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**JOHANN GERHARD ONCKEN**



*H. Crocker*  
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# JOHANN GERHARD ONCKEN

HIS LIFE AND WORK

By

REV. JOHN HUNT COOKE

*WITH NINE ILLUSTRATIONS*

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## Preface.

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THE value of biography is found in character building, which is of higher importance than condition building. It is to the latter that attention is chiefly directed although it is of lesser value. The one is for eternity, the other for time. For character consideration has to be given not only to what has been done, but the spirit in which it has been done. It is on this account that the memory of Johann Gerhard Oncken is held in such high esteem by many who knew him. His life and labours can never be forgotten in Germany. It is indeed a noble story, and the grandest part is not his remarkable success, but the fixed and devout spirit in which he pursued the work before him.

It is not only as the founder of Baptist Churches that the name of Oncken must ever stand amongst the chief in the roll of the greatest religious heroes of Germany. He was the champion of religious equality. Amidst the vast developments of evangelical life, which future historians will see was the great glory of the nineteenth century, he was the pioneer and leader of the great Free Church Movement on the Continent of Europe with its attendant development of liberty both of thought and action. His aim was ever to keep the Bible as the lamp in all efforts to

leave the social darkness and develop civil and religious liberty. Well would it be were that book more considered in the great reform movements of our age. It is impossible to estimate fully what Germany owes to the religious light of the humble Baptist Churches, the formation of which was Mr. Oncken's life work, and to the pure and quiet lives of their members.

The spirit in which the work was carried on is well illustrated by the following incident. On the occasion of one of his visits to Edinburgh, Mr. Oncken had an interview with Dr. Guthrie, who among other things, asked him, "How many missionaries have you?" Mr. Oncken gave the number of members, seven thousand. "Beg your pardon," said the Doctor, "I asked the number of missionaries." "I know," was the reply, "but we consider every member as a missionary." Dr. Guthrie rose from his seat, walked across the room, repeating again and again, "That's the thing, that's the way to evangelise the world."

A biography of Pastor Oncken in the English language has frequently been asked for. That he was worthy, some testimonies may be given. The Rev. Joseph Angus, D.D., Principal of the College at Regent's Park, London, wrote, "No man more deserves to be remembered and honoured for the grace in him. He has done more for Evangelical truth on the Continent than any man—than any number of men—in this century." The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon spoke of him as "The Apostle Paul of Germany," and said, "That country has lost in Oncken a much greater man than she will to-day believe." And Principal Cairns said on one occasion, "I have just returned from Germany, where I find that by their character,

losses, and advocacy, the Baptists there have secured for themselves and others, religious liberty—little short of a second reformation.”

Such a life as that of Pastor Oncken lasts into the distant future in its effects and influences. The blessings he was the means of effecting were by no means confined to his native country. Many in our own land derived lasting benefit from the visits he paid during more than forty years both in England and Scotland. His simple tale not only produced interest in his labours and sympathy for him and his co-workers in their sufferings, but stirred up also, in the hearts of many, thoughts respecting their own condition, and conviction that their zeal for God was small and cold compared with his. His earnest appeals, alike to the unconverted and to believers, were so instinct with life and power that they caused many a heart to burn with brighter zeal and purer love than ever before. The single-minded devotedness, the earnest piety, the whole-hearted Christian love became, by the Spirit's power, catching in the circles of which he became the centre, both in the public assembly and the social gathering. And the circles of influence thus formed are still producing other circles ever widening.

It is therefore not simply from filial piety that the only surviving son, Mr. William S. Oncken, desires that a biography should be prepared by the author, but from the conviction that such an example of single-hearted consecration to the work of the Master, in resolute obedience to Holy Scripture, could not but prove a blessing and inspiration to evangelical Christians in all English speaking countries. It is in this spirit that the work has been done and is now sent

forth with many a prayer that the great Head of the Church will use it for the advancement of pure and undefiled religion to the glory of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

J. HUNT COOKE.

Bournemouth,  
April, 1908.

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# JOHANN GERHARD ONCKEN.

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## CHAPTER I.

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Let others boast the gaudy tints—  
The foam of earthly fame.  
The true, dear Christ, He never sought  
Nor gained the world's acclaim.  
Wise are the minds that calmly seek  
His favour to ensure;  
To make the work that near them lies,  
Bright, beautiful, and pure.

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### EARLY YEARS—CONVERSION—BEGINNING OF EVANGELICAL WORK.

THE inundation of woe and degradation outpoured across Europe by Napoleon Buonaparte at the opening of the nineteenth century, is beyond description and terrible to contemplate. Among the places where the suffering was great was a pretty little town, in the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg, not far from the North Sea. In the year 1800 Varel was the capital of the small Duchy of Varel,

which was independent of any other authority than that of the Empire. The Bentincks were Dukes of Varel, one branch of this family came over with William of Orange and made a home in England; from this ancestry came the present Duke of Portland.

The shameful victories of the French armies reached this quiet place, and brought all the misery of a foreign yoke despised by the people. The young men were swept away to desolate other peaceful homes until they perished in the degrading pursuit to which they were driven. Those who could escaped. One citizen of Varel who rebelled against the yoke, and had taken a prominent part in a patriotic movement was compelled to flee with all secrecy and haste to England. Shortly after his flight, on January 26th 1800, his son, Johann Gerhard Oncken was born; the child never saw his father, who died about two years later in exile, in London. It is a worthy pride Englishmen feel that their land has been a refuge for the oppressed from other countries: long may it so continue!

The child was brought up in the home of his grandmother. The early years of his life were sad. Many were the scenes of cruelty and destruction he witnessed, still he ever retained

a great love for his native place which in after years he frequently visited. Amongst the better influences of the boy's childhood were the instructions of his grandmother, who was a religious woman, and often drew her grand child aside and pressing him to her heart, wept and prayed that the Almighty would be a true father to this fatherless child; on Sundays she would call the boy apart and pronounce over him the Old Testament blessing. A pious neighbour, nick-named the 'Holy' tailor, used to take him to church on Sundays.

At this time Lutheranism had become a cold and formal religion. The Deity of our Lord was ignored. Whenever churches slide from off this rock, their life and power depart, and they are true churches of Christ no more. The French armies brought the grossest infidelity of belief and life, with a deluge of immorality. The days of the French tyranny in Germany are remembered for their depravity. Rationalism prevailed in the Protestant State Churches and the Free Church movement had not yet commenced. In the earnest outcry of our day for Christian re-union, and the destruction of sects, it may be well to keep in mind that very frequently

where there has been complete uniformity, there has been spiritual death.

Young Oncken went through the orthodox routine of the Varel church. He was christened in infancy, and confirmed at the age of 14. He was a good lad, and had his seasons of penitence and prayer. He stated in after life that neither from any of his teachers or from the Lutheran pastor, did he receive a single true direction of salvation by Jesus Christ. Under these circumstances it was a remarkable providence of God that early in life he was taken to England.

Napoleon's hatred of England was intense. In 1804 he issued a decree absolutely forbidding the importation of goods from any of the ports of Great Britain or of her colonies. The effect of this upon Varel, being in the vicinity of the Jahde, an arm of the North Sea, was to develop a very extensive smuggling trade. This came to an end when the power of Napoleon was broken by the disastrous Moscow campaign, and by the battles of Leipzig and Waterloo. With the breaking up of this very undesirable business in the year 1814, after about ten years of its continuance, a Scotch merchant came to Varel to settle up accounts for goods smuggled into the

country. He became acquainted with and took a liking to young Oncken, who was a bright and attractive lad and ready for the adventure, and with the consent of his relatives, took him away at the age of 14 to Scotland. He said, "I will make a man of this youth." It is interesting to notice that one of the first questions this merchant asked the lad was, "Have you a Bible?" His reply was "No, but I have been confirmed," evidently regarding confirmation as practically the completion of the Christian life; which it is to be feared is not infrequently the case. He was taken at once to a bookseller's and a copy of the Holy Scriptures procured for him. That was a far more important step in his history than either he or his friends at the time realised.

He sailed to Scotland and on his arrival in that country was much impressed with many things and especially with the Sabbath keeping. He records that though the merchant spoke highly of the Bible yet his life was not fully under its influence, but he had a very pious mother. This lady took the lad to a Presbyterian church, where he heard the Gospel proclaimed as he had not before, and it made a very deep impression upon his mind,

leading him along the first part of the narrow path, by bringing him to a sense of sinfulness. A friend, a Christian lady, presented him with a copy of Harvey's "Meditation Among the Tombs," which led him to take an interest in epitaphs, and to visit graveyards to copy the more remarkable inscriptions. Pleasure in such a pursuit is not altogether morbid, and has not been peculiar to Oncken amongst thoughtful young men. For a short time he held the position of pupil teacher in a school at Leith, which he was obliged to resign in consequence of the boys' persistence in annoying him as a foreigner.

In the year 1819, he left Scotland and went to London, where he soon came into contact with Christian friends. He was deeply impressed by experiencing the consciousness of God's protecting hand over him in an accident which occurred soon after his arrival in the Metropolis. He was seated on the roof of an omnibus or coach when through some sudden jerk he was thrown to the pavement and lay there bleeding from nose and mouth. Happily he soon recovered. The consequences were not serious, except in the better sense of leading him to more serious thought. After a while he went to reside at Blackheath in the

house of Christian people, the head of the family being the deacon of an independent church. He attended public worship with him, where he heard a full and faithful Gospel, from a Congregational minister, Rev. T. W. Julia. But he was especially impressed by family worship, to him an altogether strange and novel proceeding.

In his intercourse with the young people of London, he had been influenced by the frivolity which unhappily was then, as now, such a prominent feature of their general character. But when in family prayer he heard earnest supplication for his own conversion, all his past religious feeling returned and he became anxious for salvation. He was led into the glorious liberty of the children of God, by the agency of a sermon he heard at Great Queen Street Methodist Chapel from the text, Rom. viii. 1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Then came all the brightness of the "love of the espousals," the delights of the first footsteps of the flock of God, when the newly enlightened soul can sing "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still

waters." But he had to be led on through paths of righteousness, where there was something different to the quiet life. The Lord had destined Oncken for some other career than that of inglorious peace. The green pasture of spiritual life had to be exchanged for the fierce battle field. But the first step in all true life must be the entire renunciation of self in the vision of the Cross. Thenceforth the one foundation of his inner life was a simple trust on the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ in the sacrifice of Calvary.

The writer of this book remembers being in company with Mr. Oncken and several ministers of the Gospel when the question arose of illustrations of salvation. Several excellent and forcible ones were mentioned and approved, when Mr. Oncken asserted that the very best was that of the brazen serpent, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life." The wounded Israelite, feeling the morbid sting of the serpent's bite, obeyed the Divine precept. He looked and lived. He might not, indeed could not, understand the whole mystery. It was enough that God had promised. So the soul,

feeling the death-bringing power of sin, simply believing in the Divine promise, looks to the Cross of Christ. He feels the healing power and rejoices in the inflowing of Eternal life. He takes God's appointed way. Not his own righteousness but the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

On the same day, according to his own statement made at a later time, that he obtained from on High the sweet assurance that he was saved, his missionary career began. The first effort was memorable. He had at that time an allowance of one shilling each day for dinner which he expended in a shop in Ludgate Hill, but now he bought two penny rolls and filled his flask with water from a public source, and with the remainder of his cash he bought tracts for distribution. He also spoke to his friends about the great gladness which by the grace of God had come into his life, but was greatly disappointed with the cold manner in which his testimonies were mostly received. He himself wrote about his experience at this time: "In the first ardour of my love, I could not understand that my labours were in vain, but the Lord saw that I needed encouragement and gave me the first fruit of my youthful witness-bearing. In

the hotel in Ludgate Hill in which I was living, there was a young Mulatto, Abraham Silva, the servant of an American merchant who had given way to drink. He was only 16 or 17 years old, and I had a great pity for the youth and spoke earnestly to him, warning him that as sinners we would be eternally lost, and as he listened earnestly I told him all I had myself experienced in my own heart, of salvation through faith in Christ. The Lord heard my prayers for the young man and a few days later I was rejoiced to hear from his lips, though in imperfect English, the ever all-important question, 'Massa, what must me do to be saved?' And out of a full heart, my answer was ready for him: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' Blessed be the name of the Lord, after a short time he attained to the joy of full assurance of the forgiveness of his sins through childlike faith in Christ and the shedding of His precious blood."

## CHAPTER II.

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Of God's great library of books, the Bible is but one  
Of those inspired volumes by which His grace is known.  
There is the tome of living men, of which the texts are deeds :  
A holy scripture given by God for him who wisely reads.

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### MISSION WORK IN HAMBURG—MARRIAGE—FAMILY LIFE.

**I**T is scarcely surprising that the philosophers of this world do not understand that the less the belief in salvation by works, the greater the belief in works by salvation. It is the faith in Christ for all, that leads to the all of life for Christ. The doctrine that every spiritual blessing is a free gift, unearned and undeserved by the subject of Divine grace, has ever proved to be the greatest incentive to holiness. See the effect on young Oncken. He says, "I could not keep to myself the unspeakable gift and the sweet assurance of my full interest in Christ here, and in endless glory hereafter. From that day I became a witness,

albeit a weak one, of His love to sinners and of the omnipotence of His grace." He began the right way, by simply doing what he could; he distributed tracts, he wrote letters to his mother and friends urging them to consider the danger of living without Christ. His warm-hearted Christian zeal gained him many friends, and in 1823, "The Continental Society" appointed him their missionary for Germany. This was a society founded in London in 1819, for evangelical work on the Continent of Europe. Oncken was providentially led to take up his abode at Hamburg, where he arrived on December 16th 1823.

Having joined an Independent Church in London, he had his membership transferred to one in Hamburg, which took the name of the English Reformed Church. The pastor, Rev. T. W. Matthews, was so pleased with the young man and his work that he found him a home in his own house, also placed a large room at his disposal for his meetings and rendered him much assistance during the first years of his work. He made him a present of a pocket Bible with the inscription which was to prove of the greatest importance to the young missionary in his future career:—"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy

mouth; but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night, *that thou mayest observe to do accordingly to all that is written therein*: for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous and thou shalt have good success." The wisdom, faith, and courage of a Joshua were truly needed for a man undertaking evangelistic work in a city like Hamburg, which, at that time, was in a deplorable spiritual condition. Rationalism reigned in the pulpits, and shameless immorality disgraced the ancient Hanseatic city.

Religion in Germany at that time had settled down into a lifeless Rationalism; of all the Lutheran clergymen in Hamburg, it is said that only one, Pastor Rautenberg, believed in the Deity of our Lord. This good pastor became greatly interested in Oncken and helped him in his work.

Although the Bible held a high position in German thought, it was not recognised as the one unerring guide. Luther's Catechism was practically the supreme direction in doctrine and practice. Wherever and whenever the Book of God is dethroned, in time there is ever the same result, and that is, spiritual death. The Bible is a living book and does not thrive on vivisection. Possibly in Germany

there has been more than enough treatment of Holy Scripture as an experiment for surgical study rather than a banquet of the Word of Life, and there has been the natural result.

Mr. Oncken was what, in olden times, was called "a right Bible man." He believed in plenary inspiration and in the infallibility and authority of the Bible; its word was to him the end of strife, "Holy writ" was God's word written, the Bible was the word of God.

Commencing to preach in the year 1824, he became in a short time a powerful preacher of the Gospel, for which God had endowed him with remarkable gifts. His profound knowledge of Holy Scripture gave force and boldness to his utterance. At his first meeting on January 7th 1827 ten persons came out of curiosity to hear the new English religion, as his message was contemptuously called, and one soul was converted to God. The name of that first convert was C. F. Lange, who afterwards became a valuable helper in his work. At the next meeting 18, at the following 30, and on February 8th, 180 attended; on February 24th the crowd was so great that about 100 were turned away for want of room; many came smiling and left weeping.

If some of the good people of Hamburg began to perceive that a prophet had come amongst them, not so the civic and alas! the ecclesiastical authorities. Oncken was continually summoned to appear at the common police court where he was subjected to the greatest indignities, heavy fines being imposed, and as he refused to pay the same his goods were distrained. Under the circumstances the meetings in Mr. Matthew's house had to be discontinued; however, nothing daunted, Oncken now held meetings in many different parts of the city, mostly in small places, in garrets and in cellars, all of which were crowded. He even took the Gospel into the vilest alleys. In this way the persecution really tended to the progress of his work, for his name became the topic of conversation in drawing rooms, at tea tables, in the public-houses and market-places.

The distribution of Bibles was from the beginning one of the main occupations of Mr. Oncken's life. At first he had received his supply from the Hamburg and Altona Bible Society, through Mr. Matthews, but in the absence of this friend, he once sent a messenger to the depôt, which was under the care of a Rationalistic Pastor, who said

to the messenger, "What becomes of all the Bibles? Does the man eat them? He shall not have any more." Mr. Oncken then went himself, but when the Pastor heard his name he exclaimed, "So *you* are the man that preaches in cellars and garrets, everywhere! Your cursed preaching! Whoever told you to preach?" He replied, "The Lord Jesus has commanded me to preach." "The devil has commanded you," was the reply, as he sprang to his feet in a rage.

When persecution grew too fierce in Hamburg, Mr. Oncken went for a while to Bremen, and there also preached the Gospel, many being converted, but he soon returned to Hamburg, where notwithstanding the persecution his heart was specially in the work. Happily, under God's guiding hand, a new Bible supply was soon opened for in 1828 Mr. Oncken entered the services of the Edinburgh Bible Society as their agent, in which position he remained till 1878, during which time, as their report states, he printed and distributed over two million Bibles.

Whilst in England Oncken had become deeply impressed by the great blessedness of the Sunday Schools and in 1825 he succeeded in establishing one in Hamburg. This was

the first in Germany. Pastor Rautenberg, in connection with whose church it was formed, was the only one of the twenty-five Lutheran clergymen in the city who did not offer strong opposition to the introduction of this "English plant," as they termed it, on German soil.

Thirty-five years later Mr. Oncken received an interesting letter from Mr. Meyer, the then superintendent of the Sunday School in connection with the Baptist Church in Hamburg, who told him he had been one of the first scholars, and received very deep spiritual influence from his teacher, a tailor, an earnest Christian man. But after two years the master of the day-school, where he was being educated, refused to have him as a scholar any longer if he continued to go to Sunday School; in consequence he was not permitted to attend any more, but the impression he had received abided, and at the age of nineteen revived and led him to seek the mercy of God and to find it through the work of Christ. The school was prospering at the time when the letter was written, and several children showed signs of conversion to God. How often is the truth experienced that where bread is cast upon the waters it is found, though after many days!

In the year 1828, Mr. Oncken had a home of his own in Newman Street, and opened a small bookshop as a private enterprise, for the sale of Bibles and religious publications, with the purpose of obtaining, if possible, the rights of a Hamburg citizen, because he feared that otherwise the authorities, instigated by the clergy, might expel him from the city, which would have ended his work there. However this was a difficulty which was providentially removed in a remarkable manner. One day he met an Alderman of the Tailor's Guild, who had been interested in the Sunday School work, to whom he mentioned his wish as to becoming a citizen. Herr Schroder accompanied him to the Registrar's office. Mr. Oncken thus relates the interview.

“When we reached the public office my conductor knocked at the door. From within a gruff voice called out, ‘Come in.’ On entering, we beheld a venerable personage, who when he saw my old friend jocularly said, professing astonishment, ‘Young man, do you wish to become a citizen?’ He answered, ‘Nay, I do not seek the honour, but I wish to help this young fellow. You know that we ought to give a helping hand to youngsters, and he wants to be a citizen, therefore I have

come with him.' 'So let it be,' was the gracious reply of the Scrivener. Very soon I was asked for my name and birthplace, and then came the question, 'What is your occupation?' I replied, 'A Missionary.' This was a word of unknown meaning, which the Registrar did not understand. It was also the case that as a Missionary, I could not become a citizen. At this critical moment my conductor explained, 'He is a Commissioner, or Commission Agent.' I made objection, but he said to me, "What is your objection? Do you not deal in copy books and pencils, and paper of all sorts? Write him down a Commissioner.' This was done, and I had to return in fourteen days and bring the fees. It was a time of prayer with me, for only the Lord could help. And He did help. On April 25th 1828, I was admitted to citizenship without further difficulty." Thus Mr. Oncken became fully qualified and took the oath of allegiance as a citizen of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, on April 25th 1828.

Still the persecutions continued. Soon after Oncken received a fresh summons and had to appear at the Police Court, where the presiding Senator threatened him with banishment, to which he replied, "Mr. Senator,

since when has it been the custom in Hamburg to expel a free citizen from the city?" The Senator, greatly amazed, upon investigation found Mr. Oncken's statement correct and could therefore not banish him, however, ere long he was sentenced to fourteen days imprisonment, which was afterwards changed to a fine of fifty-five shillings; this he refused to pay and his goods were therefore again distrained. Yet for all this, Oncken continued the work.

In this important matter Mr. Oncken recognised the special intervention of the overruling hand of God not only in the opportune assistance of his friend Schroder, but also by a dream he had concerning a certain meeting which he had arranged to hold, and which—in the dream—had resulted in his imprisonment. On telling his friend Mr. Lange, of this dream it appeared, strange to say, that the latter had had a similar one, and accepting this as a direct warning the meeting was not held. At the time originally appointed for this meeting Mr. Oncken was sitting looking over some letters with his friends, when a policeman entered in the expectation of finding the forbidden preaching-service. Mr. Oncken calmly asked him

if it were no longer permitted for a man to take his tea quietly, with his friends, in his own house, whereupon the official withdrew with considerable confusion. If, however, he had found Mr. Oncken again preaching, in defiance of the strictest prohibition, citizenship would have been impossible.

