Christ's sake. Amen." This prayer was granted, for the applications for membership in 1858 were nearly three times as many as those of the previous year. Friday evening seems to have been the appointed time for visitors on soul matters to see him, and when applicants for church membership came, their visits are noted with such grateful ascriptions as the following:—"This is goodness; how shall I praise Thee? May I not say, 'Not forsaken'? —J. W. and E. H. propose. Blessed be my God.—E. C. proposes. Blessed be my God.—Bless the Lord, O my soul. — Blessed be Thy Name, O Lord, for Thy mercy." When no one came on such an errand prayers and lamentations occur, such as these: — "No signs. 'We see not our signs.' — Lord, send me evident signs.—No signs. Be entreated of Thy poor worm for Jesus' sake.—No signs. Hear my prayer, O Lord I"

The Sabbath School at Ebenezer appears always to have been a flourishing institution, the friends taking great interest in it. Schoolrooms were built in 1851 at a cost of £700, and opened on Wednesday, June 4th, of that year, by a public tea-meeting, and addresses by Mr. Samuel Milner and Mr. Daniel Curtis, of London. Mr. Atkinson paid great attention to this branch of Christian labor during his pastorate at Brighton, and the following memes, appear in his diary for the year 1858 in relation to the teachers and himself:—"Sept. 14th.— Met Sunday School teachers and engaged to read Scripture with them monthly. Oct. 5th. — Attended first Scripture reading meeting of Sunday School teachers. Lord, make it the beginning of good. Thy blessing, Thy blessing! "

On several occasions he composed verses to be sung at the Anniversary of the school. The following, being one of these compositions, may be introduced here as helping to give variety to these pages, and as a specimen of suitable words to put in the mouths of children at such times:—

#### **EBENEZER SCHOOL ANNIVERSARY.**

*Once again has old Time, fleeting,  
Brought our happy Annual Meeting.*

*Let us all unite in greeting  
 Ebenezer School.  
 Generous patrons, us befriending,  
 Thanks we give you, all hearts blending ; And to teachers kind attending  
 Ebenezer School.  
 Pleasures have abounded,  
 Kindness us surrounded;  
 For love rules here  
 Throughout the year.  
 Be gratitude resounded.  
 Gladly still we'll hail the dawning Of returning Sabbath morning ;  
 Pleased to meet—despising scorning—  
 Ebenezer School.  
 Here we escape profane connection,  
 Wicked ways' and words' infection,  
 Covered by Thy dear protection,  
 Ebenezer School.  
 And we learn from sacred story Jesus love and sufferings gory,  
 Pointing us the way to glory,  
 Ebenezer School.  
 Each a tribute bringing,  
 All unite in singing  
 With one accord  
 To Christ the Lord,  
 Loud hallelujahs ringing.  
 Saviour, Friend of children, heed us;  
 Shepherd, as Thine own lambs feed us;  
 And at last to heaven lead us;—  
 Ebenezer School.*

The printed annual reports of this Sabbath School show a remarkable degree of

growth and prosperity. In the first year of its existence, ending May, 1852, the number of boys whose names were on the books was 165, that of girls, 160; total, 325; average attendance, 200.

Three-fourths of the children under instruction were from the immediate vicinity of the school, the desire to impart instruction to such having been the principal object in view in establishing the school. In 1878, the twenty-seventh year, there were 735 names of scholars on the books, and 33 teachers, whose respective average attendance was—morning, 373 and 27 ; afternoon, 528 and 29. To accommodate so greatly increased a number of children it had, of course, become necessary to enlarge the schoolrooms. This was done in the year 1866-7, at a cost of £500, the whole of which amount was most generously given by one donor, Mrs. Lambert, so that the friends had the happiness of seeing the “noble building opened free of debt, through the munificence of their kind friend.” By the liberality of the same kind friend, four years later, a room for the infant classes was provided at a cost of £79 4s., including forms for the children. A room for the accommodation of the senior male class was fitted up at the same time, the work being done by the teachers, and suitably furnished by Mrs. Lambert, their “untiring friend.” Two senior classrooms were constructed in 1875 at a cost of ^165 10s., which was met by a general subscription, Mrs. Lambert having joined the assembly of the blessed above on June 2nd, 1871; otherwise a repetition of her former liberality would no doubt have taken place on the present occasion, as she bequeathed an annuity of about ^20 in her will, in perpetuity for the maintenance of the school.

Of the blessing attending the instruction given in Ebenezer Sabbath Schools the Committee, in their twenty-sixth annual report, thus speak:—“It is a matter for gratitude that, during the 26 years of its existence, the teaching given here has spoken for itself in not a few instances. Some that have passed away have left a testimony that is thoroughly self-confirming as to the quality of the instruction which has been here given and received. Some—and these not a few—that are yet with us, and others that have been removed under Providence far and near, are now experiencing in themselves and witnessing to others the value of the precious truths that are taught and learned within—it is not too much to say —these honored and endeared walls.” In confirmation of the

truth of these words, on looking over the yearly statements, repeated mention is found to be made of additions to the church from the school—in one year (1875) as many as 12; also of children, dying young, who gave pleasing testimony of the work of grace having been begun under instruction received in these schools, the Blessed Spirit having made it instrumental to that happy end. The Sabbath School at Ebenezer, Brighton, is a proof that the sentiments of free and sovereign grace —“high doctrine,” as our friends of the popular side term them—as taught by good men of the class that Mr. Atkinson belonged to, are quite as productive of good results in this direction as the misty, undefined, impalpable pulpit teaching of those who decry those sentiments. The importance of definite religious instruction in Sabbath Schools is referred to in the following striking words in one of the Ebenezer annual reports :— “Mention should be made of the harmony of truth relative to the way of salvation. Perhaps Christian teachers were never more free and easy about the harmony of truth than now. Perhaps latitudinarianism was never more mistaken and commended for liberality, and fidelity to principle never more traduced as the narrow-mindedness of bigotry than now. But it ought to be known, and laid to heart, that inharmonious teachings bewilder, breed doubt, and cannot possibly be true ; that every worshipful exercise of faith, love, and hope must have a more or less understood doctrinal basis; that it will be impossible for a rational being to accept and act on conflicting doctrines until both sides of a contradiction can become true; and that nothing will be done towards a sound instruction in the truths of revealed religion, that may not be easily undone, until an intelligent conviction is formed and confirmed.” These words—undoubtedly those of Israel Atkinson—are worthy the serious consideration of all engaged in Sabbath School instruction.

His Bible class at Ebenezer was an object of special interest and attention with Mr. Atkinson. The first allusion to it in his diary reads thus:—“Tuesday evening, October 5th, 1858.—Attended first Scripture reading meeting of Sunday School teachers. Lord, make it the beginning of good. Thy blessing! Thy blessing! ” Sundry references are made in subsequent years to this institution, as to what portion of Scripture was read and the meetings being pleasant, interesting, &c.; but in 1869 a “ new arrangement ” was proposed by Mr. Atkinson, which proposal was received with “ lively satisfaction” by the

friends at a meeting held for the purpose of receiving it. The class met for the first time under the new arrangement on Wednesday, February 10th, 1869, the meeting proving a very interesting one. "Lord, make it a blessing!" is the pastor's recorded prayer on the occasion, and a blessing the class was made to many without doubt. Frequent references are thenceforth made in his diary to this class, and the satisfaction its President experienced in meeting it. On December 10th, 1872, the following occurs:—"Bible class. Good papers. A surprise. Testimonial. Tried to say something in acknowledgment and floundered egregiously. Very kind of the class indeed. God bless them!" Probably the attempt "to say something" was deemed an eloquent expression of thanks, for the emotion exhibited on such an occasion is usually more significant than any mere verbal utterances, however well chosen.

