

**THE HISTORY OF THE BELL
STREET CHAPEL
MOVEMENT: MAY, 1888,
TO JULY, 1902**

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The History of the Bell Street Chapel Movement: May, 1888, to July, 1902 by Anna Garlin
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**Agent of the Trustees under the
Will of James Eddy and Resi-
dent Minister of the Religi-
ous Society of Bell
Street Chapel.**

Providence,

1903.

Preface.

It has been said that "any movement worthy to be carried on for a decade is deserving of some permanent record." However that may be the movement which centres in Bell Street Chapel has some unique features which seem to make its history of interest. Moreover there is a peculiar reason for complete and permanent registry of the first few years of this work. That reason lies in the fact that the Supreme Court of Rhode Island, in passing the decree which confirmed the validity of the trust under the will of James Eddy, (out of which the chapel movement has grown,) indicated that the conduct of its affairs during the early years and while all the original trustees were living, would form the basis of judgment for future administration of the trust. This makes the history now presented not only a record of earnest endeavor to carry out the wishes of the founder of the chapel enterprise, but also a basis of suggestion for those who may lead the movement in future years: and thus the history constitutes an act of fidelity to the trust itself.

The material has been compiled from the records of the trustees, from the reports of the agent and resident minister, and from the minutes of the society meetings. Chapter I. gives a detailed account

of action inaugurated or suggested by the trustees, during the initial period of the movement, on account of its value as indicating the understanding of the requirements of the trust by those originally chosen by Mr. Eddy to carry out his purpose. Chapter II. gives a more condensed statement, under its topical heads of departments of work, of the co-operative action of the trustees and society in the period since the society attained its present measure of independence. It is hoped that this volume may serve also a more general purpose than is indicated above. This is an age of experimentation in religious and ethical movements, and any effort to translate spiritual aspiration in terms of social service, and to express radical views in an atmosphere of reverence and worship, is of value. We trust therefore, that this account of things done and attempted in the first years of the chapel movement may be of service, not only to those who in the future shall be charged with the task of adapting this enterprise to the needs of the new time while yet keeping it true to the purpose and ideal which called it into being, but also to others who are seeking in quite different conditions and by other methods

"To build the universal Church,
Lofty as is the love of God
And ample as the wants of man."

EXTRACTS FROM "THOUGHTS ON RELIGION AND
MORALITY," BY JAMES EDDY.

(Published as a part of the initial discourses given at Bell Street Chapel, December, 1889, and January, 1890.)

Let us be voluntarily grateful to that life-giving and life-sustaining Power which is revealed by nature and by human experience!

I have no dispute with any one as to the name to be given this great invisible Power above man.

All scientific knowledge rightly understood serves to deepen our conviction of the wisdom and goodness of that Power whom we designate as God.

To man's more or less evolved intelligence at every given period of human growth is left the ascertainment and teaching of religious, as of other, truths.

All true religion must be acknowledged and endorsed by an intelligent philosophy and must harmonize with all ascertained scientific truths.

The truth, whatever it may be, should be the aim of all research and reasoning. And any religion which will not place the truth above all preconceived ideas will not suit the modern mind.

Of course new truths will be constantly developed through the human mind by time and experience, and

all new truth must be in turn added to those already accepted and taught if our religion is to be kept pure.

May we all be inspired by the love of truth; for all truth is of God.

Let it be the task of every religious organization, of every good man, to eliminate as fast as possible all the evil and injustice of the world from government and from society.


The measure of our intimacy with God, the character of the principles which guide us, are shown by our daily life.

Let us remember that the lower animals are especially under our protection as they are under our control.

We have no desire to diminish in any sect the religious sentiment or devotional spirit; far otherwise! We would aim to increase and purify this spirit of devotion by presenting a truer object of inspiration and by giving sound reasons for the cultivation of the religious sentiment.

We believe that the acme of man's privilege is to live ever nearer to God.

What I desire above all things else is to assist in founding and building up a religious society which shall be guided by the highest principles of truth and right which the mind of our day can conceive.



I desire to help form a religious society which can say: 'We are inside Christianity, as we are inside of all the religions of the world, in every truthful principle which Christianity or any other system of religion inculcates. And we are outside every belief and principle of Christianity or other religious system which underestimates the character of God or lessens the true dignity of man.

And while as builder of the Bell Street Chapel, and initiator of the religious society which I hope may in time worship therein, I ask a reasonable sympathy with, and adherence to my views from those who may found such a society, I should violate my own convictions of freedom and duty if I sought in any way to prevent the exercise of any other person's reason and individual judgment of what is right and true.

CONCERNING THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

(Published in the pamphlet entitled "What could a Church at Bell Street Chapel do for Providence?")

I believe in establishing Sunday schools. I would embrace in the teaching of such schools the whole duty of man, religious, moral and political; and also such teaching as would tend toward success in life in pecuniary matters. I would teach children to do unto others as they would feel it right for others in like circumstances to do unto them. I would teach them to rely as much as possible on themselves and not on

others for their material well-being in this world. I believe that for the maintenance of a useful Sunday school there must be by the parent society, under the auspices of which the school is established, some organization on definite principles, or acknowledged codified statements of belief. The endowments of a higher power of reason, and the accumulations of experience, may, like material property, be handed down to our posterity. By this means the race of mankind gradually approximates toward perfection. To make this march toward perfection sure and steady we must each and all of us seek first to educate and perfect ourselves, in order that we may transmit to our children and posterity the accumulations of truth we have ourselves gathered. We must, also, simultaneously with our own progress, make our children partakers of our moral and religious acquisitions. The most effective method of sustaining any system of thought or religion is *organization*; and this includes the teaching of children by all parents and teachers of what is esteemed by them to be the truth. I believe, however, that the truths and deductions of reason taught to children should be advanced by the teacher in a spirit of humility and of deference to the possibility, and even probability, of a future gradual change in the human mind which will modify present conceptions. The parent and teacher, however, is bound to give the child, at any time, what seems to him the truest and most advanced thought of his age.

JAMES EDDY.