The following incident may show how Mr. Oncken's influence was continually extending, and how the Lord was owning and blessing the zealous labours of His faithful servant.

Early in his missionary labours he had become acquainted with Mr. Lenthe, who, at that period, was Court-painter of the Grand-Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin; he was an artist of repute, held in high esteem by the Grand-Duke. Mr. Lenthe was a Christian, and, becoming intimately acquainted with Pastor Oncken, a warm friendship sprang up between them; and there still exist portraits painted by him of the Pastor and his first wife. The enthusiastic efforts of Pastor Oncken in the circulation of the scriptures inspired his friend with a similar zeal, and in spite of his position at Court, he took upon himself the actual work of a Bible Colporteur among the religiously benighted population where he dwelt.

Soon however the strain of this labour of love began to tell upon the health of the artist, accustomed only to the life of the studio. At the next visit which his friend Oncken paid him he therefore complained that he feared he must abandon the *con amore* colportage. "Oh, no! No, dear Lenthe," said Pastor Oncken, "we must now ask the Lord to give us a horse for you." "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Nor did the united believing prayers of the two friends remain unanswered. One day, shortly afterwards, the Grand-Duke said to Mr. Lenthe:—"My good Lenthe, I notice you are not quite as nimble on your legs as formerly; now I have a somewhat ancient "steed" in my stables, for which I have no further use but you are heartily welcome to it." With a thankful heart to the Giver of every good gift, and warmest thanks to the Grand-Duke, Mr. Lenthe accepted the welcome offer. The good news was speedily communicated to his friend Oncken, and soon the good work of colportage, with the help of the "steed," was resumed.

A few years later, when the Grand-Duke

had died, his widow removed to a palace in the country, where, in the retirement, she devoted herself entirely to the education of the Princess Helène, at that time emerging from childhood and later married to the Duc d'Orleans. The Dowager-Duchess, being herself a true Christian, extended her solicitude for the welfare of the Princess Helène, not only to the physical and mental well-being of her daughter, but also to her highest spiritual interests. Through the influence of Mr. Lenthe, Pastor Oncken was requested by the Grand-Duchess to hold a Bible-class at the palace. In this Bible-class not only the Grand-Duchess and the Princess took part, but the entire household; before the commencement, however, the Grand-Duchess with touching motherly concern whispered to Mr. Oncken:—"Will you please not address many questions to Helène, as she is rather timid." What fruit that Bible-reading, at which, in his fervent manner, Mr. Oncken expounded God's full counsel unto salvation, may have borne in the youthful mind of the Princess, we know not, but we would fain consider it a link in the chain of the life-experiences which, under the blessing of God, helped to make her a noble woman, whose character,

combining grace, dignity, and fortitude, called forth universal love and esteem; moreover, the Christian faith of the Duchess of Orleans at all times shone forth in untarnished lustre. Devotedly attached to her husband, the Duc d'Orleans, and living on kindly and amicable terms with the Roman Catholic family, to whom she was, by her marriage, allied, the Duchess Helène yet never abandoned the simplicity of the Protestant faith in which she had been brought up. On the occasion of her marriage a German Bible, the covers of which were lined with silk, in the tricolour colours of France, was presented to her by Pastor Oncken, and graciously accepted.

Mr. Oncken was married to Miss Sarah Mann, of London, on May 19th 1828. The union was an exceedingly happy one, and was blessed with seven children, of which two died in infancy. The eldest daughter Margaret, who was born 1829, went to England when seventeen years of age. She was baptised by Dr. Steane, and was a member of the Church at Camberwell, London, for some years. Later in life she was married to Mr. Carl Schauffler, a Hamburg merchant, who was for some time a highly esteemed co-pastor with Mr. Oncken. She died at an

advanced age in London. The eldest son, Paul Gerhard, was born in 1831. He became a merchant at Hamburg, and later on at Leith, and married a daughter of Mr. John Stuart of Aberdeen. In 1839 was born William Sears; he was baptised at Barmen, in 1856. He went to England in 1872, and engaged in mercantile pursuits at Lincoln; in 1889 he was married to Penelope Lydia, eldest daughter of Rev. Ph. Bickel, D.D. He has rendered great service to the Mission work in Germany, by its advocacy in Great Britain, and by editing and promoting the circulation of the "Quarterly Reporter of the German Baptist Mission," in the English language.

The youngest son, Philip, was born in 1842. When eight years old he was one day playing in a hay loft near the house, to which the only ascent was by a ladder. It could never be explained how the lad got there, or to what the conflagration was due, but fire broke out, and the child, who was the darling of the family, perished in the flames. The father was away from home on one of his mission journeys at the time, and returned the day after the mournful calamity. He preached on the following Sunday from the text, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not

what a day may bring forth"; but scarcely had he commenced his discourse when overwhelmed with emotion he broke down, and weeping, cried: "My Philip, my dear Philip," and the whole congregation wept in sympathy with their beloved pastor.

The youngest daughter, Sarah, was born in 1844. She was married to Dr. Wallace Lovejoy of Boston, U.S.A. Her married life was brief, lasting but two years, when she died, in 1873.

In the earlier years of his married life, Pastor Oncken was much engaged in printing and publishing some new editions of the Bible in German, and it is interesting to note that his wife gained a fluent knowledge of that language by assisting her husband in the proof reading. It was a rule with him to pay very special attention to the printing and binding of the Bible. He considered it important that the sacred book should be presented in good and attractive form.

Their lives were not without tribulation. Indeed it has been remarked that Pastor Oncken had besides his trials in public life a large share of sorrow in the home. In the cholera epidemic of 1831, the pest entered his house and carried away, in one week, three

inmates, a beloved little daughter, Sarah, and two valued servants. The constant excitement of her husband being summoned to appear in the police court, the fines imposed, the distrains executed and his imprisonments very seriously affected the health of Mrs. Oncken, whilst the care of the children fell wholly upon her during the long absence of her husband on missionary travels.

In 1840, whilst Mr. Oncken, sentenced to four weeks imprisonment, was confined in the Winsersbaum, his little daughter, Lydia, just five years old, was smitten with a mortal illness. The grief-stricken mother petitioned the Senate for the temporary release of her husband, which was granted. When he reached his home, the little girl still lived, but the worst was hourly expected. In the midst of these sorrowful circumstances a most urgent appeal came to him from Copenhagen, to come over immediately to baptise a number of friends, as in view of the coronation of the King there was a specially favourable opportunity of doing so without the intervention of the police. There must have been a deep conflict in the father's heart, but he considered obedience to the call his first duty and set out on his journey. On the following day the

little girl passed away, and the mother had to bear the grief alone. In the empty room, for all the furniture had been seized to pay a fine, there was only the cradle left to serve as the bier of the dead child. There is a touch of infinite pathos when we learn that the lonely Englishwoman ordered a sky-blue coffin; in vain did the Hamburg undertaker attempt to dissuade her from a thing so unheard of, and she laid her child to rest as it seemed her best.

In the year 1845, the beloved wife and faithful partner was taken from him by death, after a prolonged illness, leaving him with five young children, the youngest scarcely 15 months old at the time. She is spoken of as a charming, cultured, kind-hearted, Christian lady, who endured the hardships of the early struggles of her husband's public life with true heroism and proved an affectionate helpmate. Her last illness was painful and prolonged. Her children ever remembered how, when going to her bed-side, the dear mother placed her hands upon their heads and blessed them.

A letter to this lady, prior to her marriage, has been preserved:—

Hamburg, *April 4th*, 1824.

My Dear Sarah,

You will see by the date of the other letter that it has been my intention to send this before now, but unfortunately my letter was too late for the ship by which I had intended to send it. I have received another letter from Sister Jane, all well at home; now you know I can read almost any sort of writing, but some parts of Jane's letter I cannot make out, the ink seems to be so very scarce in London that J.'s letters often look as if the ink bottle was quite dry.

I am glad you like Edinbro', it is indeed a lovely place. How do you like the view from Calton Hill towards Leith, the Forth, and Fifeshire? I should like to behold it once more. How good, how blessed, and how lovely must He be who created all these things. If I can but enjoy His presence and feel His love I shall want no more heaven; "for whom have I in heaven but Thee, and on earth there is none beside Thee."

I have begun to preach to the German seamen, the *Bethel* has been hoisted on board of a German vessel the last three Sabbath days. The first time I had about 30 hearers, and on the following two Sundays from 70

to 80 each time; they pay great attention to all that is said to them. After I had spoken to them of the value of the Bible, and of our duty and privilege to read it, four of the seamen came a few days afterwards and bought Bibles.

It is the intention of the deacons and friends in general of our little Church under Mr. Matthews to build a chapel if a sufficient sum of money can be raised. We had a meeting for that purpose last Tuesday evening, when about 364 Louis d'or (about £290) were subscribed and about 200 more afterwards by persons not present.

Mr. Matthews will in all probability visit Scotland in June next, and afterwards proceed to London, so that I hope you will see him either in Scotland or in London. Have you heard Mr. Robert Haldane preach? If not, go and hear him and let me know how you like him. He wrote first to the Continental Society about me.

I am sorry to say that though God has some witnesses of the faith in Hamburg, there is not one serious German I have met, with whom I can agree in doctrines, they are all Arminians without exception, and a holy Arminian I can love as well as a Calvinist, but

there are no English Methodists among the Germans. There is no pressing forward unto perfection among my countrymen, most of them rest in the experience they have had years back, thus they are not "forgetting the things that are behind." But I have daily, I find, more difficulties (though I have the confidence that the Lord will help me through them all) to overcome. I found out that not a few of whom I had hoped better things are Universalists, that is, they believe that all men and devils will be saved at last. The Scripture gives not the least intimation for such belief, and it is, as I see it to be, contrary to the Bible, and a most horrible doctrine. I am determined to oppose it to the best of the ability the Lord has given me. Pray now for me that, though all men were against me, I may not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, that I may have the testimony of a good conscience which is of more value than all the smiles of this poor fleeting world. May that truth of truths, the endless misery of the damned and the everlasting happiness of the saved, have its proper influence on your and on my soul. "Let us then," my dear Sarah, "lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us," knowing that

we are candidates for eternity, and that there is no getting to heaven without much pains on our side to strive to enter in by the strait road.

Now I commend you to God and to the Word of his Grace, be steadfast, unmovable to the end, the world beneath your feet, and Christ in your heart the hope of Glory.

Your affectionate, J. G. Oncken.

Writing to a friend shortly after the death of his wife, Mr. Oncken said: "My loss can only be partly estimated by those of my friends who knew her. Her sound judgment, her principles of moral rectitude and not less, her clear and sound views of divine truth, combined with an undeviating attachment to the cause and people of God, were of no ordinary degree, and have exercised on the character of her husband the most salutary influence.

I am left with five dear children, the youngest not yet two years old, but I and they are in safe hands. The streams may be dried up, but the fountain never ceases to flow; and when God removes the desire of our eyes it is only that we may be brought nearer to Him. May this be the happy result of the long and severe trial and loss to which I have been called; and may I be thus better fitted for the blessed work in which I am engaged.

### CHAPTER III.

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On every side lie untilled fields—  
God's eye is everywhere!  
Unceasing is the moan of woe,  
His ear lists every prayer.  
He has resolved that right shall win,  
All useless doubting quell;  
Find out what He would have you do,  
And do the little well.

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#### TRUE GREATNESS—SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM—CHURCH AND CHURCHES.

THE year of our Lord, 1834, was not without its great men and great events. Who and what among these deserve to be placed in the first rank? History has its roll of honour, but its estimates are not infrequently of the earth, earthy. When the books of God shall be opened in the light of the Great White Throne, and the true worth shall be made known for eternity, it will be found that many who are now first will be last, and many now last will be first. Well would it be for us all, in forming estimates of human great-

ness, to more frequently consider that what is now public opinion is certain to be reversed in eternity, in regard to thousands of events and men, to be reconsidered no more. We need not be without a true judgment if we will but accept as supreme the instruction of our Lord. "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

With this standard we may accord a high honour to an incident which occurred at Hamburg, on April 22nd, and to the leader, Johann Gerhard Oncken. Late on the evening of that day, a little party of believers on the Lord Jesus Christ went outside the city, and at a secluded island were solemnly immersed in the River Elbe in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The ordinance was administered by Professor Barnard Sears, of Hamilton College, North America. It was observed at the quiet hour of night and in this retired spot to avoid persecution. It was worth looking into by the ever-witnessing angels.

Germany professed to be a Christian

land. It was there that Martin Luther, enlightened by the Spirit of God, saw a great truth, unrecognised by the decadent professing Christianity of his day, and obeyed. And the great German people, ever since, have held him in the highest estimation as one of the greatest men of their race. And now another German came forward, and German authorities forbade him by persecution, from following the Divine leading in obedience to a neglected precept of the Lord Christ.

Imagination would fain recall that scene. Mr. Oncken has recorded that it was a beautiful evening. The little party left the city, soon after sunset, by the *Sandthor*; these faithful disciples knew well that they were in peril of being punished and having their goods seized by the authorities of the city, for daring thus to obey their Lord's precept and command. There was also a certain gloomy prison, the spirit-crushing interior of which their leader was to know only too well.

The brave little party consisted of J. G. Oncken and his wife, Sarah Oncken, a shoemaker and his wife, Diedrich and Henrietta Lange, another shoemaker, Heinrich Krüger, a looking-glass maker, Ernst Buckendahl, and Johannes Gusdorf, a Jewish proselyte

and linen-draper. Not just the persons the historian delights to honour, but of those "whose names are written in the Book of Life." With these Professor Sears.

They pass along the path silently, for their hearts are full, yet now and then comes a word of trust or gently uttered prayer. A boat awaits them at the river-side, in which they quietly take their places. Do fears enter their hearts? Probably, for true courage is not to be without fear, but to rise and conquer it. Above them are the calm bright stars. Around the darkness and shadows. Everywhere there is the invisible eye of God. He is all in all to them. And so they move on to the selected sequestered spot, at the dead of night. And there the great appointed symbolic act of death and burial to the world and rising to a new Divine life is solemnly observed, not with the robing and august ceremony and white stoled procession along a lofty, richly decorated cathedral aisle, which we are accustomed to think gives dignity to a religious rite; but with the homage of earnest souls, looking not at the things seen, but at the eternal unseen, witnessed by the holy ones and watchers of the ranks of ministering angels.

Mr. Oncken subsequently wrote of this event "Our gracious Lord favourably disposed all that had reference to the ordinance. With a glad heart I descended into the waters, and with lips full of praise I returned to the shore." This observance was not some sensational act with desires of forming a sect, or notoriety with men. Oncken asserts, "All was dark; we had neither the prospect nor the hope of success. We were compelled blindly to follow our Master. Not one of us entertained the slightest hope that the Almighty would, by this feeble commencement, convey his thoughts of peace to thousands, and spread afar his ancient apostolic truth. Conviction impelled us onwards; we could not but act as we did, come what might. But, although externally all was dark, within us all was light. In those memorable days which followed, my heart was so joyous, it seemed to me, as I walked through the streets of Hamburg, as if everybody must know I had put on Christ by baptism."

Professor Sears has expressed his opinion of Mr. Oncken as follows: "I found a man interesting from every point of view. He is about thirty years of age, married in England, and is well acquainted with the English lan-

guage. He has not indeed had the advantage of a very learned education, but possesses a clear and penetrating understanding, is well read, a man of unusual practical experience and of very agreeable appearance and gentlemanly manner. He has the confidence of Tholuck, Hahn, Hengstenberg, and many other distinguished men of the Evangelical party, who are associated with him in the distribution of Bibles and tracts."

It was assuredly no suddenly taken step. Some years previously Oncken had entertained doubts of the scripturalness of the rite generally called baptism, both of the mode of its administration by sprinkling, and of the subjects, unconscious babes. Early in his Christian life he had made it a principle, not to be departed from, to reject as a matter of faith anything that could not be proved by Holy Scripture. He resolved not to be misled by the teachings of men. He found that infant sprinkling had no place in the New Testament, and it became clear to him that it was not of God. At Bremen, where in the year, 1826, he had held a remarkably successful Evangelical mission, two Christian ministers, Pastors Müller and Mallet, were anxious that he should enter the ministry as

a Lutheran pastor and they undertook, if he would do so, that they would be responsible for the expense of his training. This Oncken declined on the ground that he had serious misgivings of the scriptural authority of infant baptism. Gradually light came. When his first child was born he declined to have her christened. Thus his first step was negative, he saw that the prevalent practice was not of Holy Scripture.

Mr. Oncken entered into correspondence with that remarkable man, Robert Haldane, of Edinburgh. Strange to say the advice he received from this able Bible expositor was that Oncken should baptise himself!

There is no Biblical authority for self-baptism, but its validity has not always been disputed. In London, in the seventeenth century, one of the first Baptist Churches formed after the bitter persecution of nonconformity had somewhat declined, had for its pastor a Rev. John Smythe, formerly Vicar of Gainsborough, who failing to find a Baptist minister who would administer the ordinance to him, baptised himself. A very interesting record of martyrdom comes from the earlier days of the Christian church. Thecla was a lady of rank. She avowed her faith in the

Lord Jesus Christ, but her baptism was delayed. She was condemned to be stripped naked and cast to wild beasts. On the way to execution she noticed a stream of water by the road-side. Springing from her guards she plunged in, pronouncing herself the baptism formula. On emerging she took her place and was led to execution rejoicing that she was a baptised Christian, and so went to a martyr's death.

Professor J. Lehman in his "History of the German Baptists," gives the following account of the baptism. He says:—

We now come to an important moment, when God once again and in a special sense said, "Let there be light," by again placing on the candlestick for the German nation, the old but long forgotten truth of baptism, by bringing about a renewal of His Church according to the old, unchangeable pattern, and making a day of salvation appear for thousands of souls sitting in spiritual darkness.

The beginnings of this new movement in the Kingdom of God were still and solemn like the birth of morning light. It was not the work of human wisdom or learning, not an excrescence of fantastic sentiment, it was the gradually ripening fruit of Divine illumination

in the hearts of men, who in living faith had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and who had in simplicity searched the Scriptures to ascertain and to obey in all things the will of the Master. The origin of German Baptist Churches is not due to any outside influences, they are a German plant, sprung up from German soil and by the grace of God nurtured, tended by German hands; but it must be gratefully acknowledged that the tender plant was watered by the love and support of our American and English brethren in the faith.

It has already been stated that Oncken was a member of the Independent Church in Hamburg, and that for several years he had laboured with great zeal by the preaching of the Gospel and by his indefatigable work of the distribution of tracts and the Word of God. He loved his Bible, and the New Testament had become to him the sole source of Christian truth and doctrine. Through his diligent searching of the Holy Scriptures, and without any outside influence whatsoever, he gradually arrived at the conviction that the same contained no warrant for infant baptism and that the immersion of believers is the only scriptural baptism. Furthermore he began to

conceive clearly the idea of a Christian church, as consisting of immersed believers, and of the necessity of the formation of such a church, which appeared to him to become from year to year more urgent, when he considered the large number of friends who, by the grace of God through his labours, had attained to faith in Christ. What was to become of them? Were they to languish in the State Church, without spiritual nurture and wither away, or is it the will of God that His people, separated from the world, should be gathered into such communities as described in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of the New Testament?

The answer of Holy Writ was clear and the intenableity of the system of State Churches convincingly impressed his soul.

Oncken did not fail to discuss this important matter with his friend, Mr. Mathews, the pastor of the church of which he was a member, but his friend in no wise agreed with him. "Under no consideration whatever," he said, "must you be baptised, Oncken, that will never do." He also in order to convince his friend, preached a sermon for his special instruction on this subject, with the result that Oncken became more convinced than

ever, as he again listened to the weakness of the argument for infant baptism; in fact, two Methodist friends, who also heard this sermon were thereby induced to become Baptists. But even more, good Pastor Mathews, who took so much trouble to dissuade Oncken, was led more carefully himself to look into the matter, and, becoming convinced of the truth of believers' baptism, within a year's time went over to England and was baptised, and later was for many years the minister of the Baptist Church at Boston.

We will now hear what Mr. Oncken himself said at the 25th Anniversary of the Hamburg Baptist Church, concerning this important event:—

“When it pleased God, to call the poor sinner, who is now addressing you, to His fellowship, and he had learned to love the Holy Scriptures, it soon became a fixed principle for the remainder of his life, in matters of faith not to accept anything, whoever might have believed or taught it, unless it could be proved clearly and distinctly by a word recorded by the Holy Spirit. By the grace and mercy of God, he has remained true to this principle to the present day. In the carrying out of this principle, it became clear to him,

although he had previously not heard or known of Baptists in America or England, that infant baptism, or more correctly, infant sprinkling, had no place in the New Testament. He found by a careful examination of the New Testament that at the time when our Lord was on earth baptism was differently administered than at the present day; but he could not tell why this change had taken place. He, however, with some friends continued to study this matter, and they arrived at the following conclusion: Whence infant baptism had come, he could not tell, but it is clear that it is not of God. As there was no one to give him any information it took some time until he saw clearly, who according to the Scriptures were to be the true recipients of baptism, but as soon as he had obtained light concerning this matter, he tried to follow the same by declining to have the first child, which the Lord gave him, baptised or sprinkled, although he himself had not yet been baptised. Gradually he perceived it to be alike the blessed privilege and sacred duty of all those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit to follow the Lord in baptism; some other brethren at the same time arrived at the same conviction.