The following testimony respecting this Bible class is by Mr. E. Mitchell, Baptist Minister, of Guildford, who was a member of it at an early period :—

*"Mr. Atkinson saw a number of young men and women, who had been called under his ministry, growing up around him, and taking their places as teachers in the Sabbath School. He felt that they needed instruction in order that they might be better qualified to teach the young under their care. As they were engaged in daily avocations, an evening Bible class seemed the best mode of attaining the desired end. The plan at first was to invite any one so disposed to write short papers (not to exceed ten minutes) on the various subjects. Sometimes so many papers were written that it was necessary to devote two evenings to one subject. One great end answered by this plan was to ascertain the amount of intelligence possessed by the several members of the class. After a time the papers were reduced to two in number at each meeting the writers being chosen ; eventually one paper only was read, and the rest of the evening devoted to discussing the subject orally, Mr. A., as President, seeking to elicit as far as possible something from as many members as could be induced to speak. If the subject was difficult, Mr. Atkinson would frequently contribute a paper himself. The class continued in full operation every session until the last illness of the President, and has been taken up by Mr. Gray. The class was always open to any member of the church or congregation who might feel disposed to join it, or occasionally to attend its meetings. It has been a*

*means of imparting solid instruction to many. Personally, I derived much benefit from attending it, and many others could testify to the same effect. Very early in its history we saw a marked proof of the divine approval in the case of a young man who came to one of the meetings quite ignorant of the things of God altogether. A word dropped reached his heart, and he has been for many years an humble member of the church and a diligent teacher in the Sunday School.*

" I may just add that this class was a favorite part of his work with Mr. Atkinson. To gather young believers around him, to see them hungering after an increased knowledge of divine things, to open his own accumulated stores and impart instruction in righteousness, was a joy to his soul, whilst he felt thoroughly at home in the teacher's chair."

In 1855 Mr. Atkinson published a little work entitled "The Saviour's Touch," founded on the interesting incident recorded in {Matthew 8: 2, 3}. It is a very searching and at the same time a very consoling production, and just the very book to put into the hand of an awakened sinner, who sees the evil of sin, feels its bitterness, and dreads its penal consequences. The feelings, fears, and anxieties of a new-born soul before it has tasted the sweetness of pardoning mercy, are touchingly described, and the willingness of Jesus to save, His wondrous compassion towards the coming, guilty, penitent, trembling sinner, and the fullness and freeness of His saving grace, are beautifully set forth in its pages. As the little book is out of print, one or two extracts in illustration may here be given:—

*"Sin to the humbled sinner is not a doubtful opinion but a distressing fact—not a harmless notion—not a bugbear of fanatics but an afflicting truth, an undeniable reality—a reality which makes him dread God and abhor himself. He knows he is not right with God, and is alarmed for the consequence. Now he sits and weeps till tears fail him, and anon he arises in listless wretchedness to do he knows not what. At length, with an undivided, strong desire, in all the un-dissembled earnestness of a life and death necessity, half hoping, half believing, he ventures to cast himself on his knees before the throne of the Most High, the throne of his offended God, and 'Behold! He prayeth.'*

*"To every such a one let the glad tidings be proclaimed with trumpet tongue, that the justice of God is satisfied for ever, and the thunders of His vengeance eternally hushed*

*towards him by the death of Christ. Let him know that, therefore, there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared, and that He is 'moved with compassion.' Let him be assured that it is a compassion springing from everlasting love, that it is justified in all its kindnesses by inflexible equity, that in all its highest, deepest, fullest indulgences it is abetted by unalterable truth, and that the testimony of it is <sup>1</sup> worthy of all acceptance, warranting the vastest expectations. To all such Jesus was ever 'moved with compassion.'*

*"Jesus put forth His hand and touched him.' Precious touch! It exemplifies a tenderness, a pity, and a power demonstratively divine. The sympathy of Jesus is salvation. Nothing is too hard for His hand, and but a touch is enough. He weeps not in helpless compassion over the helpless in misery, but with a touch commands salvation. He is able to save to the uttermost the filthiest leper that comes to God by Him—able by a touch. Jesus is the willing and able Saviour, and whosoever calleth upon Him shall be saved. Still He touches, and still He heals. With equal compassion He now welcomes the helpless to His aid and the miserable to His mercy, and with equal power and equal promptitude He speaks the forgiving word and gives the healing touch. "*

What words more sweet, more true, could any one write about our blessed Saviour, who is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them?

A few years later Mr. Atkinson published an interesting account of the religious experiences of a young person in his own congregation, who was accustomed to write down her feelings, her fears and anxieties respecting the salvation of her soul in a kind of diary form. His visits were much blessed to her during an illness, of which she died at an early age. The different stages of her experience are placed before the reader in her own words, with suitable reflections thereon by the writer of the narrative. The name of the young person was Elizabeth Willey. She died January 16th, 1859. Her last words, on being asked if she was happy, were, "Oh! His rod and His staff they do comfort me." It is very precious to read of such a testimony from the lips of a dying saint, whether young or old.

Mr. Atkinson's name appears attached to a tract in the Baptist Tract Society's list, No.

171, entitled "Frank Knight." His larger productions, published at a late period of his life, are three, viz., "The Atonement," in 1875; "Faith," in 1877; and "Appendix to Faith," shortly afterwards. The first has 76 pages, the second 174, the third 55 pages. These works having been so recently published, and described, moreover, in the various reviews of them in the magazines, &c., and also probably been read by most persons by whom these lines are likely to be perused, need not be noticed here, further than to say that they are the ripened fruit of a vigorous and closely reasoning mind, and cannot be carefully gone through without great mental and spiritual profit resulting to the reader. All the notices of these works that appeared in the various periodicals spoke in high terms of the ability of the writer, the originality of his thoughts, and the worth of his productions, although, of course, all his critics were not equally agreed in their estimate of his theological views.

To finish at once reference to his literary productions, a word may here be said as to Mr. Atkinson's contributions to religious periodicals. These were confined principally and almost exclusively to the Gospel Herald and The Voice of Truth, by the editors of which magazines Mr. Atkinson's communications were always welcomed, as valuable in themselves and acceptable to their readers. His first original contribution to the Herald appeared in the number for May, 1845, It is an interesting account of a young person, Susan Knight, the daughter of godly parents, members of the church at Raunds, of which Mr. Atkinson was then pastor. She was seriously impressed with a sense of the evil and danger of sin under the earnest supplications of her father at family prayer one Lords-day morning. The good man was led to plead very earnestly with the Lord on that occasion for the salvation of his children, then kneeling around him at the mercy-seat. His prayer was heard and answered, and Susan, then in her fifteenth year, who had previously been unconcerned to any serious degree about such matters, rose up from her knees with a heart full of feeling and eyes full of tears, the effects of an influence not experienced before. The Spirit of God had spoken to her through her father's cries and entreaties on her behalf, and she felt the commencement of that life which begins with a sense of the guilt and burden of sin, and is perfected in the place where sin never enters, and songs of praise for deliverance from it never cease. After a time she was favored

with the manifestation of divine mercy in her soul, while a hymn was being sung at chapel, and her heart overflowed with love, joy, and gratitude. Subsequently, during a long illness, Mr. Atkinson's visits were much blessed to her, and she peacefully slept in Jesus about two years after hearing the Lord's voice at the family altar.

Mr. Atkinson's last contribution to the Gospel Herald, sent by his own hand, appeared in May, 1881, the month of his decease. The title of this is, "The Great Question," being a consideration of the words in {Matthew 22: 42}, "What think ye of Christ?" It is one of a series of papers termed by their writer "Echoes from the Sanctuary," a considerable number of which have appeared in the Herald. Of these "Echoes" there are over a hundred among his manuscripts. They are well written essays—short, pithy, and compact, and therefore to be read with pleasure and advantage, and would make a useful and instructive volume, very acceptable to thoughtful readers, if published in a collective form.

Amongst his contributions to The Voice of Truth is a "Memoir of Mrs. Esther Goffe," a "mother in Israel," who with her husband, Mr. John Goffe, had a very considerable share in founding the church at Ebenezer, Brighton. She was forty-one years an honored and influential member there. Mr. Atkinson sums up her useful and Christian character thus:—"At Joppa there was a Dorcas and at Philippi a Lydia, to bless the disciples and ministers of Christ in various ways; but at Brighton, it may be said without the slightest exaggeration, we have had the distinguishing qualities of both those noble women in the person of Esther Goffe." Mrs. Goffe died December 18th, 1865, in her seventy- eighth year, suddenly and unexpectedly, of apoplexy. Her husband had died in a similar manner of the same disorder in 1850, having been a highly esteemed deacon at Ebenezer twenty-one years.

Thus much, with what has preceded, may suffice in reference to the productions of Mr. Atkinson's pen, of which he appears to have been constantly making use, either, as indicated above, in epistolary correspondence, or other ways. He was a laborer, no loiterer, in his Master's service, and in the highest and most dignified form of earthly employment, honorably bore the title of working-man, for he served God in the Gospel of His dear Son with diligence, earnestness, and fidelity. Some few further particulars

regarding himself and his pastorate at Brighton may be gathered from his diary before passing on to the last part of our brief memoir—his last illness and death. The life of a stated minister of the Gospel is not very frequently one abounding with remarkable incidents, especially if the duration of his stay in one place extends to the, in the present day, unusually lengthened period of twenty-seven years, as was that of Mr. Atkinson at Ebenezer.

That period was, upon the whole, with him and his flock a time of much spiritual prosperity and happy enjoyment of the thousand sacred sweets that the hill of God's Zion upon earth is found to yield, when the brethren walk together united in love to Christ, His truth, His cause, and to each other for His sake, under the care and teaching of a faithful, affectionate pastor, devoted to his flock and his work. Interruptions to the usual happy current of affairs occasionally occurred, as they will in the most spiritual and best regulated churches; but Ebenezer, as in the days\* of his predecessor, so in Mr. Atkinson's pastorate, was usually a quiet habitation, a field that the Lord blessed, a growing plantation, a fruitful vineyard. So is it now, and so may it long abide under the care of its present, its third pastor.

The whole number of members added during Mr. Atkinson's pastorate was 446, of whom 323 were by baptism and 123 by dismissal, &c., having, of course, been previously baptized in other connections. The last time Mr. Atkinson administered the ordinance was on March 4th, 1880, when he "preached from {Matthew 11: 30}, was very graciously helped, and baptized six persons." It is a little touching to read the entry in his diary respecting the next baptism at Ebenezer, the last during his pastorate, when, owing to the effects of a long illness, he was unable to baptize personally:—"Nov. 4th, 1880. — In the pulpit to-night for the first time since the last Lord's-day in June. Afraid to give loose to the mind. Preached moderately from {Galatians 3: 27}. Mr. Turner baptized three persons. Wished I could have done it myself." Generally, when any one proposed for membership, some feeling note of thanksgiving is added to the record of the circumstance in his diary; but when one of his own family propose, as we have seen before, then the united feelings of the father and pastor cause his heart to overflow with grateful love to his God, and earnest prayer gushes forth for the fullness of the blessing.

Thus, on December 21st, 1866:—"In the evening my dear child Rebekah proposed to join the church. O my God, I would that I could more profoundly feel Thy precious mercies. Let not a hoof be left behind—my children, myself, their mother—all, all, for Christ's sake! " And again, on April 18th, 1877:—"Martha (his son Ebenezer's wife) called to propose union to the church. Blessed be the Lord! My boys, Lord, my boys! " People talk of "high doctrines" making men frigid and cold, and drying up their natural affection; why here is a brother who was as high in doctrine as the beloved Paul himself, and yet full of feeling and warm human affection. The great Apostle was as full of all human sympathy and earnest desire for the salvation of his kind, as he was lofty in his conceptions of the divine plan of mercy and the sovereignty of divine grace. Why do not the ministers of Christ's Gospel more generally learn of the great preacher to the Gentiles in both directions?

The annual Church Members' Tea Meeting was an occasion of much pleasant and profitable intercourse, which Mr. Atkinson and his flock greatly enjoyed. They appear to have been to him delightful seasons, being spoken of in his diary in such terms as the following: — "Nice meeting.—A very happy meeting. Bless the Lord, O my soul!—Good gathering, cheerful meeting. — A very happy meeting.—A cheerful gathering.—Members' meeting; 164 present. Blessed be God! Let me end my days with my flock in usefulness, honor, and peace. —A. really good meeting. Personally, I never felt, I think, equal pleasure in any similar meeting. "Not unto us, not unto us.' Lord, bless, Lord bless, for Jesus' sake." Happy Ebenezer! May many such annual "love feasts" be equally enjoyed there, as profitable and refreshing communing of saints without any "spots" in them to poison the cup of spiritual pleasure or spoil the Christian fellowship?

The Jubilee of the formation of the church gave occasion to a meeting of the members on Saturday evening, March 21st, 1874, which was a "large and encouraging one." A present from a few of the friends was given to Mr. Atkinson as a memento of the event. On Tuesday, August 10th, 1875, after "an excellent inaugural meeting" on the previous evening, Jubilee services were held in the chapel to commemorate its opening in 1825. On this occasion Mr. William Crowther and Mr. John Hazelton preached; a numerously attended tea meeting was held; Mr. Atkinson gave an account of the history

of the church from its commencement; and suitable addresses were delivered by Messrs. Crowther, Box, Bardens, and Styles. On this occasion Mr. Atkinson was presented by the church and congregation with a purse containing nearly £50, as a token of their esteem and regard for having served them in the ministry with "unfailing affection and fidelity for upwards of twenty years." Previous to this Jubilee service the chapel had been closed for extensive alterations for five weeks, during which time Mr. Atkinson preached on Lord's-days at the Pavilion, returning to Ebenezer on Lord's-day, Aug. 8th, preaching in the morning from {Psalm 132: 5}, "Until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob;" evening, {Psalm 122: 1}, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence my help cometh."