“There was, however, no Philip at hand. In 1829, I wrote for the first time to a baptised Christian, Mr. Robert Haldane of Edinburgh, a man whom I highly value, both for his profound knowledge of scripture and for his zeal for the Kingdom of God; he was in his day, a burning and a shining light, and blessed traces of his indefatigable labours are still to be found in Scotland, India, Germany, France, and Switzerland. Still even great men are able to err. This dear man gave me the extraordinary advice to baptise myself. True to my principle, I at once searched the scriptures for confirmation of this advice, but from Matthew to Revelation I could find no case of self baptism, and in a matter of such importance I would not act on my own responsibility. Brother Lange, who shared my views, found with me that our only recourse was prayer, but we had to wait for the desired Philip for more than five years. Some few like-minded brethren desired that we should at least together partake of the Lord’s supper, but to this I could not consent, feeling sure that, if the work was begun in a wrong manner, it would also be continued in a wrong way, and I cannot now sufficiently praise the Lord that He over-ruled us in this matter, and

that we did not venture to constitute a church for which we have no example in the New Testament.

I then wrote to a Mr. Ivey, a Baptist minister in London, who, in reply, asked me to come to London in order to be baptised there, but at the time I was so fully engaged with pressing work concerning the Kingdom of God, that I did not feel justified to undertake a journey, which would, in those days have necessitated an absence of two months."

In the winter of 1829, Mr. Oncken became acquainted with a Baptist from America. This was Captain Calvin Tubbs, who was detained in Hamburg by his ship being ice-bound for six months; this good man was greatly rejoiced to find a few friends who held the same views as himself. And on his return to the United States he communicated the good news to the American Baptist Missionary Society in Boston.

In the summer of 1833, Professor Sears arrived in Hamburg and found to his astonishment that Oncken and his friends were ready and fully prepared to receive baptism, but as Oncken was just on the point of starting on a journey to Poland, for the Scotch Bible Society, and did not consider it wise to leave

the little flock immediately after they had been baptised, the baptism was postponed until in April 1834, Professor Sears came from Halle, where he was pursuing studies, and the important baptism took place.

There are three sources of authority in religion. Our ideas come to us either from within, from around, or from above. We are directed by reason, by tradition, or by revelation. Each of these three has its place, but one must be pre-eminent. The apostacy of Roman Catholicism was the placing of tradition above reason and revelation, the church which is but the embodiment of tradition is believed to be supreme, to which both Holy Scripture and common sense must bow. Protestantism in Germany fell into the opposite error; it made reason supreme; if tradition did not accord, then it must be rejected, if it suited it might be accepted. The same with the Bible.

The word "church" is used in many instances in the New Testament of the gatherings of believers in a place, united in fellowship and brotherhood. Oncken's great work was in the formation of churches after the scriptural pattern. He soon gathered a number of men of like spirit. They went in all directions

preaching the word, baptising those who believed, and forming such Christian communities. In this work he continued for a long life, often amidst the bitterest antagonism and persecution. At the time of his death the statistics of the Union of German Baptists showed more than 150 churches, with 31,438 members, and 17,000 children in Sunday Schools. This does not give the entire results, for there had been formed Baptist centres in Austria, Bulgaria, Roumania, Hungary, Poland, Holland, Switzerland, Trans-Caucasia, and throughout Russia. German Baptist Churches had also been planted in South Africa, in the United States, some outlying places on the American Continent, and one in the neighbourhood of Mount Ararat, all really the outcome of Mr. Oncken's work. Still later reports show that God is blessing the work by its continuance with greater success and more rapid advance than ever, so that at the time this book is written there are in connection with the German Baptist Union 280 churches with 1222 preaching stations, having a total membership of 54,000; 771 Sunday Schools with 31,500 scholars. Emenating from the small beginnings in Hamburg, the movement has spread into Denmark,

Russia, and Poland, and in each of these countries there are now Baptist Unions with a total membership of about 60,000, grouped in 173 churches.



A BAPTISM IN THE DANUBE AT BUDA PEST.

## CHAPTER IV.

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Witness, ye friends, assembled now,  
Witness, ye unseen angels here—  
A bold and solemn step I take,  
Obeying thus my Saviour dear.  
Yes, witness all, my heart is fixed ;  
'Tis done, and there is no retreat,  
I follow on the saints of God,  
Till in the glory land we meet.

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### IN FULL WORK—OPPOSITION—PROGRESS.

**J.** G. ONCKEN had now become a man in a much higher sense than that intended by the genial friend who took him to Scotland. He had joined the grand procession of those who, led by the Spirit of God, had by a definite act made a profession of decision for Christ, and that in a Divinely appointed way. Baptism with him had been what was intended. It was not regeneration but a profession of having been regenerated. It was not a washing away of sin, but an act of faith that Christ had washed away his sin. It was dying and being buried

to the world, and rising from the grave of earthly things to newness of life. A solemn profession that such was his constant hope and trust through the death and resurrection of Christ his Lord. It was a bold step—one which he must have known would sever him from many friends and former associations of Christian work. On the day following the baptism, the baptised party was solemnly formed into a Christian church and Oncken was chosen and ordained by Professor Sears as their pastor.

Pastor Oncken was then in the 35th year of his age. Although not tall, he was a man of commanding presence, one who in any assembly would be recognised as a leader of men. He had dark black hair and blue eyes of vivid expression, a pleasant countenance, a fine forehead, well-marked and strong features. He was richly endowed with will power and determination, a sturdy, steady obedience to conscience which gave stability to character. There was intensity and vigour in every movement. His voice was deep and strong, and, in German especially, he had great command of language. He spoke English fluently. His home affections were firm and true. Amidst all the evidences of

a forceful nature there was much gentleness and quietness of manner, as though his whole soul was suffused with a peace that passeth understanding. All who met him felt that he was a man capable of great things, but especially that he possessed a spiritual force



J. G. ONCKEN AT THE AGE OF 30.

which would give him a high place amongst the heroes of the armies of God.

The antagonism which he met with from professing Christians after his baptism, was intensified by the legend of the Anabaptists

of Munster. Were the whole truth to be told of that remarkable pre-reformation movement, possibly the terrible spectre, which so alarmed the leaders of the great Reformation and many Christian men since, would be laid, to frighten no more. Those despised Baptists were not what the priests of their day, who hated them bitterly, represented them to have been. A Lutheran writer in 1550 bore witness: "Though they were in error on some doctrinal points," meaning, of course, the question of baptism, "yet they were elevated above the other Protestants on account of their strength of faith and their godliness of life."

It is not the only period of Church history which needs to be entirely re-written. However, it is too late for complete correction now. Their true records, which history is incapable of giving, is on high. Ecclesiastical records were for long in the hands of unscrupulous monks. It is only by "blood traces," incidental references to their suppression by persecution, that we gain hints of the great numbers of baptised evangelical believers, which have lived the unworldly life on the continent of Europe, men of whom the world was not worthy, and who passed away with unrecorded lives to the palm

bearing multitude of heaven. It is gratifying, however, to record that recent impartial historical research by such competent authorities as Professor C. A. Cornelius, Dr. L. Keller, and Dr. H. Dettmer, prove clearly that far from the Münster Empire being a natural development of the Baptist Movement in the time of the Reformation, it was, on the contrary, a total apostacy from the fundamental principles of this movement and an entirely fanatical degeneracy of its aims.

Soon the Tract Society, of which Pastor Oncken had been secretary, severed its relation with him. He had to leave his share of the work in the Sunday school he had founded. His membership with the Independent Church ceased. Many of the friends he had gained through his evangelistic work throughout Germany withdrew from him. It was evident his baptism had been to him something more than a form. We do not find, however, in Oncken that response of bitterness so generally met with in those who depart from the beaten paths. Men who adopt new views ought to be prepared for some antagonism from those who do not see with them. When those views are erroneous, there is generally a departure from love as well as from faith, and

a squeamish outcry about persecution. This is a favourite weapon with those, who from the pride of intellect rebel against the everlasting gospel. Even before anything unkind has been said, they and their followers cry out that they are persecuted and bring unfounded charges of the bitterness of orthodoxy. The men Mr. Oncken had forsaken were justified in forsaking him and we do not find recorded any unkind feeling cherished by him on that account.

But that differs from persecution, and it is a shame to use this term without correct definition. Oncken was persecuted. Baptisms were often held at midnight. In connection with these, evil reports were circulated, which were utterly false. It was in consequence resolved to administer the rite in full daylight. This step proved, however, the source of greater trouble, as the baptisms, often in the river, were witnessed by large numbers of persons, and thus the matter soon became widely known, and complaints were lodged with the authorities which resulted in active measures being taken.

For a while the head of the police, Senator Dr. Hudtwalker and some of the authorities were not unfriendly, but the appointment of

Senator Binder to this office opened the flood-gates of persecution. Mr. Oncken was summoned before the new authority and assured that everything possible would be done to root out the Baptist heresy. Mr. Oncken reminded him that no purely religious movement had ever been suppressed by force, adding, "You will find that all your labour will be in vain." The Senator replied, "then it shall not be my fault, but so long as I can move my little finger, it shall be raised against you." Mr. Oncken said, "I think, sir, that you do not see what I see, which is, not a little finger, but the mighty arm of God." The Senator, however, remained unmoved and vowed that this sect would not be tolerated in Hamburg. Amongst other efforts to put out the light, there was offered Mr. Oncken and all his family a free passage to America, but he replied that he could not accept the offer, as God had placed him there, and there he must remain.

At length Pastor Oncken was thrown into the "Winsersbaum" State Prison, the meetings were broken up, heavy fines imposed, and goods confiscated. The old prison in which he was incarcerated stood close to a bridge, and members of his church would assemble there after service on Sundays and wave



THE "WINERBAUM" PRISON (ON THE LEFT) IN HAMBURG.

their salutations. His co-pastor, Köbner, and his deacon, Lange, soon shared the honour of imprisonment. The latter had his cell above that of Oncken; when he struck up a hymn, Oncken recognising the voice chimed in, and thus like Paul and Silas, they sang praises to God in prison. The Church could no longer meet in one place; but they met in little companies, at one another's houses, thus eluding the vigilance of the police. An amusing incident is remembered. On one occasion a coffee-pot with a false bottom, was used as a means of communication with the prisoners. Sometimes even letters were conveyed placed inside loaves of bread sent in for food. One of these was noticed by a warder, who demanded its surrender and handed it to the Senator who no doubt felt rather disconcerted when he read, "Dear Brother, The Lord's work goes on well, may that comfort and refresh your spirit. Yesterday we met in twelve places; the police were hunting for us, but failed to find us."

Extracts from Mr. Oncken's diary in prison will show the spirit with which he bore the trial. "As soon as my warder had gone, I fell on my knees, blessing and praising the Saviour

who counted me worthy to suffer imprisonment for His name's sake. I felt well and happy, and prayed for the conversion of my persecutors." The next day he noted, "I had several opportunities of speaking to my jailor concerning the one thing needful." At the close of his imprisonment, he had to pay heavy costs, for which his goods were seized and sold.

Dr. Hoby, in his "Visit to Germany," thus describes the prison: "The house is built literally in the water, being washed on two fronts by what is not unlike a vast uncovered sewer, from the effluvia emitted—a dangerous residence for a prisoner afflicted with an affection of the throat and chest, and which might have proved a most effectual method of silencing an obnoxious preacher." Mr. Oncken's stay here, if brief, was long enough for him to receive seeds of weakness and disorder, from the results of which he suffered severely in after life. A disease-engendering prison is a terrible weapon in the hands of a remorseless persecution.

Amongst other interesting incidents of divine interposition in connection with persecutions in those days, the following may be mentioned: Mr. Oncken, with several friends,

had gone to Blankenese, a pretty place of resort a few miles down the Elbe. As there was a little time before the hour of service, they went into the park known as Bauer's Garden. It was the rule that visitors should be counted and then furnished with a ticket on which the number of which the party consisted was given. On leaving, the party was again counted, to prevent anyone remaining behind in the Garden; so Mr. Oncken's party, which consisted of thirteen, was also counted, but the ticket was marked *twelve* persons. It was replied, "We are thirteen." They were again counted, and again the number was returned as twelve, and the discussion becoming rather excited, Mr. Oncken said, "Let it be, my friends; who knows why the Lord permits it?" This was soon manifested, for they had not been long in the garden, when a lady walked up briskly to Mr. Oncken, and whispered, "Dragoons are at the other gate to take you prisoner." Oncken thanked her, and said to the friends, "Now we know why only twelve were allowed to be counted." Quick as a deer, for he was remarkably agile, he hastened down a slope to the side of the Elbe, on which the garden borders, and jumping over the hedge he heard a voice, "Mr. Oncken, will

you go with us to Hamburg?" He looked up and saw a boat in which he recognised several of his friends. "You are sent by the Lord," he answered, and was rowed in safety to Hamburg, while his enemies were waiting in vain for him at the garden gate.

From the beginning of his work in Hamburg, God had given to Oncken in Mr. C. S. Lange, his first convert, a brother and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, a true Epaphroditus, gladly helping and ministering to his wants, always ready to every good work. In the year 1836, it pleased the Lord to lead two men to conviction concerning spiritual baptism, who were destined to become faithful fellow-workers with Mr. Oncken, and with him were recognised as the leaders of the movement. Of great individuality of character they supplemented each other in a remarkable manner, and, from their harmonious working, these three were frequently termed the Cloverleaf of the movement.

Julius Köbner, was the son of a Chief Rabbi amongst the Jews in Denmark. He embraced the Christian faith, but taken up with the world, and exercising his poetical talents in writing for the theatre, his Christianity was merely formal. On his removal to Hamburg

he heard that the Baptist preacher was a remarkable man and powerful orator. He attended a meeting in Mr. Oncken's house, where by the power of the Holy Spirit he found Christ. Soon also he was convinced of the spiritual character of believers' baptism, and was baptised by Mr. Oncken, who found in him a brother beloved, and a most valued colleague; endued with natural gifts, and having received an excellent education, he became one of the best preachers and the poet of the churches. His hymns are excellent and have cheered the hearts and refreshed the spirits of thousands.

Gottfried Wilhelm Lehmann was born in Hamburg, but having removed, with his parents, when a child to Berlin he received his education there. He was an earnest Christian with sincere aspirations after a fuller spiritual life. He made Oncken's acquaintance on the latter visiting Berlin, and entered into personal friendship. At first much perplexed by Oncken's teaching concerning baptism, later on he was convinced of its scriptural character. On his taking the decisive step, he, together with five others were baptised by Mr. Oncken, on May 13th 1837, and on the following day constituted by

him as the first Baptist Church in Berlin, with Lehmann as their leader.

The American Baptist Missionary Magazine gives the following interesting extract from a letter addressed by Mr. Oncken to the American Baptist Board of Foreign Missions, dated Hamburg, August 10th 1837, referring to the formation of the church in the Prussian capital.

“Whilst we have to record the Lord's continued blessing to the church at Hamburg, we rejoice to point you to a new field, which by His gracious providence has been opened to us. My tour to the capital of Prussia has been highly interesting, and has filled our hearts with joy and gladness. In it you will richly participate, when I inform you that a little church composed of six of God's dear children, previously baptised according to the rule of God's house, has been organised. A glorious triumph indeed of the truth of God, in the heart of a country where everything is calculated to keep men from taking so decided a step. I need hardly observe that these beloved brethren and sisters must have had severe struggles, before they took a step which may be attended with most serious consequences to their liberty and property; nothing but



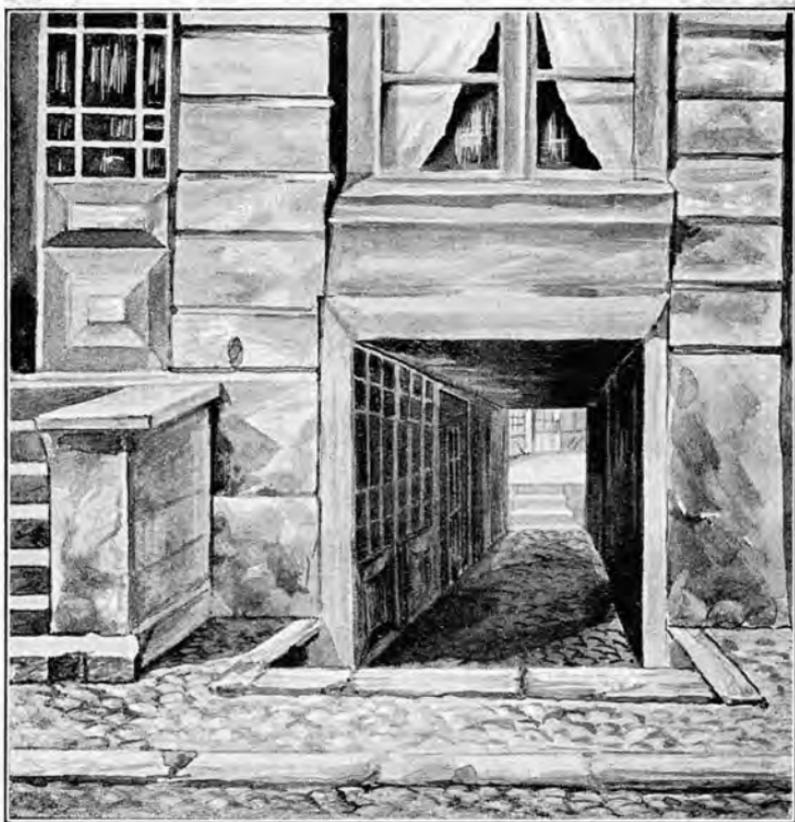
FERRANEAN PASSAGE LEADING TO THE WAREHOUSE IN THE JEWS' QUARTER, HAMBURG, USED AS A BAPTIST MEETING PLACE IN 1842.

the full conviction derived from the Word of God could have induced them to take this solemn step. My stay at Berlin has indeed been a blessed time to me. Besides the formation of the church, and the administration of the Lord's ordinances in their primitive simplicity, I was permitted to preach the unsearchable riches of the gospel to numerous assemblies. I was still very weak in body, but enjoyed such an abundant measure of grace that my infirmity was not felt, and while breaking the bread of life to others, my own soul was filled with the power and love of God my Saviour. Though all these acts were unlawful, according to the laws of the Prussian Government, the Lord was a wall of fire around us, and so no one molested us. I have been favoured with several letters from one of the brethren in Berlin. They are exceedingly happy in their new relation to the Lord, and each other. One of the brethren exercises his gifts to the edification of the church, and meets with much encouragement. They are amply rewarded by their Lord for the odium cast upon them on account of their profession. Beloved brethren, I commend this little band to your constant and warmest prayers. I have assured them of this, and

they feel themselves happy in this consideration, and will derive rich blessing from its accomplishment. I shall have to visit the frontiers of Prussia, as soon as I can, to baptise a young man, who will then constitute a part of the church, with another young man from Oldenburg, baptised last autumn. The Church at Berlin will then consist of eight members."

The persecutions in Hamburg were temporarily brought to an end in a remarkable way; the incessant prayers of the Church were heard, the answer was by fire. In May, 1842, a very extensive conflagration occurred in Hamburg. One-third of the city was left a heap of ruins. Thousands of families were homeless and helpless. The Baptist Church had just taken a warehouse of four stories, to serve as their meeting place and Bible depôt, in the Jews' quarter, and were about to enter it when the fire occurred. At once Mr. Oncken placed three stories at the disposal of the authorities, who were only too glad of such accommodation for the homeless. This gave the death blow to the Hamburg persecutions, though they did not entirely cease for many years afterwards.

Having accepted and advertised "the



SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE LEADING TO THE WAREHOUSE IN THE JEWS' QUARTER, HAMBURG, USED AS A BAPTIST MEETING PLACE IN 1842.

Meeting-House of the Baptists" as a place of refuge; they could not decently persecute them, nor interfere with services held in the same building that sheltered eighty of the houseless poor. And the vigorous assistance which Oncken rendered to the authorities in several ways at the time hastened on the day of toleration. Nevertheless, on the anniversary of the fire he was again placed in prison, although he was at that time suffering from very bad health, he obtained a respite for a time, after which he was obliged to return to his former cell in the "Winserbaum." Then his illness became so severe that he was again released, and through influence in high quarters, the incident was brought to a close.

The year 1848, which was a great period of Continental upheavals, gave an opportunity for extended active operations amongst the churches. Mr. Oncken writes of the events: "The great political changes in the country have ushered us, as it were, into a new state of existence, both as to our personal liberty, so that we can move more freely in every direction, as also to the wide field of labour assigned to us, and the earnest solicitations from various quarters to send brethren who can preach the Gospel and take the oversight

of the little bands of believers who have seceded from the national churches." He made several missionary tours, visiting Vienna and Pesth, and the Silesian Mountains, as well as many portions of the field already occupied. Part of an old monastery was hired at Vienna, where the brethren met till 1851, when letters between them and the brethren at Pesth being intercepted, they were surprised one Lord's day, and men, women, and children were arrested and cast into prison.

As it became known that not one of the five thousand members belonging to these Baptist Churches took any part in the revolutionary movements, ardently though they longed for increased liberty, the favourable impression made by their peaceful and law-abiding bearing, was remarkably illustrated in the case of Hamburg, where Senator Binder, the man who had declared he would do all he could to crush them 20 years before, now said, "Mr. Oncken, your conduct and that of all your members has been so noble, that we must give you all you ask, and henceforth, anything I can do to serve you I shall be happy to do," and he remained their friend till his death. In 1857, full tolerance was granted to the Hamburg Church, and on January 1st,

1866, a decree of the Senate and the Town Council declared all the religious denominations on a perfect equality. Similarly throughout the land persecutions relaxed, and gradually opposition ceased.