Several brethren entered the Christian ministry from Ebenezer during Mr. Atkinson's pastorate, and became settled over churches, viz.:—Mr. Joseph Nunn, at Hailsham; Mr. G. Virgo, at Wivelsfield; Mr. E. Mitchell, at Guildford; Mr. G. Field, at Cuckfield; Mr. Boxell, at Edward Street, Brighton; and Mr. W. Turner, at Uckfield. Mr. Mark Adams, for some time pastor at Hoxne, Suffolk, was for a short time a member at Ebenezer under Mr. Atkinson, being received from another church in 1859, and dismissed in 1861 to Gaddesden Row, in Herts. Besides these, several brethren should be mentioned, labourers in the Gospel as itinerant preachers in a number of little country places within a few miles of Brighton, that depend upon such instrumentality for the ministration of the Word of truth. These are Messrs. Stenning, Light, Webb, J. Webb, and Botting, all of whom are worthily spoken of by the brother who furnished this information for these pages. Three of the brethren mentioned above—viz., Stenning,\* Field, and Light—

*\* Concerning this good brother informant writes:—"He was a man of no education, and of no great intellectual capacity, but possessed a huge heart brimful of love to the Lord Jesus Christ and to poor sinners. He was at one time my teacher in the Sabbath School, and while I write memory recalls his animated face and streaming eyes as he sat in the class and talked to us boys of the love of Jesus. Never has the impression of the reality of the religion of Jesus Christ, as seen in that teacher, been effaced from my soul. He was, as a supply, most acceptable. He may be said to have died in his work, for after preaching one evening he hurried to the train, took cold, and died in a few days. His*

*funeral was a time to be remembered. Mr. Atkinson had an intense affection for him, and the service, conducted by him, was a most impressive one. A brother and sister of the deceased, both of them living in utter neglect of the means, were then awakened, and became members of the church at Ebenezer."*

preceded their pastor to the world of light and glory. The brethren Field and Stenning died as martyrs to their work, both having taken cold returning home from preaching, which in each case proved fatal in a few days. It may thus be said of the church at Ebenezer, as of that at Thessalonica, "the Word of the Lord sounded out from them." So may it be from all our churches that the Gospel of the grace of our God may be proclaimed to sinner and saint, and the Name of our Lord and Saviour be glorified.

A word should be said about the special religious activities of the sisters at Ebenezer, without saying which this account of Mr. Atkinson's pastorate at Brighton would lack one feature of interest. The sisterhood at Ebenezer, always zealous in doing good, have latterly united their energies and enlarged their efforts in the department of "good works and alms deeds," in which one of old was distinguished, whom the Lord Jesus was graciously pleased to send back from heaven to earth that she might for a while longer minister to His poor saints below in the form of Christian work which now everywhere bears her name. The Dorcas and Maternal Society, "the last born beneficent institution of Ebenezer," held its first working meeting January 9th, 1877, which the pastor opened and closed with prayer. The institution thrived so greatly that, in the third year of its existence, it became necessary to erect a separate room for its convenience, which was dedicated to its use by a short service held in it, in which the pastor, deacons, and committee took part, together with their liberal-hearted friend, Mr. W. L. Payne, who had generously defrayed the cost of the erection. The Society is in active operation, and has been the means of doing a large amount of good in its own special sphere of operation. Thus the sisters at Ebenezer, as "becometh women professing godliness, adorn themselves with good works," which words, it may be hoped and believed, apply to the sisterhood in all our churches.

This "Ebenezer Chapel Maternal and Dorcas Society," it should be stated, grew out of "a small private maternal undertaking" that previously existed, which the new society

adopted, and perpetuates in the present greatly extended and enlarged form. There has also existed at Ebenezer from the year 1836 "The Brighton Union Benevolent Society, for visiting and relieving the sick poor of all denominations, which is attended to by the brotherhood of the church.

## PART V.

### LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

*"What must it be to dwell above,  
At God's right hand, where Jesus reigns ;  
Since the sweet earnest of His love  
O'erwhelms us on these earthly plains !  
No heart can think, no tongue explain  
What bliss it is with Christ to reign.*

*"When sin no more obstructs our sight,  
When sorrow pains our heart no more,  
How shall we view the Prince of Light,  
And all His works of grace explore!  
What heights and depths of love divine  
Will there through endless ages shine!*

*"This is the heaven I long to know;  
For this with patience I would wait,  
Till, weaned from earth and all below,  
I mount to my celestial seat,  
And wave my palm and wear my crown,  
And with the elders cast them down."*

"THE time drew nigh that Israel must die." Blessed are they who, at that solemn period, have Israel's God as their salvation, waited for, hopefully trusted in, and known and realized by precious faith in the Person and work of God's dear Son. He is the salvation of Jehovah, whom Jacob saw with prophetic eye as the Shiloh of His people, with whom he had wrestled at Peniel as a prince, and had power with God and prevailed; and He, the Angel of the Covenant, who redeems His people from all evil, temporal and eternal. To such as put their trust in Him, death is not merely the accomplishment of a divine appointment, that all men must die, but it is also the voice of their heavenly Father calling them to mansions in His house above—the voice of their Elder Brother, lovingly bidding them welcome to His home on high, to behold His glory, and in their degree to share it with Him; in Paul's expressive words, to "be for ever with the Lord."

As, therefore, it is appointed unto all men once to die, and as there is a set moment in the mind of God when He will give glory to each recipient of His grace, that period arrived according to covenant arrangement in regard to our brother Israel Atkinson before he arrived at the not very advanced age of sixty-four years. Originally of a robust frame and sound constitution, a longer term of life might have been anticipated for him. But, owing probably to the effects of privations undergone in early days, and the closeness of application with which, in mature life, he pursued his studies, he, for a number of years, suffered greatly from dyspepsia, and the evil train of concomitant ailments that usually arise there from, which, no doubt, had the ultimate effect of shortening his days. These, however, though at times very distressing, but seldom prevented him attending to his ministerial duties, On Lord's-day, May 26th, 1861, we find him recording, "Unable to preach through hoarseness—the first occasion of the kind during the period of my ministry, now over 18 years/" He was better, however, the next day, and "attended church meeting, when three persons bore delightful testimony/ preached on the following Thursday evening, and was "kindly helped contrary to my expectation. How good! Restore me to my health, to work, to usefulness." Evidently ill health of a serious nature was then a new experience with him, and it was one which at that time speedily passed away. But a year or two later references to sundry ailments become increasingly frequent in his diary, and it is evident that he was the subject of much bodily suffering

from the cause above specified during the last fifteen years of his life. Persons whose digestive organization is so perfect that they are not unpleasantly reminded once a year of the fact that the stomach forms a most important component in the human economy, cannot form the slightest idea of the sufferings of the poor confirmed dyspeptic under the crop of ills which spring from that prolific root of ailments, indigestion. This was Mr. Atkinson's thorn in the flesh for years, which, like Paul of old with regard to his, whatever that might have been, needed grace in constant exercise to enable him patiently to endure; which grace he, also like Paul, found frequent occasion to entreat the Lord to bestow. Hence seasons of suffering are noted in his diary accompanied with ejaculations such as these: — "Lord, help!—Lord, save me from all my weaknesses!" and others equally indicative of bodily suffering and fear of becoming impatient under them. Seven years before his decease he speaks of his ailment thus:—"Felt my old malady very sorely. Bears down my spirits and neutralizes every effort. Lord, help! " But although, through succeeding years, he has occasion again and again to refer to his " old enemy at the stomach," it was seldom his ailments prevented him preaching; it is evident, however, from his diary they were frequently the occasion of much difficulty in the exercise. No doubt this and other trials deepened the experimental tone of his ministry, for, according to the testimony of Scripture, it is by such means that the Lord qualifies His own sent servants the better to comfort the souls of His people. {2 Corinthians 1: 4, 5, 6}.

It was not until November, 1878, that Mr. Atkinson was laid aside from his loved employ for any length of time. In the early part of that month he was taken ill, and continued so for some weeks, being unable to preach for ten successive Sabbaths. During this unwonted absence from his flock, in his solicitude for their spiritual welfare and anxious concern for the prosperity of the cause of God at Ebenezer, he wrote the following affectionate and instructive pastoral letters to his beloved charge:—

"December 8th, 1878.

"To the Members of the Church and Congregation 'worshipping in Ebenezer Chapel.

"My beloved Christian Friends,

"The continuance of my enforced absence from you makes me desirous of addressing a word to you through the means of my esteemed brother Jull.\* \* Who

supplied the pulpit at Ebenezer on Lord's-day, Dec. 8th, 1878.

Rare things have happened to us, and new things, albeit no strange thing. To be absent from my post of labor during a ministry now extending over a period of thirty-six years has been a very rare thing ; but I have been detained from occupying my place among you, the very home of my heart in this world, now during five successive weeks. The omission of the Supper of the Lord at the usual time has been unknown to us during my pastorate until now. Dispensations such as these convey to us divine messages. The good Lord give us skill to understand and humility to receive them.

"Bear in mind that a time of trial is ever an opportunity to the wily tempter which he never fails to use. It happened, you will remember, that when the great Shepherd was smitten the sheep were all scattered. A like thing not un-frequently happens when his under shepherds are broken down by affliction. Be it yours to value the ministry more than the ministrations of any particular minister. Ministers come and go; they are here to-day and to-morrow they are gone; but the ministry, the Word of the Lord, this endureth for ever. Be it yours, too, to value the dear old home under the changes which have for the time come upon it, where the Word of life has been held forth among you, and you have compared the hour to a time of feasting. I do not ask you for your prayerful sympathy, for I am sure that I have it; but I do ask you for your loving regard to dear Ebenezer, that I may not sorrow in my affliction that my labor has been in vain.

"My affliction came on me suddenly; it has been sharp, and it is not short. By means of its sharpness, however, a new experience in spiritual things has been gained, and some old spiritual knowledge has been deepened on the mind. It is to me a wholly new experience to exist for days together entirely without any spiritual exercise; but the distractions of pain and the distresses of weariness in this affliction have produced this state of things. It is also with me an old spiritual knowledge that the godly soul is, of itself, sufficient for no spiritual exercise ; but in however many ways this knowledge may aforesaid have been proved in the mind, it has never before had the practical proof which it has received through this affliction. Another little piece of old spiritual knowledge with me is, salvation being wholly of the Lord, the security of the saved is inviolable, whatever may be their dangers ; but this affliction has served to exhibit this knowledge

from a standpoint whence I had never before seen its wonderful excellency. Oh ! at such a time as that through which my soul has passed, had there been anything required of me, any spiritual exercise demanded in order to secure my salvation, my damnation would, by that condition, have become a very absolute and awful certainty ! But, 'Salvation belongeth unto the Lord.' This great truth, when well understood, leaves nothing to pay, nothing to do, and nothing to believe in order to secure the 'sure mercies' of unconditional promises to the heirs of promise.

"Yet, Oh! how sweet it is to get back again into a condition in which the precious delights of devotional exercises can be enjoyed ! —where one can pray and give thanks —can call upon the name of the Lord and talk with God; can pour out his soul to his Father in heaven, and listen to hear what God the Lord will speak in reply.

"O my beloved friends, use your devotional privileges, both private and public, while you have them. Omit no opportunity of gathering together at the family altar Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together in the sanctuary, regarded as 'the house of prayer.' Aim to have to do with God in all your worship. Serve Him that you may seek Him. Seek Him that you may find Him, and find in Him all you want and all that your capacious souls can wish.

"I am looking now, in the course of time, to enter with you again into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise, that we may magnify the Lord together. This, however, is a matter, with all its belongings, which is committed, with all others, into His hands whom I have believed.

" 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.' So prays your willing servant, for Jesus' sake,

"ISRAEL ATKINSON."

"December 29th, 1878.

*"To my beloved Christian friends, the Members of the Church and Congregation meeting for Worship in Ebenezer,*

*"My absence from you has been to me a long and painful one, and one of the afflictive elements of my long illness. But long, painful, and wearisome as my affliction has been, it has, through the rich mercy of our Lord, been attended and lightened by*

*many alleviating circumstances, one of which is a consciousness that I have had the living and prayerful sympathy and the loving, practical concern of my beloved friends. May it be evident that rich benefits, appropriate to each of us, shall have arisen out of the affliction and its disturbing consequences, under the overruling providence of our God, and that our profiting may appear to ourselves, to each other, and to all.*

*“But, my dear friends, I am now fondly looking to return into your midst, and the more fondly in proportion as my strength is renewed. While I gladly feel that the space between me and my place in the sanctuary is daily lessening, I can but anticipate what my gladness will be when it shall be again ‘said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.’ May we not be disappointed of our hope of this event! May this hoped for event when come not prove a disappointment to you or to me! May the Father of mercies grant me my prayer and my expectation respecting my looked for return—that is, that He shall fill the bestowment of this favor so full with His enriching blessing, that a sacred constraint may be on us all, with our whole soul to magnify Him for the riches of His grace ! Brethren, pray for this mercy.*

*“I would say that, while I have been solicitous that the pulpit labors of my brethren who have occupied for me may be made fruitful of every spiritual good, and the prayer meetings seasons of holy intercourse and indulgent freedom with God, I have been rejoicing that your practical interest in the benevolent institutions which have sprung into existence among us has not been lacking. Permit me the boldness to say to you, Let no good work be slackened on account of my absence. I am thinking of our Annual Meeting on the first Tuesday of the New Year. I must of necessity be absent otherwise than in spirit. How strange this will be to me!—and, as I cannot but suppose, to you also. But gather together, my dear friends, and in the greater numbers on account of my absence. Rally round the dear brethren on whom falls the burden of conducting the affairs of that noble institution, our Sunday School, and their fellow-laborers in the self-denying but beneficent work which is there carried on. Encourage them. They have need of this expression of your love. They have entitled themselves to such a testimony of your esteem. Such a recognition of them by you will hearten them to spend and be spent in what, from one point of view, may be regarded as the cause of humanity, and, from*

*another, the cause of God. When on that occasion you shall be brought together, may you experience every hallowed feeling which can arise from the Divine Presence in your midst, and every sacred sentiment which can spring from and connect itself with brethren dwelling and working together in unity.*

*“Permit me to add, my beloved friends, that the voice of Inspiration admonishes us that ‘the time is short,’ and that the tenure of our own lives is so uncertain that we may not boast of to-morrow. What, in such a condition, should be the object of desire and the pursuit of Christians? What but to ‘occupy’ while we are here, and to be ready against the time of our departure? I would that the loud admonition I have had of my own mortality should have the effect of increasing my sense of the value of what time and opportunity may await me in my fast shortening future, and that I may be awakened and directed to occupy in all things, and only occupy, till the Master comes. Let the noble and holy ambition be ours, my dear friends, to be vessels sanctified and meet for the Master’s use; daily to present ourselves for acceptance in His service, and to be accepted and consecrated and employed by Him for the advancement of His beneficent and holy purposes in the hearts and lives and destinies of men; and to have His gracious recognition, His ‘well done,’ at His coming. So, also, let it be ours to have the high thoughted spiritual purpose to be ‘ready’ when ‘the time of our departure’ shall come. Brethren, our citizenship is of a city whose Builder and Maker is God, and our heritage is in the ‘better country.’ Our sanctification assures us that God has for us a holy destination, and our son ship that he has prepared for us a portion becoming the dignity of the wonderful relation to which he has elevated us. By our departure, therefore, we have nothing to lose and everything to gain—nothing to dread and everything to expect. The end of our election, our redemption, and our calling is a consideration we may well cherish for its mighty and sweet influence to wean from things which are carnal and worldly while we stay here, and to promote in us at the time of our departure a readiness to go hence, to be holy and without blame before Him in love.*