The following extract from a letter to the Committee of the American Baptist Missionary Union, Sept. 28th 1848, gives a vivid view of Mr. Oncken's work and the spirit in which he carried it on. He writes, "My whole time is devoted to God's cause, in one way or another. The church here and the churches generally, our extensive tract operations, the constant issuing of new editions of the Holy Scriptures, an extensive correspondence with our missionaries and colporteurs, and frequent missionary tours demand my time. All are important, and form a part of the whole. The only thing to which, if possible, I should like to devote more time, is the visiting of all the churches. This I consider most important, as the churches are all in their infancy, and though I believe there is generally a deeply pious tone among the members, there must of necessity be a scanty amount of knowledge. I have always found that by one visit to a church more lasting good is effected than by a dozen letters. But, on the other hand, I

fear the church here would be ill pleased, and there are many considerations which are against a protracted absence from home."

"A number of brethren who are, have been, or may yet be engaged as evangelists or missionaries, should have the advantage of some instruction, comprising at least a grammatical knowledge of German, biblical exposition and church history. And though as yet I have no means to carry the plan out, I intend to commence with it in January next."

"As regards the churches supporting their pastors and contributing towards missionary objects, I believe more has been done for the cause of missions by them than by any other body of Christians in Germany. For the support of their pastors nothing has as yet been done, nor do I think that this would have been possible, unless their aid had been withheld from other objects. The church here for example has generally supported three of our brethren as missionaries, has assisted other churches, raised annually about three hundred dollars for the support of its poor, defrayed the expense of a place of worship and contributed to Tract, Bible, and other societies. Most of the other churches have followed the example and on the whole we

have cause for gratitude. Our sisters in the church at Hamburg have almost without an exception laid their trinkets on God's altar. But much more can and will be done, and I trust, as we have now personal access to the churches, and the disciples are reminded of their high responsibility to Christ, that His love will constrain them, and us, to devote ourselves, with all we are and have to His service."

The educational training of young men who were to be sent out as missionaries and evangelists, referred to in the above letter, was commenced by Mr. Oncken, in 1849, with the assistance of Pastor Köbner. It may here be mentioned, that, having had to renounce his connection with the existing Tract Society, he formed on September 26th 1836, the Hamburg Tract Society, which proved a fruitful means of the extension of the work, all members taking an active part in tract distribution. Hamburg was a city that had many attractions for young men from all parts of Germany, both for perfecting themselves in their trade, and for enjoying the many distractions it offered. Many however of these were led, through tracts received, to the Saviour and added to the church, when in

their turn they at once entered the ranks of zealous tract distributors. In most cases however not for long. Some policeman would see them committing this punishable offence, they would be arrested and enjoined to leave Hamburg forthwith. Whenever this happened Mr. Oncken not only had them provided with some means, but also with their knapsacks well filled with tracts, and a new missionary was thus sent out on the journey to his own home. In this manner the good seed was spread far and near, and everywhere throughout the German fatherland small flocks of Baptists were formed, remaining in contact with the Hamburg Church and visited from time to time by the ministers or deacons of this Church, especially when Baptism and the Lord's Supper were to be administered.

Now, in 1849, a further step was taken in giving systematic instruction and training to seven young men who were to be sent out as pastors of the Churches which had meantime been formed. In 1851 and 1853 similar courses of instruction were given to a further fourteen, and in 1869 to twenty-six missionaries, but these courses only lasted for six months. From these small beginnings the present Hamburg Baptist College has de-

veloped, which was opened, free of debt, in 1888, in which continually a number of young men are being trained for ministerial work in Central Europe, and for mission work in heathen lands. Up to the present time 200 young men have been prepared for the gospel ministry and pastoral work. There is an able staff of tutors, and the course of study lasts four years. The college has a warm place in the affections of the German Churches, and supported by their gifts and prayers it has done, and is still doing, substantial work.

We conclude this chapter by giving the following valedictory address by Pastor Oncken, to his students, on May 30th, 1855:

Dear Brethren,

The solemn hour of separation has now come; gladly would we still have retained you in our midst, and if I rightly interpret your feelings, you would gladly have remained with us some months longer. But such is the fate of earthly ties, they are made to be severed. Not so however among the children of God. The pain of bodily separation we feel in the same manner as the children of the world, but even this is modified by the fact that our real, if spiritual and invisible, union continues, and cannot by space, time, or death be severed or even diminished. Our union has its origin in Christ, the Lord over space, time, and death. We are of good confidence that you are His, and therefore

we are assured that our meeting at this hour and in this poor life will not be our last meeting. He who has through His Spirit here united us in one faith, one Lord, one baptism to be members of one body, will as the Head of this body soon once more unite us above.

Here below Christ unites His disciples for combined work, labour, suffering, contempt, persecution, so that His body, the Church, should become like Him in His humiliation, but above He unites them, that they shall be like unto His glorified body, according to the power, whereby He will make all things subject unto Him.

Whilst parting then, the feeling of sorrow must not prevail, because the Master is calling you, and calling you to a work which is too good even for angels.

The Lord Jesus calls you as once He called His Apostles, not to be Apostles as those first infallible witnesses, but He calls you to proclaim the same truths which they preached to the world, be it as colporteurs, through the dissemination of Holy Scripture, and of books baptised into the spirit of Holy Writ, and by simple conversation with fellow-sinners, or by the preaching of the Word in smaller or larger congregations.

He calls you to go out, not to the heathen world, nor primarily to the Jews, but to tell the Christians in your own Fatherland, that they are not Christian, but rather heathen, and that as such, notwithstanding their name of Christians, they will be lost, yes, eternally lost, if they will not turn and as poor sinners take their refuge in Christ, and through hearty faith in Him obtain forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life.

"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

This, my beloved, is the last command and authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords, to His first witnesses, given shortly before the eternal gates opened to the Conqueror over sin, Satan, and hell, to assume His well-merited place to the right of the Majesty on high, so that Zion's God and King from above might give to the witness of His messengers power, weight, and irresistible force, and the nations of the earth be delivered from the power of the prince of darkness and be brought under the gentle yoke and the peaceful sceptre of the Son of David and the Son of God.

As long as the Church of Christ adhered to this command of her King, so long also was the promise given therewith, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," fulfilled, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs. Following immediately upon their first witness the risen Lord gains the victory over the hearts of three thousand Jews. Overwhelmed by the almightiness of His grace they fall at the feet of the glorified Nazarene, and own and hail Him as Israel's God and King. And now from victory to victory. The High Priest and all his adherents, who with him withstood the Lord, had to own to their confusion that there was still standing One other besides the Galilean fishermen. And as in Jerusalem the right hand of the Lord obtained the

victory over many thousands of hearts by the faithful obedience of His servants to His command, so to an even greater degree among the heathen. Millions were saved. The great, mighty, and lovely victories of the Lord imbued the Apostles and the first Christians generally with a zeal and power, of which we have no conception. Without railways, without steamers, the Gospel was in a short time proclaimed to the whole then known world; yes, it is even assumed that Paul travelled as far as Britain.

We all, who belong to Christ should to-day be in the Millennium, the world would be conquered for the Lord, and instead of continuing the warfare and anew sharpening our swords, we should be enjoying the sweet and holy rest of the thousand years. Satan saw this, and for him it became a life-question as to how this could be frustrated. He remembered his achievement in Eden—man would know better and do better than the great God—thus he achieved the fall; and once again the same attempt should be made with Christ's confessors. They were seduced to tamper with the Word of God, to interfere with the clear, concise, positive command of Christ; of course with the best and kindest intentions. Thus men have tampered with and crippled God's holy command, and oh! fearful, fearful have been the consequences.

Instead of the Kingdom of God, the kingdom of the devil has been built up under the name of Christianity. They have bound the hands of God that he could not continue to bless. If to us God grants the grace that the whole truth undiminished, without tampering, without adding thereto or taking therefrom, is by us acknowledged, believed, obeyed, and fearlessly

carried into a godless, false Christianity, then will the gates of Divine blessing which had been closed by human traditions and imaginings, once more be opened. The eternal faithful God can again own the command given by Him and the promise attached thereto, and again we shall see the arm of the Lord revealed to all the people.

The most difficult task of a pastor does, however, not consist in preaching to the enemies of God and of His Son, who daily mock and blaspheme Christ by a godless life, God's judgment and eternal condemnation, but to preach this to disciples of the Lord who have lost their first love, and from whose entire demeanour it can be seen, that their whole Christianity is no longer the free, glad out-pouring of a heart which daily in the love of Jesus finds heaven on earth. The "Lord, Lord," is still on the lips, the garment of Christianity is still there, but the anointing, the deep humility, the holy earnestness, and the undivided allegiance have long since disappeared.

The injury, however, caused to the Kingdom of Christ by such inner sickness—in God's eyes back-sliding—is more deadly than anything that can be undertaken by a godless world against the gospel. Not the world and the devil hinder the free course and the victory of the gospel, but the lukewarm, undecided, withered, worldly-minded confessors of Christ. Such there have been at all times. Achan with his love for the Babylonian mantle leads the procession of such confessors in the Old Testament, and Judas, the treasurer of the twelve disciples, in the New Testament, and the Church of Laodicea is the first to do the same as a Church of the New Covenant.

We, my brethren, are in the same danger, as is proved by our short history; along the road of our escape from Sodom there are the fearful statues, pillars of salt. Many among us who once ran well and justified the best hopes are to-day drunkards, fornicators, adulterers, misers, self-righteous and blasphemers of this Church. Many who were once baptised among us on the confession of their faith, and who had solemnly vowed to God and man to remain faithful unto death to Him, the living God, the acknowledged Truth, and to His people, stand to-day in the ranks of Christ's enemies.

Therefore, the necessity, with all earnestness to heed the word "Awake, thou that sleepest, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," that we may escape all the misery of the great apostasy, and in the spirit of watchfulness and prayer abide in the same calling, wherein we were called, unto the end.

## CHAPTER V.

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We cannot each write large upon the page  
Of history, indelibly, an honoured name.  
We shall not live to see the future age,  
And find a pleasure in a lasting fame;  
But every one may gain a crown of glory—  
If his allotted work he doeth well;  
Then, often in eternity, the story  
Of his good deeds the records there will tell!

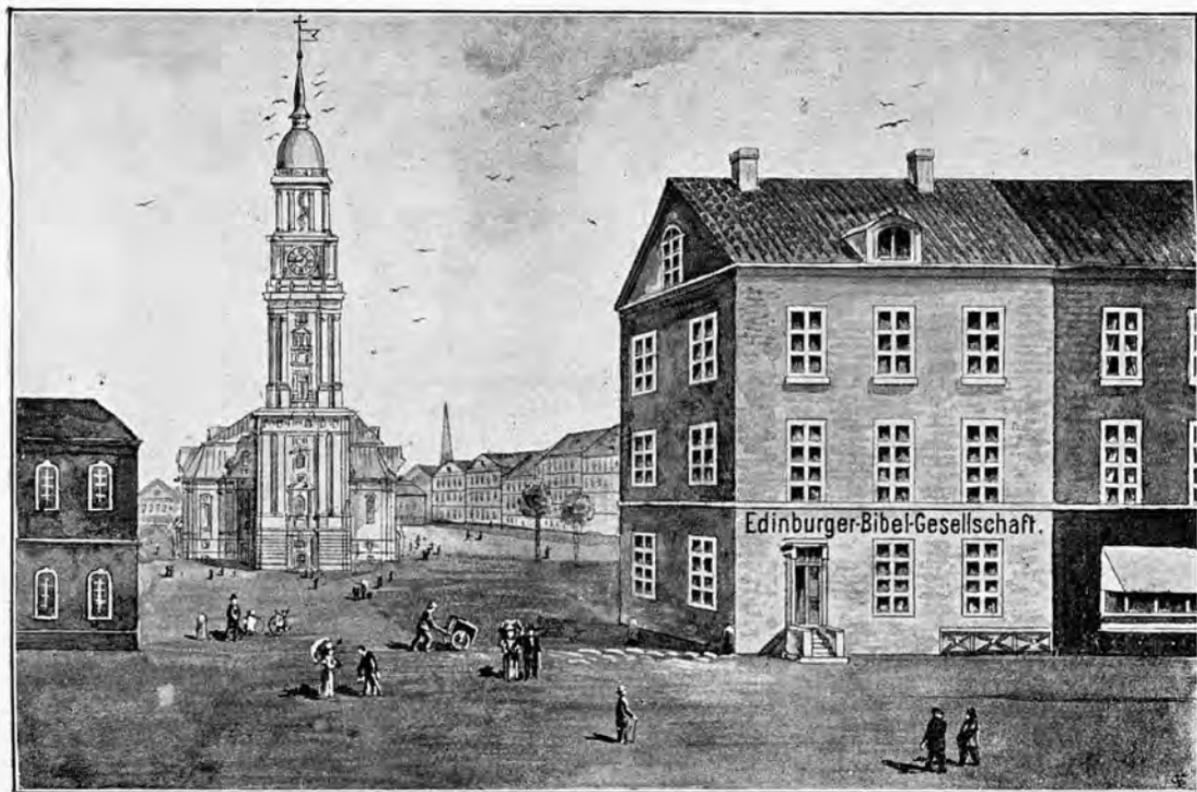
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### PUBLICATION WORK—MISSIONARY TOUR— BAPTISMS.

THE business which Mr. Oncken had begun in a small way in Neumann Street, in a low-lying part of the city, was, in consequence of the unsanitary position of the house abandoned, and he took up his abode at No. 7, Englische Planke, the ground floor of which was used as a depôt for Bibles and tracts. This house, in which the first Baptist Church in Germany was formed on April 23rd 1834, stood in the immediate vicinity of the beautiful Lutheran St. Michael's Church, and was, with the church, destroyed

by fire in 1906. When larger premises were required owing to the ever increasing importance of the Bible and publication work the depôt was transferred to the centre of the city, No. 12 Grosser Burstah, where it formed a great centre of religious literature and the head-quarters of the Baptist movement. It became a continental depôt of the Religious Tract Society, of London, the American Bible and Tract Society, the Scottish National Bible Society, and other Christian literary institutions. Its issues averaged yearly from ten to twenty thousand copies of Holy Scripture, and a million religious tracts in German, Danish, Polish, Russian, Hungarian, and other tongues. Here were published several new editions of the Bible. In 1836, there was formed here "The Hamburg Tract Society." In 1844, "The Missionary Leaves," an excellent monthly evangelical magazine, much harassed by government censorship, was first published. The depôt also became a centre of various branches of mission work, such as "The Chapel Building Loan Fund," "The Widows' Fund," "The Relief Fund for Persecuted Christians."

In his business undertaking Mr. Oncken was greatly assisted by a brother very



J. G. ONCKEN'S HOUSE IN WHICH THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN HAMBURG WAS FORMED.

competent for the work, J. Braun, who for thirty years by his business skill ensured its prosperity. He was born Nov. 8th, 1819, in Mohrungeu, East Prussia. In his 18th year he received religious impression and was baptised, and entered into the Menonite Church. Still living in and with the world he could find no rest for his soul, till in 1841, by the reading of the works of Grace Kennedy, he was wholeheartedly converted. About this time he became acquainted with Pastor Oncken, who was on a missionary journey to that part of Germany, and the young man was deeply impressed by the sermons and personal advice given him by Mr. Oncken. The latter had been greatly struck by the earnestness, devotedness, and missionary zeal of the young man, and in 1842, called him to Hamburg to assist in his depot for Bibles and books. In this position he soon gained entire confidence, through his reliability, punctuality, faithfulness and love of work, so that he very soon became the trusted manager of the concern, in which position he remained for thirty years—the right hand of Oncken—taking a personal and active part in church and missionary work, and frequently accompanying him on his missionary journeys. In 1866

he founded his own business, in which he was greatly prospered, so that starting from a small beginning it has grown to one of the largest emporiums of Hamburg. Although he had the grace to be content with a second place, he has been made a great blessing to the German churches in many ways, especially in that he from the very beginning cultivated in the churches the service of song. When first he came to Hamburg as a young man, Mrs. Oncken noticed in him musical talent, and as he had a good voice she gave him instruction in music. He continued his studies, and eventually became so efficient that he collected and edited a book of chorals and tunes, containing many of his own composition. For many years the highly esteemed Elder of the Altona Church, he devoted a great part of his time, and generously supported the institutions of the German Baptist Mission—especially the Publication Work and the College. Of the latter, he was the indefatigable treasurer, and if the German Baptists own a large and well-appointed College free of debt, it is due to the faithful and persevering solicitude of Mr. Braun. He was a man of prayer, who loved and knew his Bible. By the grace of God he attained in good health,

and undiminished faculties the ripe old age of 89, and after a short and painless illness entered upon his eternal rest in February, 1908.

In the year 1835, Pastor Oncken was, by the American Baptist Missionary Society, appointed their Missionary for Germany. In his instructions he was advised that "untold blessing would result" if he could devote time to make missionary tours.

A condensed narrative of one of Oncken's missionary tours, may give the best idea of the work he undertook. From his reports to America one is taken at random, in fact it was the first that came to hand, but appears to give a fair example. In a letter from Breslau, in Silesia, dated June 19th 1846, he speaks of sorrow on account of the few labourers in the promising fields around him. "The responsibility of our work is almost overwhelming, yet the Word and the Spirit of the Lord are sufficient, not only to keep us from all error, but also to enable us to build the Lord's house after the Divine original." He prays in the exciting times to be kept "from the troubled waters of politics, in which the Christians of Great Britain and America have, I fear, been so much immersed as to

injure their spirituality of mind and zeal for the Lord. We have just one work to do and whatever convulsions may shake the earth, we must have our eye and heart fixed on this: to preach Christ, become all things to all men, that we may save some, and restore Apostolic Churches. He who has called us and sent us has thus far been with and blessed us above our most sanguine expectations, and on His unchanging word 'Behold I am with you alway,' relying, we will go forth to the battle, certain that the most glorious victories will be achieved in the strength of Jehovah." Pastor Oncken's work at Breslau was to form a little church. Two converts from Romanism had been baptised, and through their teaching four more were awaiting baptism; to these he administered the ordinance, and the six formed a church, over which he ordained a pastor, and gave much instruction before he left the town. He then visited Stettin, in Prussia, where he found one hundred and twenty had been baptised in a few previous months; he left with the brethren a small sum of money, and ordered for them a good supply of Bibles from the depôt. He heard that at five or six villages where there were

small assemblies, upwards of forty-nine had been baptised since January.

In his report of the same date and place, he gives an account of a visit to Niesky, a Moravian settlement. The minister gave him a hearty reception, and introduced the subject of baptism. Baron von Bulow, a nobleman interested in evangelistic work, who was present, "granted that infant baptism could not be proved from the Bible, though neither was it prohibited." The minister said, "I always tell the children in the instruction previous to confirmation, that infant baptism is nowhere taught in the New Testament, but we have history for it, and the development of the church." At Thorn, he met several pious persons who were members of the State Church, with whom he held conference, and had reason to conclude that his testimony had not been in vain. "The hospitality received from these dear Christians was most hearty." If very definite in faith, Mr. Oncken was broad in charity.

He then went to Schneidenmuhl, where he was disheartened by a cold formal reception, for nothing seemed to repel him like religious frost. At Schwetz, he met a Romish procession of Poles, singing hymns to the Virgin

Mary, to these he gave tracts. He visited a church of Mennonites, and preached for them, at their place of worship on the Lord's day. In the evening, he preached in a farm-house to about one hundred persons. After visiting and preaching at Graudenz, Garnsee, Saalfeldt, Allenstein, Warteburg, and other adjacent places, and making some evangelical efforts at each, he went to Königsberg, when he was detected by the police authorities, and ordered to go back to Hamburg. He went away, but instead of going home, he proceeded to Elbing, where he was apprehended and brought before the magistrates, and commanded to go home at once; he succeeded however in the evening in gathering together the members of the church in that place, and remained with them speaking counsel and encouragement till a late hour. At four o'clock the next morning, he started on a 48 hours journey to Berlin. To several persons in the train he made known the way of life. He stayed four or five days with the Church at Berlin, then revisited Stettin to assist in the formation of a church, when he evaded the police who were in search for him, and finally reached home safely.

The following month he visited England,

to collect for the new chapel at Hamburg, and realised £450. The additions to the church there in 1846, were 73 by baptism, forming a membership of 326. At the same time he was able to report many baptisms, by his evangelists, in various places in Hanover, Brunswick, Hessa, and elsewhere.

Baptism was a heavier cross in those days and in such surroundings than now, or as it is in England and America. It is doubtless intended to be a trial, to mark a definite step. But in a good chapel, when all the appointments are complete, and every arrangement made for a pleasant observance, with bright light and suitable singing, and the full protection instead of the persecution of the forces of authority, there is a great difference. The spirit is the same, to face a gainsaying world with a profession which, to what are called the people of society, must be an offence and a ridicule, Baptism is a trial and will ever be so, were it not, it would not meet its intention.

Here is a narrative by Mr. H. Cramme, a missionary at Salzgitter, of a baptism in Switzerland, in Canton Appenzell.

"One aged believer I baptised here. It was her fourth baptism, but her first scriptural immersion. She had been baptized as an infant, sprinkled as a believer, then baptized by a false teacher in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and having now

compared our views with the New Testament, cheerfully submitted to a scriptural administration of the ordinance. Circumstances even now gave this friend's baptism an unusual character. The continuous heat had rendered water scarce in the mountain-heights. I, therefore, descended to a near valley, where a brook, enclosed by rocks, was leisurely pursuing its course. Here I built a baptistry of mould and stones, in the hope that until night sufficient water would be collected in it, to make a baptism possible. At midnight four persons descended into the valley. But my reservoir, having suffered a break, was not quite filled; yet we were of good cheer and, a repair being made, I could soon administer the ordinance. Our voices caused the mountain-solitude to resound with the praises of God, and after a perilous ascent, we reached the summit, which was to us a very Pisgah, as we celebrated the dying love of Christ. We were but four believers in number, yet true to His promise, the Lord was in our midst."