*“May the Holy Ghost, by every circumstance which occurs to us, impress on our minds the incomparable importance and excellency of things spiritual and heavenly over things which are natural and earthly—of” the things which are not seen over the things*

*which are seen. May we know and feel that we are the children of God, and have our hearts filled with such sentiments as are becoming to the sons and daughters of the holy, just, and good Lord Almighty. May we ever be found walking in those ways and doing those works which are creditable to persons so wonderfully distinguished. May we bear our sorrows and our sufferings with the submission and patience of those who steadfastly believe in the all comprehensive and unremitting providence of God their Father. And may we live and die grasping firmly every elevated expectation that may be warrant- ably entertained by those who are designated 'heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.'*

*"I am, my beloved friends, however unworthily I sustain the character, your willing servant for Jesus' sake,*

*"ISRAEL ATKINSON."*

By the blessing of God on the means, he was sufficiently recovered to attend worship in the chapel on Lord's-day, January 5th, 1879; on the 12th, he "brake bread" in the afternoon, and on the next Sabbath occupied the pulpit, and preached from the words, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes" {Psalm 119: 71}, noting the event in his diary thus:—" Know not how to speak or write about the mercy of being enabled to enter once more on my work. Make it a mercy, dear Lord." On the 30th of the same month he resumed the Thursday evening services, and "preached with a nice feeling and a sweet taste of Word from Hab. iii. 19, 'The Lord God is my strength/ " He was enabled to continue his labors from that time for the space of nearly eighteen months, although with " much debility " towards the close of that period. On Lord's-day, June 27th, 1880, he preached in a state of very great weakness, being scarcely able to stand. The illness had commenced, or rather was developed, which was the messenger from his heavenly Father, sent to take down the tabernacle. After this he occupied the pulpit on the Lord's-day but one Sabbath more, viz., Nov. 14th, 1880, when he preached from {Jonah 2: 9}, "Salvation is of the Lord," being the text he took at his first attempt to preach the Gospel; and in the evening from {Luke 13: 24}, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," &c., remarking in his diary concerning the exercises of the day, "Favored. Bless, Lord. Strength unequal, but helped through." After this he gave brief

addresses on Thursday evenings only, as strength permitted, to the number of about ten; also on the Christmas-day, his text on that occasion being the very appropriate and precious words in {Matthew 1: 21}. On Lord's-day, April 3rd, 1881, he brake bread with his flock for the last time. It was a solemn season. He felt, he said, that he was a tree that his heavenly Father had marked to come down, alluding to the custom of trees being marked for felling, adding an expression of confidence as to his future. On Thursday, April 7th, he "spoke a little from {Hebrews 10: 35}," but was "very feeble" the next day. This appears to have been Mr. Atkinson's last time of addressing his people from a text. The following Friday week, April 15th, being Good Friday, and the anniversary of his pastorate at Ebenezer, he presided at the meeting held in the chapel on that occasion. The following account of the proceedings, sent by Mr. Gray, then on a six months' probation at Ebenezer,\* appeared in the Gospel Herald, the next month:—

*\* Mr. S. Gray had been supplying the enfeebled pastor's lack of service at Ebenezer for about twenty Sabbaths with increasing acceptance, when, on March 28th, there being an end of all hope But this joy had diminished, and in its place he was favored that Mr. Atkinson would be able again to fulfill his ministerial duties, the church, with the full concurrence of their pastor, gave Mr. Gray a six months' invitation to supply the pulpit with a view to the pastorate. This he accepted, and having fulfilled the engagement, was invited to the pastorate in the following August, the congregation having increased and the church held together in the enjoyment of peace. 181 members voted in the affirmative, and only six in the negative, on the question of the invitation, which, being so unanimous and also cordial, was accepted by Mr. Gray. Services in connection with his settlement were held on Tuesday, December 6th, 1881; and thus this Christian church, which during fifty-seven years has only had two pastors, enjoying much spiritual prosperity under both, is now peacefully and happily settled down under its third pastor, to whom may an equally lengthened and prosperous union with the church at Ebenezer be graciously accorded.*

"The twenty-seventh anniversary of Mr. I. Atkinson's pastorate at Richmond-street was held on Good Friday, April 15th. About 200 friends took tea in the schoolroom;

where a public meeting was held after tea, at which about 400 were present. The pastor presided. In his opening address he remarked that in all probability that would be the last time he should commemorate the assumption of office at Ebenezer. During his pastorate he had experienced many vicissitudes. But he had not to seek a new religion, as new sets of circumstances presented themselves. Doubtless, there had been imperfections in his service; but these had been forgiven by a kind people. He should make no particular confessions, however; for he had lived long enough to know that when men spoke in depreciating terms of themselves, they were often in a subtle manner indulging in self-praise. In concluding his course he had to say—and said it without vain-glory—that he did not confess to idleness, to covetousness, to unfaithfulness, or to unfruitfulness.

“During the evening he stated that at the commencement of his illness his mind was in an elevated state. Not un-frequently he could sing—

*“Run up, with joy, the shining way.”*

But this joy had diminished, and in its place he was favored with a calm, quiet, reposeful spirit, nicely reflected in the sweet lines ----

*‘Give me a calm, a thankful heart,  
From every murmur free.’*

As to this world, he had no trouble; and as to the next world, the sacred principles which had been the stay of his soul in life would be the stay of his soul when death was at hand. Addresses were delivered by the diaconal brethren Webb, Elliott, and Cozens, who all expressed their sympathy with their pastor, their sense of the sadness of the occasion, and yet were gratified the sadness was not altogether unrelieved.

“ The meeting was subsequently addressed by Messrs. Payne and Reed, who gave expression to the kindly feeling they entertained towards Mr. Atkinson, and expressed hopes that the prosperity that had waited on the church in the past would, through the divine blessing, continue to be enjoyed.

“ A short address, by Mr. S. Gray, a hymn, and prayer offered by the chairman

concluded the exercises."

The end was now drawing very near. The excitement of the meeting was too much for the enfeebled pastor, and he returned to his home to leave it no more, except for his heavenly home, which he entered within three weeks afterwards. Miss Atkinson, in giving an account of this last period of her father's life, and of its closing hours, writes thus:—

"My dear father got through the trying scene on Good Friday better than I feared, and was able to walk home. Early on the Saturday morning, however, he called me to him, saying that he was very unwell. He had succeeded in dressing himself, and I hastened to get him some medicine, which he took; but in standing for a minute was seized with a severe pain, and I thought he would have fallen. I got him to the bed, and he remained there all day.

The next day an attack of shivering came on. On the Monday he thought he felt better, and would get up and come down stairs, but was very soon obliged to return to bed; and this was the last time he came out of his room. From this time his appetite failed, and the next Saturday I saw such a great change in him—it seemed to me that death was written on his countenance—that, consulting with my brother, we telegraphed for my sister. After we had done so, on my returning to my father's room he said, <sup>44</sup> I should so like to see Effie once more/ calling my sister by her name, and I told him what we had done. She had just time to catch the last train, and reached Brighton late that night. On the following morning, on her entering the room, he was so pleased to see her, and, stroking her hair, said to us, ' Oh! girls, I should like to make a colony now and start,' meaning that, now we had met, he should like us all to depart to the better land together.

"During the week he was frequently attacked with violent pain, and on one occasion, while undergoing a severe paroxysm, he said, ' Oh what an awful thing sin must be to cause such pain ! ' On the Lord's-day, May 1st, I noticed for the first time a strange look about him, which indicated that the disease was affecting the brain. In the evening a friend, one of the executors, called and saw him a few moments. Feeling that the time was drawing very near, he asked my dear father who he would like to bury him. He thought a moment or two, and then said, <sup>41</sup> think Edward must bury me; yes, Edward

must bury me' meaning Mr. Mitchell, of Guildford, Up to this time we were quite unaware of any wish he might have on that subject. I should also say that the whole of the time he kept his bed, he suffered such entire prostration, that he begged of me not to allow the friends who called to come into the room to speak to him, as he felt too ill to see any one. On the Monday, May 2nd, he was very ill and the mind wandering, especially during the night, and he had great difficulty in swallowing anything, his throat being very bad. All through the next day his mind was wandering, although he knew us all; and when my brother came in the evening, and changed his position for him, he said, ' Bless you, my precious boy.' Early the next morning, the day of his death, he complained of pain in one of his toes, which continued about six hours. Afterwards, about nine o'clock, the pain came on again in the shoulder and chest, and it was quite distressing to be with him and feel that we could do nothing to alleviate his sufferings. About four o'clock the pain left him, and he told us he was 'quite happy, no pain, nothing troubling him; oh no, quite happy,' repeating the words, 'quite happy,' with emphasis. He called me by name twice after the pain left him, and said to us, 'Kiss me, make haste.' About a quarter of an hour before he died, after several attempts, he succeeded in repeating that verse—

*'Weary of earth, myself, and sin,  
Dear Jesus, set me free;  
And to Thy glory take me in,  
For there I long to be.'*

It seemed as if his whole soul went out in these lines, which, with other lines of a kindred character, he was constantly repeating throughout his illness, but I think I shall never forget his repeating these the last time. He still dwelt on that verse until within five minutes of his death. He departed this life without a sigh or single movement of a finger—so quietly, indeed, that we could scarcely tell the moment of his departure.

"Throughout his illness my dear father was quite aware that it would terminate fatally, and, with death before him, was kept the whole time peacefully resting in Jesus, waiting for the time to come when he should depart and be with Him."

"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." So died our brother Israel Atkinson at 6 a.m. on Wednesday, May 4th, 1881, wanting about two months of completing the

sixty-fourth year of his age, and a few days after completing the twenty-seventh of his pastorate at Brighton. It has been remarked as a noticeable coincidence that it was in May, 1837, our dear brother first sat down at the Lord's table; in May, 1854, he was ordained pastor of the church at Brighton; and in May, 1881, he was called up higher to join the host triumphant above.

The funeral took place on the Monday following his decease, and perhaps we cannot do better than copy the account of that solemn and impressive scene as given in the Gospel Herald, to which magazine these pages have been so repeatedly indebted :—

“The interment of the mortal remains of our dear brother took place on Monday, May the 9th, at the Extra-mural Cemetery, Brighton, in the presence of a very large number of persons—the local paper says nearly 4,000. The ‘chief mourners’ comprised the members of the family of the departed, the deacons of the church and their wives, and three other friends, who followed the hearse in four coaches. Many members of the church followed in other conveyances. Many hundreds of persons not connected with the church or congregation at Ebenezer attended to pay a last tribute of respect to the departed man of God. The children of the Sabbath School were drawn up in line on either side of the path between the cemetery gates and the chapel in the ground. The service in the chapel was conducted by Mr. E. Mitchell, of Guildford, assisted by Mr. S. Gray, who officiated for Mr. Atkinson during the greater part of his illness. The hymn, ‘Why do we mourn departing friends?’ was sung in the chapel, and ‘We speak of the realms of the blest’ by the dear children, as the procession passed between them from the chapel to the grave.

“Mr. Mitchell delivered an address at the grave, speaking in very high terms of the deceased man of God, who had been his beloved pastor in the Lord. The speaker's manner was very impressive and touching, his own feelings at one part of the address being such as to quite overcome him. At the close of the address the assembled company sang in faith of Him who is the Life and Resurrection of His people, the hymn of which the first verse reads thus:—

*'Asleep in Jesus, blessed sleep !  
From which none ever wakes to weep;  
A calm and undisturbed repose,  
Unbroken by the last of foes.'*

*(See Stevens\* Selection, Hymn 858.)*

"Mr. Gray concluded the service by pronouncing the benediction.

"The inscription on the coffin was : ' Israel Atkinson, fell on sleep May 4th, 1881, in his sixty-fourth year.' Notwithstanding the very large number of persons present, everything was conducted in the most orderly and becoming manner, every one being befittingly impressed with the solemnity and specialty of the occasion. Amongst the assembled friends were the ministerial brethren Horton, Nunn, Lawson, Littleton, Glaskin, Virgo, Boxell, the Messrs. Sharp, &c. After the funeral, the friends assembled at their prayer meeting, it being the usual evening for that service at Ebenezer. On the present occasion the engagement would, of course, be an affecting and heart-moving one. The deacons severally offered prayer, and Mr. Gray gave a suitable address, basing his remarks on appropriate verses in {John 14}. The hymns sung were—'Oh happy they who safely housed,' 'The God of love will sure indulge,' 'Lord, we feel no anxious care, 'Jesus, while our hearts are bleeding? Hymns better adapted to the occasion, as expressing the mingled feelings and sentiments of the bereaved church just returned from the grave of a deeply loved and revered pastor could not have been selected, as sorrowing for their own loss, rejoicing at the thought of his gain, and hoping one day to unite with the happy throng the dear man of God had so recently joined."

Sermons in reference to the departure of the now glorified servant of the Lord were delivered at Ebenezer on the Lord's-day following the day of the funeral. Mr. S. Gray preached in the morning, from {Jeremiah 12: 5}, a discourse on the subject of death in general, but making special and loving reference to the departed, and containing words of kind sympathy addressed to his bereaved church and family. Mr. Edward Mitchell, of Guildford, preached in the evening from {2 Timothy 4: 7, 8}, " I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course," &c. This being, by appointment, the funeral sermon, and Mr. Mitchell having been brought up under the ministry of Mr. Atkinson, much of the

discourse consisted of references to the deceased of a personal and historical character, delivered with much feeling and warmth of affection. The sermons were preached to crowded, attentive congregations, nearly all of whom were attired in the habiliments usually worn by mourners. The pulpit was also draped with black. Both the sermons were published.

The following portraiture of Mr. Atkinson, as a man of God and a minister of Christ, was drawn up by Mr. Mitchell at the special request of the compiler of these pages:—

Jehovah, by the mouth of His servant Isaiah, predicts and promises concerning His spiritual Israel that "All that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." The saying of the woman of Shunem, at whose house Elisha was wont to eat bread as he passed to and fro, affords an illustration of this: " I perceive that this is a holy man of God, which passeth by us continually." Grace is self-evidencing. As Christ could not be hid in the house, so He cannot be hid when He is formed in a sinner's heart. The gracious distinction indicated by the prophet was very manifest in him whose character, as a Christian and minister of the Gospel, I here attempt to sketch. None who knew him could doubt his being a subject of divine grace, nor question as to the family to which he belonged. He was manifestly a "man of God."