As an illustration of the bitter spirit then prevalent against baptism, the following case of mistaken persecution is reported from Saxony. A merchant from Chemnitz, had business at Oederau. It being a hot day, he thought he would enjoy bathing, and enquired of a police officer for a suitable place. The man formed a notion that he was about to attend to a rite of the prohibited Anabaptist heresy and arrested him. It happened that he had not a passport with him. He was conveyed through the streets, followed by a jeering crowd, and taken before the magistrates. There he underwent an examination, all papers taken from him and he was placed in confinement. As soon as he could, he

telegraphed for his solicitor, who on his arrival testified that his client was an orthodox Lutheran, when he was released, but only on the payment of all the costs.

Verily these humble followers of Christ, the Baptists of Germany, of the central decades of the Nineteenth Century, must have felt they were not of this world. On every side they were treated as the offscouring of the earth. In the Prussian Chamber, a deputy on one occasion made a strong protest to their being compared, in that august assembly to "hordes of murderous highwaymen in India." Christian ministers accused them of being "wilful soul murderers of themselves and their children." A very popular work of fiction called "Baptism or Anabaptism," became a vehicle of the bitterest calumny and greatly inflamed the masses to seek their extirpation. But they went their way encouraged by a remarkable and continuous success. From their reports, their sermons, and their letters, it is evident that they were men of strong faith who endured hardships as good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, preaching the Word in season and out of season, implicitly relying on the Master's promise, "Lo, I am with you alway," and

they enjoyed in an unusual degree the presence of the Lord of love and power.

### BAPTISMAL HYMN.

BY PROFESSOR AUGUSTUS RANSCHENBUSCH.

*(Translated from the German.)*

ONCE, where flows the sacred Jordan,  
 Christ was buried 'neath the wave;  
 See the waters swelling round Him  
 In this emblematic grave!  
 See how glowed His tender love  
 For the sinful, when He strove  
 With the mightiest powers infernal,  
 Snatching souls from death eternal.

Yes, for us on Calvary dying,  
 He from sin has made us free,  
 Life and fullest pardon winning,  
 Blessedness for you and me.  
 His we are from this glad day,  
 Follow Him in His own way,  
 Uncomplaining, His cross bearing,  
 He for us our nature wearing.

Therefore, on! ye well-loved children;  
 Are you from the curse made free?  
 Glows your heart with love for Jesus,  
 Crucified upon the tree?  
 Ye who bear this sacred name,  
 Follow Him through flood and flame;  
 Where our Head has gone before us  
 We may tread, His banner o'er us.

## CHAPTER VI.

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Within the heart of every man,  
An angel and a tiger dwell ;  
Which ceaseless strive to see which can  
The whole soul bring beneath its spell.  
When savage war an entrance gains,  
The angel flees—the tiger reigns ;  
When Christ His grand salvation gives,  
The tiger dies—the angel lives.

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### PERSECUTIONS—SUPPORT FROM AMERICAN AND BRITISH BAPTISTS—LETTER TO MRS. ONCKEN.

THE persecutions to which the Baptist Churches were subjected were directed as much against the preaching of repentance and faith as against the administration of the ordinance of Believers' Baptism; although, for the latter, the sham spectre of the Anabaptists of Munster may have been considered as giving some excuse.

We have already spoken of the opposition and persecution Mr. Oncken and his Church in Hamburg had to suffer, but it was the same in all other parts of Germany to which

the movement was gradually extending. During his many missionary journeys, his safety and even his life were often endangered by the fury of fanatical mobs, and until 1848 he was also subjected to expulsions, fines, and imprisonment by the police. In the duchy of Hesse-Cassel, even a reward was offered for his apprehension. In Denmark, he was declared an outlaw, and a judicial decree was issued threatening with the severest penalties any person concealing his whereabouts while in the country, and offering a reward of twenty dollars to any person causing his arrest or giving precise information as to where he could be found. Mr. Oncken later wrote about this: "Our baptisms all took place under cover of the night and on my missionary tours, which were frequently extensive, I was banished successively from almost every State in Germany.\* I could never travel as an honest man by daylight, but was compelled to journey on foot in the darkness, to hold services, examine candidates, administer the ordinances, and form churches in the dead of night, and take care to be across the frontiers before break of day for fear of my pursuers."

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\* It should be remembered that Germany at that time consisted of 36 different independent States.

Similar and in some instances even more cruel persecutions were endured by most of the noble band of Oncken's fellow-labourers, and by many private members of the churches; and for sufferings endured, for heroism displayed, for success achieved, and for unfaltering loyalty to Jesus Christ we are often reminded of the record of the Apostolic work of the first Christian Churches. A few instances must suffice.

A young man, Johann Heinrich Sander, born in Othfresen, near Brunswick, had been converted in Stuttgart and added to the church there in 1838. He returned to his own home and preached the gospel, and soon had the joy of seeing several converted, so that Mr. Oncken, passing through on one of his missionary journeys, could baptise seven and form them into a little church, with Sander as their leader. At once a fearful storm of persecution arose. The meetings were prohibited by the police; if they were nevertheless held there were fines and imprisonments, and as for conscience sake the fines were not paid, their household goods were seized.

Their new-born children were taken by the police and sprinkled by the Lutheran clergy. Frequently members were by night hauled

out of their beds to ascertain that they were not concealing friends. It became necessary to meet for worship at night-time in the forests, the place of meeting having frequently to be changed in order to escape detection. To the enmity of the clergy there was added the hatred of the world, so that the young converts had to endure many sufferings, especially as Sander had meantime gone to Hamburg. Mr. Oncken therefore sent him back, in the position of a colporteur of the Bible Society, in the hope that his presence amongst them would prove an encouragement and tend to the extension of the Kingdom of God, as he was a man of humble and gentle mind and full of sincere love and affection for the suffering disciples of Christ. And so it came to pass that under God's blessing soon others were converted and added to the small flock.

Sander was a diligent worker. He visited the scattered members as often as it was possible for him to do so, and also visited the neighbouring villages. However, he could only take these journeys at night as he had been prohibited by the police to leave his own village. In many other respects also there were many trials for the Lord's sake. In May, 1843, he writes that his mother had

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just been released from prison, but that he was now to be incarcerated, and that it was no longer permitted for even the smallest number to meet for the worship of God. In consequence of all these hardships he fell ill and nigh unto death, but eventually recovered and was in 1844 ordained as a missionary. In 1848, as he was beginning to conduct a service in the village of Upen, the peasants and their labourers led by the magistrate, armed with cudgels, broke into the meeting, extinguished the light and maltreated him in a most brutal manner, finally throwing him out of the house and then dragging him for a quarter of an hour, leaving him half dead, with the promise to do better next time! The authorities took no notice, but rather approved of this cruel assault. Similar occurrences happened at other places. The colporteur Kramme was stoned at a neighbouring village. The Lord's work however was not thereby hindered. Upen soon became a flourishing station and remains so to this day.

An even worse experience was met with by the Missionary Straube, in May 1849, who after a three days missionary tour, arrived in Gesstorf, at the house of a man who had asked for his visit. When next morning he

met with a few friends for edification from God's Word, the local magistrate and two policemen entered, asked the names of those present and overwhelmed them with a flood of insults and vile language, telling Mr. Straube to leave the village within an hour. Incited by a sermon by the Roman Catholic priest who had told them that it would be no sin to destroy a man like him, a crowd of young fellows dragged him out of the house, maltreating him in a most outrageous manner. His clothes were torn off his body until he was half naked, and thus he was dragged along the high road to the next village. His health was permanently injured by this cruel treatment and the loss of blood he sustained. Mr. Straube when reporting this incident concludes: "I heartily forgive the people who thus dealt with me and also those who hired them for money to treat me in this manner. May God, for Jesus' sake, not put it to their account. It can last but for a few moments—as many as God permits. Soon we shall see Him who died for us and rose again."

In Denmark the persecution was particularly violent, meetings were prohibited, fines imposed, and finally the two brothers Mönster, the leaders of the movement, were thrown into

prison, where they languished for a long time. Mr. Oncken went to England and aroused the sympathy of the Baptist Union for the Danish persecuted brethren. A deputation consisting of Rev. Eustace Giles of Leeds, and Henry Dowson of Bradford, were sent to Copenhagen with a petition to the King, signed by 400 English ministers pleading for their release, the deputation was graciously received but the request was not granted. Elizabeth Fry also intervened on their behalf but without avail. They were only liberated many months later after having paid the imposed fine and the expenses of the incarceration, and under the repeated prohibition to preach and administer the sacraments. An important deputation of the American Baptist Union, consisting of the Professors T. J. Conant and Horatio B. Hackett, which arrived in Copenhagen in the following year to plead the cause of the persecuted brethren was no more successful, on the contrary the Mönsters were imprisoned a third, fourth, and fifth time, their food consisting of bread and water.

The hearty sympathy and the liberal support of the Baptists in the United States and in Great Britain, which from the beginning had been extended to Mr. Oncken in his work

was ever deeply appreciated by him and proved a great blessing and encouragement; when he was passing through the fires of persecution in Hamburg, Dr. Ackworth and Dr. Hoby, acting as a deputation from the Baptist Union, and a minister representing five hundred American Churches, presented a petition to the Hamburg Senate, which was supported by the Queen of England and by Lord Palmerston.

The American Baptist Missionary Society had from the very beginning, and for a great number of years, in a whole-hearted and systematic manner supported the work of the German Baptist Mission. In presenting a report to the Board, Mr. Oncken writes: "I now give an account of my stewardship and of the brethren engaged with me. I do this with grateful feelings both to God, and your esteemed Board; to God, as the author of all good; who graciously purposed our present efforts to spread the glory of His name; and to your Board as the honoured means by which the work was to be sustained."

The great personal kindness and gracious hospitality which was at all times extended to Mr. Oncken during his many visits to England and Scotland, and the rich support

given by British Baptists for the work entrusted to his hands was and remained to the end of his days a constant cause of gratitude and praise. The following letter addressed to his wife is characteristic of the man and his spirit.

Edinburgh, 14th June, 1838,

Half-past 12 a.m.

My dear and beloved Wife,

My highly interesting stay in this modern Athens has now drawn to a close. I leave this morning at half-past five o'clock on my way to Shields, Newcastle, &c., and though the hour is late, I must spend a few moments with her, in whom so much of my earthly happenings are bound up.

To relate half of the kindness and love I have experienced would require more time than I can at present command, suffice it to say my heart is refreshed with the delightful communion which I have enjoyed with the Lord's people. I have been much in company—but all very profitable, and I shall look back to these sweet seasons with sacred delight. Blessed be God there are yet real Christians—Christians without guile—Christians of the highest mental attainments and in possession

of earthly wealth and yet so humble, so teachable, that it does one's heart good to see them. The Lord reward all the dear Christians who have been kind to me, and to His name be all the glory that many as I am told have been blessed and refreshed by my visit.

A deep interest for our little cause in Germany has been raised here and many prayers are ascending to heaven for us. Last Thursday a special prayer meeting was held at Mr. Haldane's chapel for us, when the Church presented its Christian love through me, to the Church at Hamburg. Fervent prayers were offered for us, which may the Lord hear and answer. My collection for the tract cause has reached upwards of £60. Miss Henrietta Haldane has been most indefatigable in collecting this; she is a dear humble Christian—a plain girl but full of good works. I spoke twice at a School conducted by her and other Christian ladies, and on Monday she took me to the state prison, where I addressed about twenty-four unfortunate females not yet tried. Dr. Beilly has been very kind to me and has engaged to get a petition signed by ministers of different denominations in favour of us, which is to be presented to the Senate. The Presbyterians have also promised to do so.

Above all things, help me to praise the Lord that I had not left Edinburgh before Lewis came—he has been like others of his Jewish brethren, for Christians cannot act so—the particulars I cannot relate now; enough, every attempt has been made to injure me; the Lord lay not this sin to their charge; I can pity them and pray for them. The committee have acted most honourably towards me, acquitted me fully, expressed their full confidence and will send me a testimonial to London. The agency continues in my hands as before. I offered them to resign but they would not hear of it. Oh! the kindness of my God! I bless Him at all times. Lewis is to continue for the present. Do not speak to a soul about him, and if he comes back by way of Hamburg have no more to do with him than is absolutely necessary.

With this you will receive the following:—a box, a large parcel with books value Banco Marks 150—get the customs declaration written out, that Müllers may get them from Board, the James Watt; there is also a little box with oat cake &c., from Mrs. McLean, which must not be mentioned.

Write immediately to London and send on any letters you may have from Oldenburg,

or other parts, and write all the news you have. But I must close or I shall get no sleep. I trust you have all recovered. My heart is with you, and I now commend you and my three dear lambs to Him, who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me." Tell the Church of my success and present my affectionate love to them all. I have also got £2 for our poor. And now, my dear Sarah, I embrace and kiss you. The Lord keep, bless, and save you.

Your affectionate husband,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J. G. Oncken". The signature is written in dark ink and is underlined with a long, horizontal flourish that extends to the left and right, ending in a small loop.

In 1847, Professor Sears had written: The great Reformation, which was commenced at Wittenberg about three centuries and a quarter before, did not, within the first eight years of its existence, occupy so many important posts as the German Baptist Mission in the same period. Since those days the movement has extended and gained a firm footing throughout the countries of Central and Northern Europe; persecution in its violent

form had ceased and even the clergy of the State Churches had found it necessary to deal with the Baptist movement as a factor meriting serious consideration.

In the year 1862, at the Berlin Clerical Conference, an assembly of considerable importance, Pastor Rühl delivered a remarkable address, which was afterwards published and obtained considerable attention. It is curious that he speaks of Baptists as the only dissenters of influence in Germany. He says: "They hold fast to the material principles of the Reformation; the two points on which they lay the special stress are, 1st, The universal depravity of man; 2nd, Mercy alone through the blood and merits of Christ. Their life-aim is the striving for deliverance from the chains of sin and for the assurance of a state of grace, and the grand epoch of their lives is 'conversion,' or, as they more often term it, the 'new birth.' And this exchange of words is not by chance—the Baptist, verily considers 'conversion' and the 'new birth' to be the same. 'The new birth,' they say, 'takes place through the word, and is perfected in faith. Awakened in terror by the word of God from the sleep of sin, the man flees to Christ, and receives through faith in Him the

forgiveness of sin and the assurance of sonship. This great change is the *new birth (or conversion)*. Baptism, as such, cannot in any way help towards salvation; it can only render more powerful and strong the consciousness in the heart of redemption and adoption when true saving faith in the Son of God has already been produced there by the Holy Spirit.' This is the doctrine of the Baptists as expressed in their confession of faith." A remarkable statement by an opponent, and one showing great penetration. He went on: "This 'Baptist' doctrine has crept into our church. But what is really the fact respecting holy baptism with reference to regeneration and conversion? According to Scripture and our symbols we can only reply, '*It is the bath of the new birth* and the fruitful source of conversion.' Baptism is the bath of regeneration, and he who is baptised is *eo ipso* also regenerated, has *the* forgiveness of sins and the Holy Ghost, and is placed in a state of grace, and adopted a child, an heir. We know nothing of a regeneration *after* baptism, but just as little do we know of a regeneration *before* or *without* baptism (that is just the *regeneratio Anabaptistica*). We know only of a regeneration *in, through* and *during*

*baptism.* A man can sin after his baptism, and may even entirely fall and be finally lost in spite of his baptism; but, on the other hand, he can repent, take hold by faith on Christ, *on the ground of baptism received, the life of which is still in him*; and this is evangelical conversion, which can only occur after and in consequence of holy baptism, for none but a baptised person can evangelically repent or be truly converted. From this it will be evident that not nearly all who are regenerated by baptism are also converted: even the most ungodly person who has been baptised is, and remains, an adopted child of God, *although a lost child.* This is Lutheran, *i.e.*, evangelical doctrine."

It would be difficult to find the two sides of this great question stated with greater insight and lucidity. Which is the teaching of the New Testament? Which the perversion by the apostacy?

## CHAPTER VII.

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My shepherd is the Lord of all,  
All the way!  
It must be well whate'er befall,  
All the way!  
In youth's bright fields, by waters clear,  
In manhood's vales of gloomy fear,  
In banquets of life's ripest years,  
All the way!

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### CHARITY AND PRINCIPLE—BRITISH FRIENDS—VISIT TO UNITED STATES—LETTERS.

**G**RACE be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Few wishes abide more fully in the hearts of true Christian men than this. "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity." Pastor Oncken was a man in whom the loving part of his nature was well developed, and whilst striving to enter in at the strait gate and to walk the narrow way, yet had broad sympathies. It is not always easy in Christian thought to draw the line between narrowness and

breadth. Perhaps the best rule is to be narrow in our judgment of ourselves, and broad in our sympathies with others. Pastor Oncken as every Christian ought to do, held very tenaciously those views of faith and practice he had received. This was greatly due to his having adopted none except such as he had found and proved in the Scriptures of truth. At times he knew what it was to stand almost alone. But anything like bigotry he put far away. As an illustration we take an extract from his address at the conclusion of a triennial conference in Hamburg:—"The more our opinions are influenced by Divine truth, and the more we are able in love to bear with each other in our still varying views, the more do we prove that we are occupying a healthful standpoint; yes, when judging ceases among us, and when we no longer desire to usurp the Divine prerogative of deciding upon the motives which actuate our brethren. Be this our glory then, and this our endeavour to be freed from the canker of mutual intolerance, so that our next Conference may in truth present the glorious spectacle seen of old in Judea, when the Christians were 'of one heart and one soul.' We shall never succeed in all being one in

head, but to be one in heart henceforth be our ideal. As God in his word acknowledges and even honours the individuality of his creatures, so let us learn to estimate the peculiar value of each member of the body of Christ."

And he maintained this spirit amidst persecution, often exceedingly antagonistic to charity. When we consider the freedom we enjoy for Divine worship and the observance of the ordinances of Christ, our gratitude may be enlarged by recalling an incident Mr. Oncken relates in one of his reports. At Marburg, in Hessa, there was a small Baptist Church which endured for years the fire of persecution. On January 1st, 1846, there were fifteen believers awaiting baptism. The police were on the alert, but their intentions were frustrated. "The waters of the little river swelled to such a height at that time that the house in which the brethren assembled that night was so surrounded by the flood that it afforded them all the protection they needed. The new converts and the Church spent in this position a glorious night, in the observance of both the solemn ordinances of God's house. The church consisted of thirty-two members; nearly all had been imprisoned

and suffered the loss of property.”

In answer to a request for his opinion on the subject, Mr. Oncken wrote as follows to the American and Foreign Bible Society, from Hamburg:—“There is such lamentable ignorance in this country as to what is, and what is not, the Word of God, that the Apocryphal books are read with the same authority as the books of Holy Writ. There are parts of Germany where out of 400 preachers, not twenty can be said to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have travelled much in this country, but have not met with more than ten or twelve families who were in the habit of reading the Scriptures at family worship. Tears gush from my eyes when I write it, the great bulk of the people are totally ignorant of the way of salvation; when asking, How do you expect to be saved? the answer is:—I do not know. This a man told me in the garden in which I am writing these lines. Others tell me, “If I behave myself well, I have a good heart,” etc. But not in one instance out of a hundred is the answer given “Through faith in the Son of God.”

In a letter to Dr. Sears he says: “The State Churches have evidently outlived their influence and sooner or later they must fall.

How glorious and encouraging are, on the other hand, our hopes and prospects for the ultimate triumph of God's truth over every error of man! How adorable are the many precious promises of our faithful God in this respect! May they constrain us to stretch every nerve in the spread of the glorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

It is this optimistic spirit, the power to look through the temporal seen, into the eternal unseen, which was one great source of the Pastor's power. Take another illustration. Here is a description of a baptism at Voigtsdorf in 1848, when nine persons, out of eleven applicants, all of whom had been Catholics, were accepted as candidates. The little party, "about twenty in number, repaired to a beautiful natural baptistery at the foot of a wooded hill, in which the nine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only mediator between God and man, were buried with their Lord, and raised again. The night was splendid, the scenery grand beyond description, but all nothing when compared with the glorious sight of nine precious souls brought out of gross darkness and superstition, wending their way to heaven, and restoring by their simple obedience the good old way. The Spirit of

the living God breathed upon our souls. It was a precious night." It is this spirit, the power to see reality behind form, the spiritual import of actions rather than "the shows which men admire," and above all, a strong clear faith in the ultimate victory of the religion of Jesus Christ, that is the mainspring of the noblest character, and the greatest power for advancing the Kingdom of God upon earth.

In the "History of the German Baptists," by Professor Joseph Lehmann, the first principles of this latter day German Reformation are succinctly stated: "True conversion to God—not simple adoption of Church Doctrine—as indispensable prerequisite to Baptism,—Baptism—a confession of personal faith and a vow of obedience to the Lord,—the Church consisting of true believers, as a house built of living stones,—Preachers called of God, and chosen by the Church itself for her edification internally,—Christian Church discipline to the securing of her position externally,—Union of the Churches with each other by no outward power or authority, but by the bond of faith and love alone,—complete separation of the spiritual Church from the worldly State,—unconditional, universal

religious liberty,—on the other hand, influence of the Church on the world by word, work, and missionary activity.—In short, return to the Apostolic Church and the renewal of the same according to the doctrine and example of the Apostles, as the only pattern and rule of the Christian until the return of the Lord.”