One of the most strongly marked features of his character was his integrity. He was emphatically a man of principle. Evasion and equivocation his soul abhorred. The truth of God was ever dearer to him than private friendship or earthly advantage, and anything like swerving from the straight path had his sternest reprobation. He possessed a strong will and great tenacity of purpose. These enabled him to overcome difficulties and disadvantages to which weaker men would have succumbed. His judgment was sound. Naturally of a penetrating mind, a clear thinker, and a close observer, he was well fitted to give advice in both temporal and spiritual difficulties. He was of a very studious disposition, and somewhat reserved in manner, but his affections were strong and constant. His outer life was honorable and unblemished, and his inner life was marked by much communion with his Divine Master, whom he loved with all the powers of his soul. He was no gossip, but in congenial society he would unbend and freely communicate the stores he had accumulated in his mind. Divine truth was the element in

which he delighted. The writer has some sweet remembrances of sacred seasons he was favored thus to spend with him, when heaven has appeared so near that he could almost see its pearly gates, and catch the sound of the songs of its blessed inhabitants, whilst his own heart has responded, " Worthy the Lamb! "

In his ministry he gave clear evidence that he was no hireling, but a true servant of Jesus Christ, " taking the oversight " of the flock, " not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being a lord over God's heritage, but being an ensample to the flock." His people were borne upon his heart, and the glory of God in their welfare was the great aim of his life. The apostolic exhortations were the models on which he sought to form himself: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." "Do the work of an evangelist; give full proof of thy ministry." He was a laborious student of the Word. "His delight was in the law of the Lord," and "he rejoiced in the Word, as one that found great spoil." He believed the true interests of the people were better promoted by the pastor in his study than by his gadding about at their houses; hence he seldom visited, except in cases of sickness. The mind of the Spirit in His Word was an object of great solicitude with him; and whilst he made free use of what other men of God had written, he followed no man servilely, but labored by prayer and close study to form an independent judgment of the meaning of Scripture. He had a deep sense of the solemnity and importance of the ministry of the Word, and judged all folly and lightness to be unseemly in the pulpit; yet he was by no means an inanimate preacher, but full of life and energy, his expressive countenance being often fairly lighted up with the joy that he realized in his Master's service, whilst at other times the meltin'g's of his heart were manifested by the moisture in his eyes. His doctrinal views were such as would be denominated hyper-Calvinistic. The deep things of God were precious to his soul, and often dilated upon, especially the covenant responsibilities of the Lord Jesus Christ. Other parts of truth, however, were not excluded; "all the counsel of God" was declared. Believers were reminded of their obligations, seeking souls were directed, and sinners warned of their dangerous condition in a loving and faithful manner. The many and

various trials through which he had passed had necessitated his putting his God often to the test, and imparted a rich experimental savour to his preaching, very grateful to tried believers. Regarding the Gospel as God's remedy for the wants and woes of His people here on earth, he constantly endeavored to present it in such forms as were suitable to meet the conditions of home going pilgrims, and so "to comfort them with the comfort wherewith he himself was comforted of God." He was mindful of the inspired description of the true pastor, that "he should feed the flock with knowledge and understanding." He labored to instruct his people, to the intent that they " might be rooted and built up " in the truth. His ministry was characterized by considerable originality of thought, comprehensiveness of grasp, and variety of treatment, and was accompanied with power to the hearts of many.

The many modern inventions to supplement the Gospel found no favor with him. So called "Sacred Concerts" and "Services of Song" met with neither sympathy nor encouragement at his hands. This did not arise from inability to appreciate the charms of music, of which he was exceedingly fond, but from conviction that all such religious entertainments tended to deaden spirituality, and that they would prove hindrances instead of helps to the cause of Christ. He was wont to say "that he pitied the man who could not find enough to satisfy him in the Gospel, without seeking to eke out the pleasures of religion by worldly amusements."

He was not what would be termed "a Sunday School man." He used to say that "he found a difficulty in getting down to the capacity of the children," yet he sympathized with and rendered efficient help to the school. He formed a Bible class for the teachers, which proved a most useful institution. The instruction imparted to the teachers rendered them better qualified to teach the children, whilst it tended to keep the teaching of the school in harmony with the teaching from the pulpit. This was quite a "labor of love." Nothing was more congenial to him than to gather around him those that were thirsting for an increased knowledge of divine truths. No pains were spared to make the meetings profitable, and many can testify to the advantages derived.

The various charitable institutions in connection with the church had his warm sympathy and support. He regarded them as the genuine exhibition of a true Christian

spirit, calculated to glorify God and to benefit both donors and recipients.

To a small body who enjoyed personal friendship with him his memory will always be precious. A much larger circle "esteemed him highly in love for his work's sake." "The memory of the just is blessed." "They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

The compilation of these few biographical pages is now brought to a close. May the glory of God and the profit of the spiritual reader be promoted by what is written! Mr. Atkinson was certainly a somewhat remarkable instance of what God can do in calling His servants from a humble position in life and fitting them for usefulness in His Church, as able ministers of the new covenant and successful preachers of the Gospel of His grace, without the intervention of human aid, rendered in the form of collegiate instruction and manipulation. Many names of Christian ministers similarly called, qualified, and made useful to the Church of God might be mentioned. And it is noteworthy that the apostles of our Lord were mostly called to their work from humble positions in life, and were spoken of reproachfully as "ignorant and unlearned men" by the literati of their day. Men of God, however, who have been called in this manner to the important and responsible work of preaching the Gospel of Christ, have ever used all diligence to improve their minds and to cultivate the gifts bestowed upon them by God for the good of His people. As we have seen in the case of Mr. Atkinson, they have conscientiously and perseveringly obeyed the directions given by the Holy Spirit to His ministers, and given earnest attendance to reading and meditation, and used all means to enlarge their acquaintance with every branch of knowledge likely to be useful to them in their sacred calling. Such men are Christ's best gifts to His Church on earth. They may not be looked upon as wonderful stars in the ecclesiastical hemisphere, nor shine as luminaries in the pomp and splendor of worldly establishments; but such godly, graciously gifted men are God's chosen instruments for gathering in His elect, who are found chiefly among "the poor of this world," and of building up His people in their most holy faith. They are the means in His hand of keeping alive in the earth the knowledge of and love for those precious higher doctrines of His glorious grace, which college-trained men too generally—it might be said almost universally—despise, deride, or ignore. May

the Lord bless this humble effort to set forth the life, labors, and character of one of these God-honored men! And oh! may He be graciously pleased to send His churches many such pastors—grace-taught men, godly teachers, who shall care for the flock—men earnest for the salvation of sinners, jealous for the honors of our glorious Immanuel, and careful to preach all the truths of the Gospel of our covenant God in connection with the salvation of His Church! Amen and amen.

The following inscription has been placed in the chapel on a tablet erected by the church to the memory of their late pastor:—

IN MEMORY OF  
**ISRAEL ATKINSON,**  
WHO ENTERED INTO THE JOY OF HIS LORD  
ON THE 4TH MAY, 1881,  
IN THE SIXTY-FOURTH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

He was a faithful Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and for twenty-seven years the beloved Pastor of the Church assembling in this place.

“I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.”— {2 Timothy 4: 7, 8}.