Many noble evangelists, converted under Mr. Oncken's preaching, were set apart for the work and went forth with Christ's full commission, “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Modern evangelical work is zealous at making disciples, but deems baptism a very secondary consideration. What was the practice and precept of Jesus Christ? And what of His Apostles? Let the New Testament be our guide, and let it be fairly asked:—Does the evangelical work of our churches give the same prominence to baptism as is found in the New Testament? One great feature of Oncken's work was that evidently he was not very careful to consider the methods of popular Christianity, but deeply anxious to keep to those of the New Testament. There it is recorded of all the converts, the thousands at Pentecost, Saul at

Damascus, the Centurian Cornelius and his friends, Lydia and her maidens, the jailor at Philippi, and others, the earliest teaching was of baptism and the earliest obedience was to the observance. And the present day state of Christianity should give emphasis to this.

Two of the chief needs of our churches are definite personal profession and thoroughness. Some clearer line of demarkation from the world could not fail to add greatly to our strength. The doctrine of the new birth needs to be emphasised; that it is not coming into the world through Christian parents, or in a Christian community; but a direct personal life by the Holy Spirit of God. And the denial of this is the great lesson of infant baptism, as its assertion is the great lesson of believers' baptism. True piety is not a mere sprinkling of religion as set forth in the popular perverted administration of the ordinance. The true follower of Christ is cleansed from head to foot, like a dyed garment, a new colour is given to his whole nature, his life is to be an entire immersion into spiritual things, he is baptised into Christ.

Mr. Oncken ever retained a very hearty affection for the country in which he had come to a knowledge of the truth as it is

in Jesus, and whence he had in the early years received support to carry on his evangelistic work. He paid many visits to Great Britain, where he formed many friendships and gained much sympathy during the time of the persecutions and substantial financial assistance for carrying on his work. His high spiritual tone of life and conversation endeared him to those with whom he came in contact. He was esteemed throughout the denomination, and his preaching was always welcome for its earnestness and power.

When in London he mostly made his home at the house of Mr. Simon Wilkin, Cossey Cottage, Pilgrim Lane, Hampstead, whose acquaintance he had made in 1843. The acquaintance soon deepened into mutual esteem and life-long friendship, as there was perfect agreement in their convictions concerning the doctrines and practice of Baptist Churches, especially as to Baptism and Strict Communion. Mr. Wilkin voluntarily acted as the Treasurer of the German Baptist Mission in England, an office in which after his decease he was followed by his son, Mr. Martin Hood Wilkin. None who have had occasion to visit that home will ever forget the air of refinement, the hearty wel-

come, and the warm spiritual atmosphere. The visitor was almost sure to find there some Christian refugee from nearly unknown parts of the east. Sympathy and often considerable pecuniary assistance were there found for sufferers from persecution. There was to be had the best information of the marvellous evangelical work progressing in Russia and neighbouring countries, in which the churches of Great Britain are not too well informed, and do not take the interest it deserves. And perhaps best of all the quiet unostentatious way in which the help was given was delightful. There was an unworldliness about the methods of assistance rendered, that brought the deep feeling that this was the work of God.

On one occasion Pastor Oncken took young Martin with him to Hamburg, where he became for nine months a member of his family and imbibed a strong interest in the Mission, which increased in later years and endured to the end of his life. The following letter, written to him when as a young lad he was seeking the Saviour, is worthy of remembrance, and we commend it strongly to the perusal of young men for its wise and

holy counsel and clear exposition of elementary gospel teaching:

Weiden Allée, near Hamburg,

*June 23rd, 1844.*

My dear Martin,

I am almost afraid my long silence will have led you to conclude that you are forgotten by me; let me assure you, my dear boy, this is not the case. I still remember you and plead for you with Jesus, that He may make you His dear child; for until this is your happy relation to our blessed Saviour, you cannot be happy, and I can assure you, dear Martin, it would add not a little to my happiness to hear from you soon, that you are now able by the spirit of adoption to cry "Abba, Father." Your beloved parents, all our Christian friends, and even the Angels would joyfully participate in such a glorious event.

Well, I trust that blessed day is not far distant, on which the Holy Spirit will lead you to feel and say this. Perhaps even now, whilst I am writing, my dear Martin may be on his knees wrestling for this blessing.

Now let me briefly reply to your interesting little letter. The questions on which you wish

to have my views are very grave, and they have such a direct bearing upon our eternal destiny, that I pray the Lord will give me an answer drawn direct from His own word.

When faith is spoken of in the Scriptures as the means or rather the mode in which God saves a guilty sinner, it means always faith in Jesus. Wherever this is not stated, it will appear from the connection, or this ellipsis must be supplied by passages plain and positive, such as "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life," *John* iii. 36. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou *shalt* be saved," *Acts* xvi. 31, &c., &c. The object of justifying faith, by which the guilty are not only pardoned but constituted righteous before God, as if they had actually fulfilled the whole law of God, and were entitled to heaven, is Christ, and Christ alone. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," *Rom.* v. 1, and *Gal.* iii. 24. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth," *Rom.* viii. 33, 34, and x. 8-13. The reason why faith is represented in the Holy Scriptures as of such paramount importance, does not arise from any inherent efficacy in faith itself, but because true faith

forgets and rejects everything on earth and in heaven, and looks to and grasps the Lord Jesus Christ and His work. Ah, my dear Martin, this is the greatest work or act to which the soul can be brought; when we take hold of Christ, firmly believing that He can, and will receive and save us, just such as we are, poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinners.

We do not wish you to go to heaven, my dear boy, without good works, for you never will enter those holy gates without them, but we wish you to bring such works as are perfect: The works of the Lord Jesus Christ who had no sin, neither was any guile found in His mouth. Whose meat and drink it was to do the will of His Heavenly Father, and who has magnified the law and made it honourable. Faith, then, dear Martin, upholds and defends the most perfect works and obedience that can be conceived: for it rests upon the glorious work of our dear Redeemer. If such be the case, it follows as a matter of course that in our own lives we shall tread as closely in the footsteps of our Lord, as present imperfection allows, but never, never can our imperfect obedience gain us an admittance to heaven.

In reference to prayer, I would just remark,

my dear boy, that if you cannot come to God as a saint, and a righteous person, you can and may come as a sinner and unrighteous. In the first place we must all come in the capacity of the latter. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; Christ received sinners, He justifieth the ungodly, He calleth sinners to repentance. If you are once quite sure, and feel that you are a sinner, then be quite sure Christ is waiting, yea, longing for you. The greatest saint, dear Martin, is also the greatest sinner. The person who knows most of Christ is the best saint, but he also has the deepest insight into his own wicked heart. If time would have permitted, I should have gone on a little further, but I must close.

You will be glad to know that the Church at Hamburg has already sent out four brethren into Russia and Hanover, to make known to our perishing fellow-sinners the only name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Pray for them, my dear boy, that the Holy Spirit may anoint them to be instant in and out of season.

How is your Tract Society going on? I trust you and your dear sister are zealously engaged in this good work, and in due time you shall reap if ye faint not. Now, dear

Martin, farewell! give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, and do not rest until your soul is washed in Christ's blood, and adorned with His righteousness.

I greet you and kiss you, as

Your affectionate friend,

GERHARD ONCKEN.

When, in 1858, Mr. Oncken began to publish "The Quarterly Reporter" of the German Baptist Mission (which is continued to the present day) Mr. Wilkin rendered valuable assistance and eventually became editor of the little magazine.

On one occasion when in London, Pastor Oncken had an interview with the Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel. Mr. Martin Wilkin accompanied him. It was on a Sabbath day, and they attended worship at the chapel in John Street, London. After service, they went into the vestry and received a kindly welcome. Many questions were asked as to the work in Germany, and Mr. Noel seemed surprised and pleased to hear of its extent and importance. One discordant note, however, was touched, though in a very gentle and pleasant manner. He said he had been talking with Dr. Steane about Mr. Oncken and the German Churches,

and they had felt sorry that they maintained such a restricted communion, but judged that it was very much on account of the persecutions they had endured from other Christians, which led naturally to their entrenching themselves rather rigidly in their own community.

“No, my dear brother,” said Mr. Oncken, “that is not the reason at all, I have come to that conviction from a careful and prayerful study of the Word of God.” “Well,” replied Mr. Noel, “that is singular, for I have come to just the opposite conclusion from the study of the same Word.” “Then I suppose, my dear brother, we must forbear with each other.” “I suppose so,” said Mr. Noel, evidently a good deal surprised at the opposite conclusions, of their respective studies. The acquaintance, thus begun, continued ever after, Mr. Oncken was invited to his house, and many were the pleasant and interesting interviews that they enjoyed.

In the year 1847, Pastor Oncken married Mrs. Ann Dogshun, of Leeds, widow of an English merchant resident in Hamburg. There were no children to this marriage. She was a lady of very kind and gentle disposition, and greatly beloved by Mr. Oncken's children. Shortly after the cele-

bration of her silver wedding with Mr. Oncken, she passed away, in March, 1873, her mourning friends bearing witness that they could not recall her having said an unkind word or made an enemy. One writes:—"All who knew her loved her, for the spirit of Christ and love to His people showed in all her words and actions; as was her life, so was her death—a heavenly smile lighted up her face, as if it reflected the glory beyond."

In the year 1853, Mr. Oncken paid a long visit to the United States of America, to revive interest in his work, and to attend the Annual Meetings of the American Baptist Missionary Society, which since the formation of the first Baptist Church in Germany, in 1834, had appointed him as their organizing Missionary, and sustained his work in a large-hearted and liberal manner. "He was exceedingly well received," he said he would probably have "had a triumphant flight through the States," but the Lord saw fit to order otherwise, and appointed to him wearisome days and nights of pain and suffering. Soon after his arrival in the country he took train from New York for Boston, in company with Professor Teenbrook. His companion had entered the foremost end of the car, but an

undefined feeling of uneasiness came over Mr. Oncken, and he urged him to come out and hastened with him to the hinder part. This apparently trivial circumstance was the means of both being saved. As the train was rushing along at full speed it received a sudden and terrific check. The drawbridge at Norwalk had been carelessly left open. The next moment they plunged into the abyss. When he regained consciousness a weight, "as of the universe," pressed his temple, but by a slight movement he extricated his head and then found himself in the water. Struggling to the land he was met by a physician, who lifting up the lacerated eyebrow, exclaimed with real pleasure in his face, "Your eye is saved, sir." This, one of the most terrible railway accidents on record, left effects in foot and hand which, slight though they were when compared with what might have been, he bore to the end of his life. And ever after he frequently suffered from severe pains in the head. Whilst still in a weakened condition he made long journeys and numerous visits to the Baptist Churches of the States. Many dear friendships were formed and mutual Christian love and confidence established, but the whirl of

life in the States was felt by him to be most oppressive.

The following letter was written by Mr. Oncken, in reply to a letter from his co-pastor at the Hamburg Church, Mr. Carl Schauffler, expressing the sympathy and joy of the Church at Mr. Oncken's escape with his life; which he ever spoke of as most providential and indeed miraculous. Upwards of fifty passengers were killed.

Boston, *7th July*, 1853.

My dear Brother,

Accept of my warmest thanks for your affectionate and truly consoling letter, and present the same to the beloved Church at Hamburg. I am utterly unworthy of so much love from the Lord's people. When I think of all the goodness of our gracious God to me, the least of all His servants, and on the love and deep interest shown to me by so many of His dear children, I am lost in amazement and would fain creep into some corner to hide myself. The united love of God and His children to me have caused me to weep more over my sins and this wretched, wicked heart of mine, than anything else.

The assurance that you and the Church are now praying more for me than ever, is most

refreshing to my spirit, especially in the prospect of the 10,000 miles I shall have to travel in this country before my work will be done, and of the grace I shall need to be everywhere faithful in my public addresses and private intercourse with the Christians of this country. My nerves are still so much affected from the shock at Norwalk, that when travelling on the rails, I am as on the rack, but the Lord will surely hear the prayers of His people on my behalf and give strength and grace equal to my day. This evening I propose going viâ New York, Albany, and Santago to Rochester, where the College Anniversary in that place is to be held in the ensuing week. After these services, I intend to visit Buffalo and Niagara, and return hither with a view to commence my begging operations.

My health is improving, though the foot is still weak and will require much care for some time to come.

I beg now to introduce to you the Rev. John F. Bigelow, a dear Baptist brother who is visiting Germany with a view to remain some time in one of our Universities. Have the kindness to show him and his companions any attention in your power, and help him on his way to Berlin.

I trust that the Lord will in mercy give you all needful grace for the important services you are now more especially rendering his cause at Hamburg, and give you an abundant reward in the conversion of many precious souls and the building up of those who have already believed. Soon our work will be over, soon the severe conflict with sin and Satan will be ended, and in view of this may we hold on, looking to Jesus for sufficient grace. Oh! precious, glorious prospect that after a few more fleeting years at most we shall reach our own sweet home,

Where not a wave of trouble rolls  
Across our peaceful breast.

Till then may Jesus be the sole and only object of our faith, and hope, and love. Oh! may He keep us as the apple of His eye.

With affectionate regards and assurance of unwavering brotherly love,

Your ever affectionate brother,

J. G. ONCKEN.

It is interesting to note that during his visit to Rochester, mentioned in this letter, Pastor Oncken for the first time met Mr. Philip Bickel, at that time a theological student, who was eventually to become his successor.

The following letter, written to his younger son, contains much of lucid instruction on divine things all in a glow of holy earnestness. The letter is very characteristic of the man of whom the endeavour is made in this work to give an accurate presentation.

New York, *July 3rd*, 1854.

My dear William,

Your very acceptable letter dated May 8th came duly to hand, and its contents have rejoiced my heart and have been a cause of gratitude to my heavenly Father. Be assured, my dear William, that if I do not write so often as you probably wish, you are not forgotten by me. Not a day passes but I bring your name in prayer before the Lord, that He would be pleased to maintain and carry forward the good work which He has begun in your heart, until the day of your glorious entrance into the mansions of glory. May He, the Spirit of God, imbue your mind with all the perfect and holy will of God that you may know what is acceptable unto Him who has loved you and redeemed you with His own precious blood. Above all things I long for the day when by simple faith in Jesus,—receiving Him as God the

Father's free and full gift to a poor, lost sinner,—you shall rejoice in Him and the certainty of your acceptance in Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Pet. i. 7, 8). That which saves the soul and fills it with the peace of God, is so exceedingly simple, that this very simplicity becomes so very difficult for us. "As Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have eternal life." The very moment a poor Israelite, bitten of the fiery serpent, believed in the remedy God had provided for his healing, and proved the reality of his faith by looking at the brazen serpent—that moment he was healed. So if you believe with your heart, that God has sent his Son to save sinners—to save you, and look to Jesus—accepting Him as God's free gift, you feel that you are healed, that your sin is pardoned, that God is your reconciled Father and you are adopted into the family of God.

The greatest act of the soul in this life is simply to believe the Father's testimony of His Son—that He has given us eternal life through Christ. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians (chap. i. 13), shows us how highly

God values faith in His Son. On the exercise of simple faith in Christ the Ephesian believers were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit impressed, as it were, a seal on their faith in Christ, a sweet, holy and abiding certainty of their acceptance, through Jesus—the beloved. Yes, my dear son—the great secret of all real godliness is to know and simply to believe in Jesus (Phil. iii. 8-11). Rest short of nothing of what Paul writes to the Romans (chap. x. 9). The power and grace which you stand in need of, to crucify your sinful nature, to resist the devil and overcome the world, flow all from and are connected with faith in Jesus (1 John v. 1-5).

You must not be discouraged in your Christian course, by the discovery of your sinful propensities—these will be gradually more fully revealed to you. God does not convert the sinner, to show to him how good he is, but how weak, helpless, sinful, and depraved he is, that thus all self-dependence may be destroyed. But then the Spirit of Christ who teaches us this bitter lesson concerning ourselves, also shows us from the Holy Scriptures what a gracious, faithful and almighty Saviour we have, and that through the grace and strength of Him we can do

all things. The two great truths which from the day of our conversion to the day we enter into heaven the Lord teaches those who shall be saved are in reference to ourselves that we are poor, lost, helpless sinners, who, if left to themselves, must perish for ever, and in reference to God, that out of boundless compassion He has sent His only-begotten Son into the world to atone for the guilt of all who should believe in Him, and that in this glorious Saviour more—ininitely more has been brought back to all who believe in Him, than ever was lost by Adam's transgression and our own sin.

I am happy that you have spent your vacation with Brother Köbner, and that during the summer you will see him again. Give my regards to them, as also to Director, Dr. Zahn.

You did not state how your arm had been injured—I trust that by this time it is quite healed. I have again a beautiful collection of flowers for you from a lady at Philadelphia. But my paper is nearly filled, and I must close, though I have yet many things to add: I sum them up in the affectionate but earnest request: Be very diligent in the study of the Holy Scriptures, and never read that precious

Book without previous prayer for the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Give all diligence, that you may as early as possible read the New Testament in Greek, and when you have mastered that language direct your attention to Hebrew. I would now give all I have if I had had the advantages which in the providence of God it is in my power to give to you. Oh, how would my heart rejoice if God should prepare you to enter in and continue the blessed work in Germany when I shall have been removed from the field of labour. There is, after all, nothing great on earth, my dear Willy, but to glorify God in our own salvation, and then to be honoured in saving others.

The time of my departure from this country is drawing nigh, and in five weeks I hope to have quitted these shores for the "liebe Heimath." (Dear home.—Ed.) Till then I have still to labour hard. Last Sunday I preached three times, twice in English and once in German, und die Hitze war zum Ersticken (And the heat was suffocating.—Ed.) My health has of late improved, and though I have met with many disappointments, I have abundant cause for gratitude, above all in the

fact that you and my dear Gerhard have given yourselves to the Lord Jesus; thus my prayers have been answered and God has given me the utmost desire of my heart concerning my children. Our dear Sarah He will doubtless also call by His grace; to this end you, dear Margaret and Gerhard will now unite your supplications with mine. And when our brief pilgrimage shall have ended on earth—oh! how glorious the prospect—we shall be reunited in the upper temple with that precious beloved mother who bore you, with our never-to-be-forgotten *darling*, and those two dear sisters you never saw (my sweet Sarah and Lydia). With one accord we shall there join in the chorus of the redeemed and ascribe our rescue from everlasting destruction, and our high exaltation to the right hand of Christ to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Now, farewell, the Lord keep you and bless you as the apple of His eye; that He may spare your life and fit you by His truth and spirit for such usefulness upon earth as shall gladden a fond father's heart, a blessing to thousands, and above all to receive the "Well done, good and faithful servant" of your

Saviour in the great day, shall be ever the  
prayer, my dear son, of

Your affectionate father,

J. G. ONCKEN.

We may here mention that all the letters  
and extracts of reports by Mr. Oncken con-  
tained in this book were written in English.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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Help thou the weak against the strong,  
The poor against the rich, but see,  
That come what may, thy hand shall be  
Still with the right against the wrong.

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### VISITS TO RUSSIA IN 1864 AND 1869.

AS the work of Pastor Oncken grew it went beyond Germany, and Baptist churches were formed in neighbouring countries. Many could not join the German Baptist Union, and were unknown beyond their own neighbourhood, and sometimes not even there. The advance was principally in the south-east, in Poland and Russia, in which countries were formed many little gatherings of baptised believers, meeting secretly because of the watchful persecution of the police. In some places these churches grew and prospered without serious molestation, in others they were cruelly stamped out by the iron heel of men in power, and members driven to perish in Siberia. The stories of

their sufferings, by such as escaped the watchful eye of the authorities, are horrible. They were in many instances unlawful in cruelty, through the savage spirit engendered by a most unholy priesthood. Reports were brought of girls beaten to death, and of barbarities better perhaps untold till we hear their relation in the light of eternity. In some places the success of the Gospel was most encouraging, and strong appeals were made to Pastor Oncken to pay a visit to the friends in Russia. As one wrote: "It is evident that the Lord has chosen you, dear Brother, to lay a foundation of that great work which has been so gloriously revealed in Germany and other States, also in Russia, and even in St. Petersburg. Your name is known there. The testimony you have borne in Hamburg has spread a good savour. Therefore hasten with all possible speed to cross the frontiers of Russia."

In 1864, Mr. Oncken paid his first visit to that country, leaving Hamburg on October 12th for St. Petersburg. The sea journey was tedious and unpleasant, but he wrote, "We were amply compensated for the self denial to which we had subjected ourselves by taking this cheaper route instead of the train at Konigsberg. The Lord had graciously as-

signed work for us among the passengers on board."

This indicates the spirit of the man, personal comfort was nought when weighed against telling the gospel to sinners. As usual the police made trouble about his passport, but that was a petty side form of persecution to which he was accustomed in other places. At St. Petersburg he met Christians of different churches and ranks in society, and had a very fraternal reception. At their request he conducted a religious service one evening, at which about thirty were present, amongst them gentlemen of high positions under government, members of the Lutheran German, and Dutch Reformed Churches, the English Independent, and even the National Greek Church. During his few weeks stay he was cordially invited to services connected with these communions and was at each gathering requested to conduct and preach. On one occasion at the conclusion he was closely questioned on the subject of baptism and church organisation which led to an animated discussion.

After a week's daily attendance he obtained an audience with the President of the Ministry for the Interior, Count Sievers, who com-

menced by saying, "There is only one difficulty in the way of your sect being acknowledged, and that is, that you are making proselytes, which is not allowed in Russia. Everybody can believe here what they like, and worship God in accordance with their faith, but proselytizing is strictly prohibited." Pastor Oncken said, "Your Excellence, everything depends on what you understand by proselytizing; if the charge brought against us means that our primary object is to put people under water, we repudiate the charge. We Baptists give to baptism a different place in theology from almost all other sects. We do not hold that it is necessary to get to heaven; we believe it has no connection with it, and if a person came to me wishing to be baptised in order to get to heaven, I would not comply with such a request. We hold that simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work saves the soul; and we believe that God has called us to preach this great truth among the millions throughout Europe, who have rejected all revealed truth and who form a most dangerous element to all good governments. Our primary object is, therefore, to win souls to Christ."

He then gave a brief sketch of his mission-

ary labours generally, and what had been done by Baptists during the recent war between Germany and Denmark, in nursing the sick and wounded and spreading the gospel among them. He defended the Baptists from the charge of ignorance, and said it was well known that no other denomination was better versed in the Scriptures than the Baptists, and that it was proverbial that they have always a string of texts at their finger's ends. He alluded, in closing, to the sad effects of forcing men to adopt religious creeds against their convictions.

The witness had been borne. Soon after Mr. Oncken was confined to his bed by severe illness. He was then again summoned to Count Sievers, who advised him to return home at once. He asserted again that he was in favour of religious liberty and that the law permits all sects to exist in Russia, but none are permitted to make converts.

In his diary of December 3rd, 1864, Mr. Oncken writes:—"On our arrival at St. Petersburg, we found here four immersed members of churches in Germany. Besides these, eight persons have expressed their desire to be immersed on a profession of their faith in Christ. During our five weeks' stay, we had ample time and opportunity to become acquainted with them. Seven of the candidates fully satisfied us that the Saviour had begun a good work in them, and that they founded their hope for pardon and eternal life solely on the blood and righteousness of Christ. These

I buried with Christ in baptism in the dead hour of the night, between twelve and one o'clock, and thus the first administration of the Lord's ordinance was accomplished in the imperial capital of Russia, by which the two great facts of our redemption are so beautifully set forth—our death with our substitute, and our life in and with Him."

On the following day Mr. Oncken left for home.

In the autumn of 1869 Mr. Oncken, then in the 70th year of his age, undertook a longer and severer tour in Russia, this time in consequence of interesting news from the south. The journey was exceedingly trying; between Czernowitz, the last station on the Austrian Railway, and Balta, the first on the Russian line, there were no mail carts nor any post road. He had to hire a waggon of the roughest kind. "The only luxury provided," he says in writing home, "is a bundle of straw which by the most dreadful jolting is soon tumbled into a small ball, so that the position one shortly is in causes mouth and knees very nearly to meet. The drivers tear along in a constant gallop, so that you hardly know whether you are on your head or your heels. Besides these troubles I can get nothing to eat, be it ever so simple. During the last forty hours I have had to live on the biscuits and cake provided for me on

leaving home. The condition of the people is in every respect a heartrending one, poor, ignorant, dirty, in the power of the Jews, who have the supreme control everywhere. Almost all the men and women bear on their countenance the impress of the oppression in which they live. Their dwellings with their surroundings could scarcely be more revolting." After several experiences of a most disagreeable character Mr. Oncken at length arrived at Alt Danzig, a German colony, where Mr. Pritzkau, the missionary working in that neighbourhood, gave him a most cordial reception. Twenty-one converts were baptised on the Lord's Day. The work was also making progress among the native Russians, members of the Greek Church. He gives the following interesting account of the Lord's Day spent at Alt Danzig: "Last Lord's Day was one never to be forgotten by me. At 9 a.m. the bells of the church tower began to ring for our service, for the church being almost destitute of hearers, the Lutheran pastor recently left the place, and the principal farmers and landholders, who hold the right over the church property, have given our brethren leave to use it. At present they do not hold their services in the church but in the school house,

but now that almost all the principal colonists have joined them, they will probably soon take possession of the church itself. The Lutheran pastor having left, infant baptism can no longer be performed here, and the pastor of the Baptist Church has been appointed public registrar of births, deaths, and marriages. I had enough to do all day, preached morning and evening to crowded congregations. Amongst my hearers were Prussian and Polish nobles, who came from considerable distances in their droschkes. Between the services, the examination of candidates was continued, and in the evening the baptism took place. The whole village were present, and their behaviour most exemplary."

Thence he went further into the interior of Russia and made many journeys sometimes more than ninety miles at a stretch through the immense, fatiguing Steppes, where, as he wrote "for hours the eye cannot descry a tree, a plant, or a house; but only clouds of dust, and the burning heat of the sun, are the companions of one's journey. Sometimes I was obliged to travel by night to avoid the heat, and should have done so generally but for the unbearable shaking of the post carriages, without spring

or seat, which shatter the body and nerves to pieces." He found that drunkenness was the prevailing sin in Russia; in its train follow poverty and countless other evils. The priests of the Greek Church are said to be almost as much addicted to drunkenness as the people. He went on preaching the gospel, encouraging the brethren whom he met, and sometimes baptising the converts and ordaining pastors, accomplishing what he spoke of as the hardest physical work of his whole missionary life. Early in November he arrived at Odessa fatigued and well-nigh exhausted, but very thankful for having been enabled to sow the good seed far and wide, "while my own soul," he adds, "has been kept in perfect peace, stayed on the Lord." He then visited Roumania and Bulgaria, in both of which countries he speaks with enthusiasm of the cordial and loving reception accorded him everywhere by brethren in Christ, but with distress and horror of the godless and miserable state of the inhabitants. In the beginning of December he crossed the Carpathian mountains to Cronstadt in Transylvania, which he describes as "a journey of nearly forty-eight hours, over rock and stone, through bogs and morasses, across rivers, and over

pathless tracts of country, the grandest but most horrible, that I have ever taken. To my no small horror I heard of the dangers as soon as I had taken my seat in the post waggon, both as to the impassable state of the roads, and the frequent attacks of banditti. Not a pleasant introduction to a long journey! But extremity leads to prayer." He reached home exhausted but safely on December 13th.

The following incident will serve to illustrate what active sympathy Mr. Oncken always took in the persecuted Christians in Russia.

When in the spring of 1874 it became known that the Emperor Alexander II. intended paying a visit to England, Mr. Oncken at once wrote to his trusted friend, Mr. Martin Wilkin, in London, suggesting the desirability of utilising this opportunity for approaching the Czar, with the object of obtaining the cessation of the fierce persecution under which, at that time Baptists and Stundists were suffering, many of whom were languishing in prisons and dungeons. When the time of the Imperial visit itself was approaching, Mr. Oncken himself went to London. The sympathies of the late Dean Stanley were enlisted, and after an introduction from a mutual friend had been obtained, Mr. Oncken,

the Rev. Edward White, and Mr. M. Wilkin had a long and very gratifying interview at the Deanery. In the course of the interview Lady Augusta came in and joined in the conversation, a circumstance not only in itself exceedingly agreeable to the visitors, but also regarded as greatly tending to further their ends, by enlisting her influence both with the Dean, and in yet higher quarters. From the "Life of Dean Stanley," by Mr. Prothero, we make the following extract (Vol. II. p. 449.):

"During the visit of the Emperor to England, Stanley was able to make good use of the influence he had acquired in Russia. A Hamburg missionary named Oncken had spent a long life in missionary work on the Continent, and had planted hundreds of Baptist centres in Europe, from Holland to the Black Sea. For some years these Baptists had been exposed to cruel persecutions in Southern Russia, and it occurred to the Reverend Edward White, one of the many Nonconformist ministers to whom Stanley gave the right-hand of fellowship, and not the left, that he might obtain help from the Dean. 'I had the pleasure,' writes Mr. White, 'of accompanying Mr. Oncken and his friend,

Mr. Wilkin, to the Deanery. The Dean and Lady Augusta received us with their usual kindness, their minds having been prepared for the interview by a letter in which we had given a sketch of the life and labours of the excellent man who now sought his aid. The interview in the Dean's library made a striking picture: the venerable and stately form of the man through whose arduous toils at least a million copies of the Bible, in many languages, had been circulated in Europe, and that of the frail Church dignitary, that minute figure into which God had poured an ineffable sum of ethereal energy, sweetness, and light of Heaven's best natural gifts of tenderness and humour, joy and gladness. According to the Dean's theory of the nature of things, he could not feel much enthusiasm for seceders from the Russian Church. But he had read the story of the Oncken Missions with wonder, and was struck with the gentle, noble personality of their author. The Dean received him with the utmost cordiality, but, promising nothing, only consented to watch for any opportunity of useful application to the Russian authorities, frankly confessing his despair of being able to interfere with success.'

Soon after this interview followed the visit of the Russian Emperor to England. Mr. Wilkin wrote to the Dean, earnestly reminding him of his promise. After the Emperor's departure, the Dean wrote as follows to Mr. Wilkin:

'Deanery, Westminster, 1874.

My dear Sir,

I am exceedingly touched by your letter, the more so from feeling how ill I deserve your kind expressions for the little I have been able to do. I can truly say that the matter of your poor friends, the Baptists in Russia, has never been out of my mind during the Emperor's visit. But the extreme difficulty, not to say impossibility, of introducing a somewhat complicated and probably unexpected subject, either to the Emperor himself or to any of his suite, was increased to the utmost extent by the circumstance that the actual interviews I was able to have with any of the party, amounted to not more than a very few minutes. I had hoped from day to day that some longer opportunity might occur, and this, fortunately, was obtained on the very last day, when we had the chance of speaking on the subject at some length to one of the Emperor's most trusted friends,

to whom the matter was quite new, but who fully entered into my feelings on the occasion. And I have, since their departure, written to this same person in the same sense, urging that if any mention of the troubles of the Baptists should be made, it should receive some attention, and not be set aside without enquiry. For your good wishes, for your Christian prayers, for your generous sympathy with one you must regard as greatly mistaken in many points which you deem highly important, I beg to express my heartfelt thanks.

Yours faithfully,

A. P. STANLEY.

After a time the news arrived in England that a special messenger had been sent from St. Petersburg to the South of Russia." From that time until the Emperor's death the persecutions ceased.

## CHAPTER IX.

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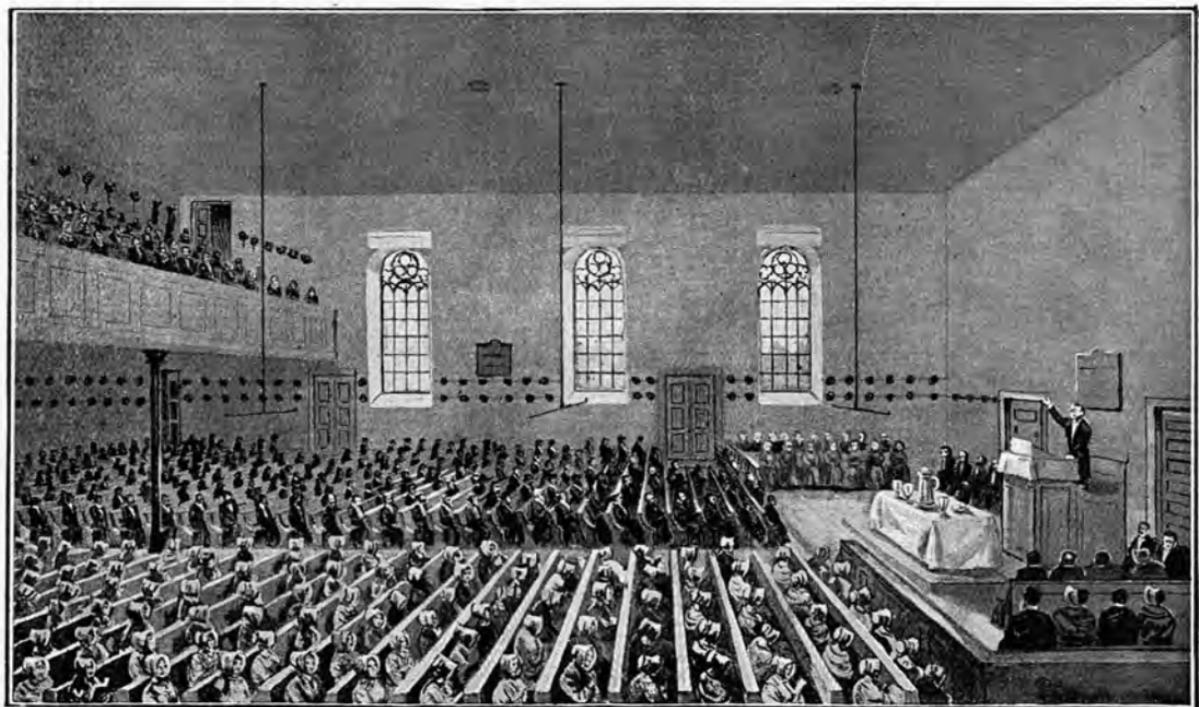
We who are met together now,  
Join hand in hand to seal the vow  
Which binds us with Thy martyr band,  
Still firmly for Thy truth to stand.  
Grant us a token from above,  
And thus accept our pledge of love ;  
Speak Thou Thine own Amen, and say :  
My peace be with you day by day.

*Translation of the Communion Hymn of the  
Baptist Churches of Germany.*

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### SPURGEON AND ONCKEN—NEW BAPTIST CHAPEL AT HAMBURG—STRIFE AND RECONCILIATION.

THE world-wide fame and the world-wide sympathies of the late Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, were sure sooner or later to bring Mr. Oncken into contact with him. It was not long after the settlement of the popular preacher at New Park Street, London, that Oncken, being on a visit to England, sought an interview. Spending an evening at Regent's Park College, he made the acquaintance of Mr. James Spurgeon, and asked him to



INTERIOR OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHAPEL IN HAMBURG.

arrange an interview. With his characteristic humour, the great preacher sent the reply "Tell Mr. Oncken, I have no time for chats. If the angel Gabriel should call and wanted a chat, I should say to him, "Most willingly, dear Gabriel, but it must be on the other side Jordan." Mr. Oncken's equally characteristic rejoinder was that he also had no time for chats, and asked not for a chat but to lay before him the case of himself and his eighty fellow labourers, and he demanded an interview in their name and in the name of their common Master and for the promotion of His cause. The reply was, "To such a request as yours, I cannot say nay." An interview was arranged resulting in a service at New Park Street Chapel, when the grey head of the veteran and the black locks of the young pastor were side by side in the same pulpit. A warm interest was thus created for the work in Germany, which for long received an annual contribution of £90 from Mr. Spurgeon's Church.

The first chapel of the Hamburg Church was opened in 1847, and consisted of an iron warehouse which had been transformed into a suitable meeting place, seating 600 persons, and had the advantage of being at the rear of

some small houses, whereby it was protected from disturbance as an outer gate could be closed. Now, however, the church membership having considerably increased and complete religious liberty having been granted by the Senate, it was resolved to build a new and adequate home for the church. The population of Hamburg at that time was over 200,000, but the average attendance at all places of worship was only 4,000. By means of help from Great Britain and the United States, and the sacrificial free offerings of an earnest people, the new house of prayer was erected and opened for worship on August 17th, 1867. The building is of white brick, in the plain Gothic style, "neither stucco nor paint being employed," and seats 1,400 persons, without galleries, estimated to be able to provide 600 sittings more. The entire cost, including fittings, was £6,500. The platform or pulpit is four steps above the floor, and has a carved wooden front, with central desk and recess seats for elders. In front, elevated one step, is an octagonal stone baptistery, which is kept open; it is edged with a wide coping, having at each of the eight corners a stone bracket for flowers, the steps are next the upper plat-



NEW BAPTIST CHAPEL IN HAMBURG, OPENED IN 1867.

form. Such of the ancient baptistries as remain, and there are many in Italy, are nearly all of eight sides. For in ecclesiastical symbology, eight is the signature of baptism; the curious reference being to 1 Peter iii. 21, which speaks of the Ark of Noah as a type of baptism wherein eight were saved. The building was designed by the English architect Mr. Scott, who had erected the St. Nicholas Church, the finest in the city. In the eyes of those for whose use it was built the house was "exceeding magnificent."

Rev. C. H. Spurgeon consented to take part in the opening services. Let Mr. Martin H. Wilkin, who accompanied him, give the narrative:—

"We had a pleasant voyage in company. One of the passengers, a lady, was a strong Ritualist, yet felt much interest in Mr. Spurgeon, and entered a good deal into conversation with his wife. In talking about the Eucharist, Mr. Spurgeon said, "Why, madam, your God, a baker made it and a mouse could run away with it!" She was much shocked, but nevertheless seemed impressed. She said that on one occasion, when she was ill, a hymn came to her mind, "Just as I am," and wished she could find it. So we gathered

round her on the deck, and repeated between us the lost hymn.

On arriving at Hamburg we all went to Pastor Oncken's house, and remained there during the interesting days of the Opening and the Conference. On the Saturday Mr. Oncken took his guest to the various places where he had held services, from the house in the "Vorsetzen," where his first congregation of ten was gathered, through the successive stages—the old warehouse in the Jews' quarter, with its access under the adjoining houses, and the chapel in Böhmenstrasse, opened in 1847, to the new building just erected on the ground by the side of the older chapel; a noble building truly, but with a high vaulted roof, which Mr. Spurgeon greatly feared would carry away the voice. "I had rather take twenty stripes on my bare back at the bottom of that garden," he said to us on reaching Mr. Oncken's house, "than have to preach in that chapel to-morrow." However, his fears as to the acoustic properties of the building were not justified, and by full congregations on the Opening Day the services were well heard.

In the morning Mr. Oncken gave an account of the way in which since 1824 he

had been led, of the trials, the persecutions, the successes which had attended the progress of the work, and thanked God for permitting him to see this crowning point of his labours. In the evening the chapel was crowded, a large number of English being present, including the whole of the Episcopal congregation with their minister. It was said that many Hamburg merchants had announced their intention of coming to hear the celebrated English preacher, and as Mr. Spurgeon was told they probably had seldom, if ever, heard the simple Gospel in their lives, he said, "Well then, I will take care they hear it now." And truly it was a genuine Gospel sermon, from John vii. 37, 38:—"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." Towards the close he introduced a favourite simile—the caravan in the desert sending out scouts to search for water. When the foremost saw it he turned round and shouted to the next, "Come," and he in his turn again, till the whole caravan heard the welcome "Come." "So," he said, "the Spirit and the bride say, "Come," and let him that heareth say, "Come," and let him that is athirst "Come," and whosoever will, let him "Come," and take of the water of life

freely." And at each "Come" he let his voice go; and now the vaulted roof did good service, carrying on the sound, which rang through the whole place like musical thunder.

The interesting and important days of the Conference followed. A large number of the pastors and missionaries had come from all parts of the mission field to attend its sittings, and to be present at the opening of the chapel. Many visitors also were there from England, Scotland, and America, and day after day we had pleasant gatherings at Mr. Oncken's house, days never to be forgotten. On one occasion Mr. Spurgeon gave a special address to all the College students, Mr. Joseph Lehmann acting as interpreter. "Tell them," he said, "to preach not only so that the people can understand, but so that they cannot misunderstand if they wish"—words which have never faded from memory, and which are a key to much of the success of his personal appeals, and distinct statements of the Gospel.

Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon went southward to the Harz Mountains. From Harzburg, Mr. Spurgeon addressed the following letter to Mr. Oncken:—

My dear Brother Oncken,—You will be glad to know that I am much better, although during the heat of to-day, I have felt

O living Spirit, quickening Lord  
 Move in our midst with heavenly power,  
 Give mighty witness to thy word,  
 With wonders crown this "Solomon" hour  
 Thy grace in all its fulness show,  
 With glorious deeds our souls amaze,  
 Make withered trees with blossoms glow  
 And frozen hearts with fervour blaze

Glory to thee O King of Kings,  
 Jesus our souls delight,  
 What wondrous gifts thy favour brings,  
 How sweet, how pure, how bright  
 Thou sweetest sinner by thy blood,  
 Our anchor holds to thee,  
 Amidst the roaring of the flood,  
 We rest most peacefully  
 Here, here we rest, all one in thee,  
 Bound to each other fast,  
 One while these hours so swiftly flee  
 And one with thee at last

C. H. Spurgeon Aug 87

very unwell. In the cool evening I am right again. Despite every pain, I shall always look back upon my visit to Hamburg as a most lovely reminiscence. Your generous hospitality is only too good and kind. Remember to be ready to go home with us, to try what we can do, in England to show our grateful love. Please remember me to all the household, and to such as remain of the guests. We have been to the station to meet friend Wilkin, but he has not appeared. I suppose the stars are now one by one disappearing from the constellation of the Conference, and you will remain like the fixed and stable pole star, around whom the rest revolve, you yourself obeying the unseen sun, invisible to mortal science, but felt and sweetly obeyed by the stars of righteousness. The Lord's best blessings rest upon you and yours. Mrs. Spurgeon and Mr. Passmore join with me in kindest remembrance.—Yours ever truly, C. H. SPURGEON.

During the Hamburg visit, two hymns were given to the writer by Mr. Spurgeon, composed by him in connection with the gatherings there."

Mr. Oncken was a man who loved peace and pursued it. He abhorred wars, but by the grace of God he was led to make use even of these sad opportunities for the dissemination of the Gospel, and this became an important part of his work. In his youth he had known the horror and misery of the French invasion, and during his life time had witnessed, with sorrow, the conflicts between Germany and Denmark, in 1849 and 1863, also in 1866 the war between Austria and Prussia, and in 1870, the great war against France. In all these wars, members of

German Baptist Churches were compelled, in pursuance of the compulsory military service in Germany, to serve in the ranks. Whenever war broke out, committees of communication were formed by the churches to keep up correspondence with these, to give them comfort and encouragement and to urge them amidst all adverse influences to remain steadfast to the faith. Later on Pastor Oncken was able to write: "The late fearful war between Prussia and Austria has been over-ruled for the highest good, it opened up a most important field of labour in camps, and hospitals, and also on battle-fields. A more distant result was an increase in civil and religious liberty."

When the awful Franco-German war broke out, we find the same spirit in the reports. The first measure unanimously adopted by the Church at Hamburg, was to meet for prayer every evening, in the chapel. These services were well sustained. Letters fresh from the battle-fields were read almost every evening. There were more than 300 brethren, members of the churches, or relatives of the members, serving in the different German armies. In each letter sent to them, from four to six tracts were enclosed so that the

poor fighting brethren were enabled to do a little for the spread of the truth among their comrades. Under Mr. Oncken's direction, during this war 1,355,570 tracts were circulated amongst the soldiers of both armies; 58,897 single Gospels in French and German, 41,662 Testaments, and 3,505 Bibles; besides 6,502 religious books in both languages for use in the army hospitals; and whilst thus striving to advance the kingdom of the Prince of Peace and to bring some spiritual blessing to the souls of the soldiers, the churches did not forget to do whatever they could in supplying temporal comforts to their brethren exposed to constant danger and many hardships, and for the wounded and sick in the hospitals.

Pastor Oncken's relation with his church at Hamburg was singularly happy and blessed. There was a true union of hearts in the Lord. The esteem in which he was held, both for his high character and his noble work grew to be very great. Hero worship even among Christians may lead to something approaching degenerating idolatry, as the history of saintly men in every age has shown. In one of the addresses at the funeral of Mr. Oncken, Pastor Kemnitz, his successor in the ministry

of the church, said, "When the soldiers of Christ gathered at Hamburg, at the Union Conference, a hush fell on the assembly at the appearance of the venerable grey head and the sound of his voice. All present seemed enthralled and enchanted. As we listened to him we longed for perfect quiet. Spirit and life flowed from him. We looked at him, as the disciples on the mount gazed on the glory of Elias, reflected from the glory of Jesus. Their gaze rested first on Jesus, then on the glory-crowned head of him who appeared with him in the resurrection life. At that moment the disciples did not understand that this was not to be prolonged. Who of them understood that Elias must vanish, that it might be said, 'They saw no man, but Jesus only!' Oncken saw that it was needful to bring his spiritual children to 'Jesus only.' It would have been well with the churches, on several occasions in the past, had they been brought to learn this great truth."

Towards the end of his active career, however, a serious variance arose in the church at Hamburg, in which he unhappily took an active part. It resulted in a division, and the formation of another church in the adjacent

city of Altona, of which Mr. J. Braun, who had laboured with him most harmoniously for many years, was amongst the leaders. Other churches took sides in the strife, and it spread far and wide, with much heated discussion throughout the Union. This was the deepest grief of Oncken's life, his sorrow and humiliation were intense, the more so as his two old friends, Lehmann and Köbner, were opposed to him. Such variances amongst professing Christians are indeed deplorable, they indicate the infirmity of humanity even at its best estate upon earth. Happily they are often overruled for good, especially in the opportunities they afford for the exhibition of Christian grace. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Church at Corinth says, "There must be also heresies (or factions) among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." The New Testament churches were certainly not free from variance. The world overlooks the fact that church disputes most frequently occur on questions of conscience, and, if unwise, yet show a desire for truth and righteousness, and are the shadows of a life of principle. They differ exceedingly from the disputes and variances with the intolerance of luxurious prelates, and the

flogging to death of their opponents, which are met with in those great and wealthy ecclesiastical systems which claim the hallowed name of church. The members of true churches may use unkind words, and separate, to worship apart, but they establish no star-chambers, and never condemn their former fellow worshippers to the stake, or even to the "Winserbaum." Baptist churches are formed of imperfect men and women, and the great ordinance tends to develop virile fearlessness and independence of action. Amongst those who opposed Oncken, were some of his most devoted admirers.

When the church at Altona elected a pastor, they chose a man greatly beloved, Christopher Rode. He at once called on Mr. Oncken, and visited him weekly with earnest endeavours for peace, in which he was eventually successful. Dr. Bickel, who about this time came from the United States, used his best endeavours for restoring peace. A pleasing incident is related. After some time Pastor Rode asked Mr. Oncken if he would be pleased if the choir of the Altona Church visited him and sang a choral in four parts, expressly composed out of love for him. He readily consented and a day was appointed.

Early in the morning at 5 a.m.; Pastor Oncken sitting in his room heard the distant strains of an anthem sung in the thicket adjoining his house. After a while the choristers appeared. They saw the grey-headed old Christian warrior, in tears, standing at his window to welcome them. With them was his old friend Mr. J. Braun, to whom Oncken at once called out, "Come up here, Braun." In a few moments, the two saints were in each others arms, words of forgiveness and reconciliation were uttered in humility on both sides; and the strife was ended. Similar interviews with Köbner and others followed, with the same delightful result. The beautiful spirit shown in the reconciliation, compensated for much of the mischief of the variance and all united in praising God that by His grace and mercy the German Union of Baptist Churches had been saved from a permanent disruption.

The legend of the philosophers' stone of the ancient alchemists, is true of the spirit of Christianity which can transmute the baser metals, the sounding brass of the caviller or even the steel sword of the warrior, into precious gold.

## CHAPTER X.

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Why should our courage fail as we draw near  
The Father's house? Why shrink from that with fear?  
Stand and look back—each footstep of thy life  
Has hither tended, ever drawing near.

Now, with thy fear, one fierce and final fight,  
Thou must not yield this time. Wake up thy might:  
Enter a victor. See, as ope the doors,  
Thy loving Lord with welcome meets thy sight!

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### LAST YEARS—CLOSING SCENE—THE HOME CALL.

**I**N July, 1875, Mr. Oncken made his last visit to England in the interests of his mission work, but finding that he could not make personal application to more than a few friends, he sent out a circular letter in which he concisely reviewed the marvellous results of the work. In conclusion, he said: "Thus, it will be seen, we have abundant cause for gratitude to the Lord. A wide door is open to us, and great victories have been achieved through His sovereign grace. For all the generous help and valuable pecuniary assistance rendered us by the National Bible

Society of Scotland, Religious Tract Society, Bible Translation Society, Trinitarian Bible Society, and the Baptist Tract Society, as well as for the contributions from churches and individuals in Great Britain, and finally, for the generous support of the American Baptist Missionary Union, the American Tract Society, and the American Bible Societies, and from individual churches and Christians of that country, I beg to present, on behalf of all our churches my warmest and most grateful thanks."

In the following year Mr. Oncken spent a holiday at Zurich, where Mr. Martin Wilkin visited him, concerning which, the latter wrote: "I am glad to say that Mr. Oncken appears in somewhat better health than when he was in England last year. It was my privilege to visit with him the Utliberg, a lofty hill near the lake of Zurich, where we spent many hours of Christian intercourse. We talked of the past history of the Mission and its future prospects, as well as of the recent events connected with it. We watched together the glorious sunset on the Alps, and later, beneath the canopy of myriad stars, sang the old verse we used to sing together, when as a lad I lived under his roof:—



PASTOR J. G. ONCKEN AT THE AGE OF 77.

Dort über jenem Sternenmeer,  
Dort ist ein schönes Land ;  
Mit seinen Bergen hoch und hehr,  
Dem Glauben wohl bekannt.

Yonder above that sea of stars,  
A heavenly country lies ;  
Though hid from sight, well known to faith,  
Its hills and mountains rise !

In the morning we rose in time to see the sun rising over the lake of Zurich, and lighting up with a roseate hue the vast range of mountains. Later in the day we wandered about the secluded paths and wooded heights of the mountain, and on the next day, which was Sunday, we worshipped with the Baptist Church at Zurich."

In 1877, notwithstanding his advanced age we still find Mr. Oncken visiting a number of churches founded in Germany and surrounding countries, which owe their existence under the divine blessing, humanly speaking, to Mr. Oncken's earnestness and fidelity in preaching the simple truth of the gospel at a time when to do so was to expose himself to the severest punishment and imprisonment. A visit to his native place, Varel, gave him great delight; a most affectionate and hearty reception being accorded the veteran, by the pastor and the members of the church there,

which it had been one of the great joys of his life to be privileged to form in 1856.

For some years his health had begun to fail. In April, 1878, he writes to Mr. Wilkin: "My health is daily growing weaker and my memory fails me often entirely. How precious the fact that He to whom we entrust ourselves for time and eternity changes neither in His glorious person, nor His love to His own; for, having loved them, He loved them to the end! In that unfathomable abyss of love we will ever sink our anchor till our frail barque enters, under the guidance of our great and unerring Captain, the heavenly port."

Mr. Oncken had always resolved to bequeath to the German Baptist Union his valuable publishing business. On retiring, by arrangement with the American Society, he made it over, accepting an annuity of £200 per annum for his few remaining years. For some time the publishing work had been declining, and the American Baptist Publication Society of Philadelphia recognising the importance of this work, placed it in the charge of Dr. Bickel, who had many years experience of similiar work in the United States. He was a German by birth, but had spent a great portion of his life in the

Christian pastorate, having studied at Rochester Theological College, in America. Whilst a student there he became acquainted with Mr. Oncken, who gave him his entire confidence. A few years previously, Denison University had conferred the title of Doctor of Divinity upon him as "the man who was recognised as a thorough Bible student, a fearless advocate of truth, a liberal-minded and conscientious leader of others." Dr. Bickel is an excellent writer, a genial poet, a man of high culture, gifted with great practical talent and sanctified good common sense, and by his warm-hearted devotion, wisdom, and courage, was well fitted to succeed Mr. Oncken in the responsible and arduous position he accepted.

On retiring from the Agency of the National Bible Society of Scotland, to which Mr. Oncken had been formally appointed in 1828, a high tribute to his worth was paid by the Directors. It was first known as the Edinburgh Bible Society. They voted him an annuity, as a reward for long service and placed on record their appreciation, "especially his indefatigable zeal for the spread of the Word of Life by his own personal distribution of it, by the publication of it in various forms and editions,

by the establishment of colportage, by the laborious correspondence which for many years he conducted with secretaries in Scotland, and by his numerous agencies for the diffusion of the Scriptures, and the journeys which he undertook across the breadth of Europe, sometimes involving not merely great fatigue, but serious risk, in order to secure new channels and outlets for his work. In dark times, when formidable obstacles interfered with the free circulation of the Word, his zeal never flagged, and he devoted himself to the great object of his life with a courage that never wavered." In conclusion, the Directors expressed the cordial prayer "that in the evening of life," he might, "enjoy in rich measure, the comforts revealed and offered in the Holy Book which he has been the means of circulating by hundreds of thousands in most of the countries of Europe."

In February, 1879, Mr. Oncken wrote to a friend in England:

"Accept of my best thanks for your kind remembrance of me on my (79th) birthday. I had a large number of my friends, who visited me to wish me every blessing. In the evening our deacons with my co-pastor and our choir visited me and greatly refreshed

me by their harmonious singing, and a present of most beautiful flowers; we spent a happy and edifying evening together.

My health is gone, and my bodily sufferings are such that I can only wish to depart and see my Lord and Saviour in all His glory. In looking back to the very feeble beginning of the mission in which I have been engaged for more than half a century I am lost in wonder, love and praise to Him who has shown in our Mission that all things belong to Him in whose service we are engaged, and that as the command, "Go ye into *all* the world and preach the Gospel," &c., so the promise remains equally in full force, "And behold I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."

In the autumn of that year Mr. Oncken's call from the Master to lay down his work, came as clear as the call more than fifty years previously had been to take it up. His had been a strenuous life, in journeyings and perils often, perils by his own countrymen, and perils by the heathen, made still rougher by the irritations of persecution. His voice had failed several times, his memory had become weak in later years, although very vivid for the scenes and circumstances of the

earlier days of the great movement. The railway accident in America too, had left enfeebling effects.

His long missionary journey to Russia, when in his 70th year, was a severe trial of his strength. He often spoke of it as a miracle that after undergoing the torture of having to drive for days over roughest roads in wood carts without springs, and not being able to obtain decent food, he had not fallen dangerously ill.

It was on November 22nd that an apoplectic stroke removed the hope of further active work. Still he rallied, and on January 26th, 1880, his eightieth birthday, he sent the following greeting to enquiring friends:

“From every part of our beloved fatherland, numerous proofs of love and attachment have reached me, congratulating me verbally, by post and telegraph, on the completion of my eightieth year. I beg all my dear friends who thought of me so kindly to accept this expression of my sincere thanks. In the present weak state of my health I am almost entirely cut off from personal intercourse with my Christian friends. So much the greater, therefore, was the consolation afforded me by the loving proofs given on my birthday

that the close ties between us still exist in all their old force and sincerity. Though I may never again have the pleasure here below to look upon faces so dear to me, the separation will be but for a short time. Soon, yea, very soon, shall we, through God's grace, be united where no separation will take place to all eternity.

With heartfelt love and renewed thanks,  
Your brother in Jesus Christ,  
J. G. ONCKEN.

It was in 1881 that Pastor Oncken relinquished finally his work and retired to Zurich. His life work was finished, a work of which Rev. R. Glover, of Bristol, said in his address at the Baptist Union Meeting in Edinburgh, in 1891:—"Our revered friend, Mr. Oncken, found Christ and set himself to share Him with others; and out of Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, and Russia, there are to-day a hundred thousand Baptists. I am only speaking of communicants; 100,000 Baptists in one man's lifetime, in the last 70 years, have been gathered, in spite of stern persecution in Germany, and in spite of persecution to the death of our brethren in Russia."

It was in Zurich that Pastor Oncken spent his declining days, tenderly nursed by his devoted wife. In 1875, Mr. Oncken was married, for the third time, to an English lady, Miss Jane A. Clark, whose acquaintance he had made in Zurich; she was a member of C. H. Spurgeon's church. They were quietly married in London and it was soon observed by all the friends of Mr. Oncken, and especially by his children, now living in England, that this union was proving a special blessing of God to His aged servant. For the next few years the noble and bright character of his wife, and the hearty interest she took in all his work, came as sunshine into his life during the last years of his active work, and lightened the burden of the years of suffering and pain which followed.

All the members of Baptist Churches in Germany, as well as many thousand friends outside the bounds of the fatherland, looked for a considerable time with much anxiety towards Zurich, where Pastor J. G. Oncken lay very ill. The faithful nursing and self sacrificing care of Mrs. Oncken, lessened the sufferings of the aged saint as far as human strength, faithfulness, and love could do. The knowledge of this fact gave much

satisfaction. In old age he still showed great vigour, which was a witness of the bodily strength which had distinguished his youth, but latterly his mental powers by degrees got weaker and weaker. In one thing only did he participate with perfect clearness of mind till almost the close of his life. This was devotional prayer; however absent he might have been, as soon as family worship began, clearness returned, and even if he forgot earthly friends and circumstances, his God and Saviour and his relation to Him were ever clearly kept in mind. From time to time there came reports from brethren who had visited him; they were always more and more sad, so that at last only one prayer could be recommended to all friends and churches—That the Lord would let His devout and faithful servant depart to his everlasting joy!

The divine call, giving freedom, ensued on the 2nd January, 1884, early in the morning. During the last fortnight particular German hymns, which his faithful wife read to him over and over again, were his comfort. Especially dear to him were the two, beginning—"Ich will's wagen," (I will venture,) and "Ich bin im Himmel angeschrieben," (I am inscribed in Heaven's roll). On the

Thursday just before his decease, he prayed at family worship, certainly with much difficulty, and very slowly, but still with great warmth and impressiveness. Soon afterwards an alteration in the condition of the patient was observed, which prepared his faithful companion and nurse for the arrival of the angel of death, but he retained his consciousness almost to the end. At last, however, the tired heart stood still. Death had come. So quietly, so peacefully had the Lord taken His faithful servant home. "Like one falling asleep his spirit passed from earth to join the palm bearing hero and martyr band, round the throne of God in heaven."

By the thoughtfulness of Mrs. Oncken the coffin, which was removed to Hamburg, had been fitted with a glass inset, so that the members of his church and his two sons, who had come over from England, could once more see the beloved face.

On January 8th, the funeral service was held in the Baptist Chapel at Hamburg, where he had so long and so successfully ministered the Word of Life. It was as solemn as it is possible for one to be in this world. It was a scene of tears, and a time of renewed deep consecration of many souls to that glorious

service in which Pastor Oncken's life had been spent.

The funeral sermon was preached by his lifelong friend and fellow-labourer, Pastor Köbner, from the text, Psalm lxxiii. 24: "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." Then an address was given by Mr. Kemnitz, who afterwards became Mr. Oncken's successor in the pastorate of the Hamburg Baptist Church; his theme was the triumphant ascent of Elijah in the chariot of fire, especially the cry of Elisha: "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." "I think," said he, "we should do as Elisha did. He took the mantle of Elijah, and wrapped it firmly together as a staff, with which to tread his future pilgrimage. Brethren and fellow-workers in the Kingdom of God, who love and honour him who sleeps in Jesus, seek in his spirit to carry on the work. Let nothing but the plain pure Word of our God in the proclamation of His free grace be our end and aim. Let us closely follow this in the building up of our churches. So did our Father in Christ and we will tread in his footsteps, and you dear members of his church continue to honour the memory of this first

witness of our testimony in Germany. Yes, wrap the mantle of this Elijah together, so that no portion of it may be torn away, but in its fulness remain our strength for days to come."

A long procession of devout men attended the body to the grave. It was led by members of the Young Men's Union carrying palm branches. At the grave side there was a short service and as the coffin was lowered into the earth, the choir sang solemnly, the beautiful anthem, "Blessed are those in Christ who sleep."

He was laid to rest in the family grave in the Cemetery of the Reformed Church in Hamburg. The memorial stone is an obelisk of granite, with the following inscription in German:

JOHANN GERHARD ONCKEN,

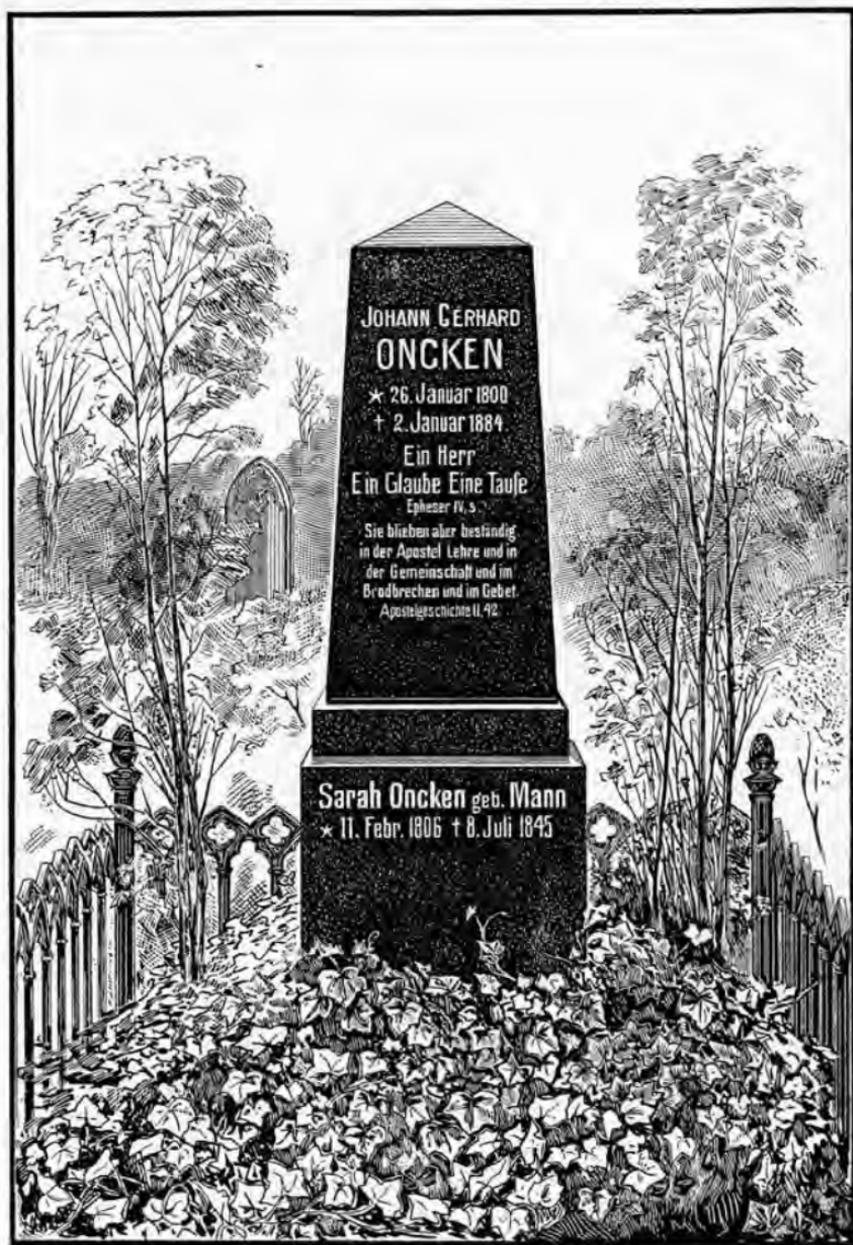
*Born 26th January, 1800.*

*Died 2nd January, 1884.*

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism."—*Eph.* iv. 5.

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."—*Acts* ii. 42.

At the centenary of Pastor Oncken's birth, January 26th 1900, memorial services were



PASTOR J. G. ONCKEN'S GRAVE IN HAMBURG.

held in Hamburg when a tablet was placed on the grave by the Church, bearing the following inscription:

“In Memory of their never-to-be-forgotten first pastor, Johann Gerhard Oncken, the founder of churches of immersed Believers in Germany, this Memorial Tablet was erected on his 100th birthday, January 26th 1900, by the grateful First Baptist Church in Hamburg.

“Remember your teachers who have spoken unto you the Word of God, considering their end, whose faith follow.”  
(Heb. xiii. 7.)

THE END.