

One
Hundred
Years

OF THE
KING-ST. BAPTIST
CHURCH WIGAN.

1826-1926.



KING STREET BAPTIST CHURCH (TO-DAY).

ONE HUNDRED YEARS:

A BRIEF HISTORY OF
KING STREET BAPTIST
CHURCH
WIGAN.

1826 - 1926.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS Book is not intended to be read as a complete History of the King Street Baptist Church. The material for such a history was not available, since there is a serious hiatus in the minute books and documents at present in the possession of the Church. The following chapters however, do, we hope, give a distinct impression of the Church in its hundred years of witness to the Sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have deliberately abstained from attempting any appraisal of the distinctive place occupied, either by ministers or laymen. Our purpose has been simply to magnify the Church to which we belong. Whatever work we have in it we affectionately dedicate to the memory of the men and women who founded the Church, and to our Fathers and Mothers in Jesus Christ.

J. H. MALINS JOHNSON,
JAMES STARR.

CHAPTER I.

IT was in April, 1826, that a little company of fifteen people came out from the fellowship of the Lord St. Baptist Church, and, with their friends, commenced the movement which is now the King Street Baptist Church, Wigan.

How venturesome was their faith in believing they could found such a cause and maintain its ministry, we can only realise as we have the imagination to travel back into those grim times that followed immediately on the Napoleonic wars. In 1821, Napoleon was exiled to St. Helena, and the long European wars came to a close. Just six years before, the English-American War had come to its end. There followed what was, perhaps, the most poverty-stricken time the English people ever knew. If we could visualise what the people of to-day would have suffered without any unemployment insurance, it would give some indication of the extreme sufferings of English men and women in the earlier years of the 19th century.

Meanwhile the whole circumstance of the political outlook was vexed and straightened by the tumults that accompanied the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. Riots were common—directed especially to the repeal of the Corn Laws and against the introduction of machinery into the Textile

industries. Manchester became the centre of revolt against governments that spoke high-sounding words about the desperate needs of the common people, yet did little but set the Habeas Corpus Act in motion, because of the fears engendered by the wild excesses of the French Revolution.

Such, then, were the times when our fathers began the Second Baptist Cause in Wigan.

In 1821, the Pastorate of the Lord Street Baptist Church (now Scarisbrick Street Baptist Church) became vacant. It remained vacant for nearly five years. During this period the people were subject to the ministries of varied preachers coming from different parts of the country. These preachers did not always preach with the same accent. It must be remembered that at that time there was a deep cleavage in the convictions of the Baptist Churches in England. There was the iron Calvinism, which gave us the strict and particular Baptist Church, and which had its strength especially in the north and in the south of England. There was, again, the General Baptist Church, which had its strength especially in the Midlands. Both really were Calvinistic, but the one was rigid, contemptuous of the softness that stood trembling before the iron logic of that inflexible creed. The other craved for a gentler interpretation of the Sovereignty of God.

The old minute book records :—

“ A corresponding difference of judgment respecting the preaching manifested itself among the members. Shyness ensued.”

Was ever a deep and poignant trouble in a church more delicately put? "Shyness ensued." The first secretary of the Church was not only an artist in penmanship, he was a perfect gentleman in spirit. All through these early minutes the roughness is smoothed, and if there were a way by which the crooked thing could be written straight, it is so written here.

In the early part of 1826, the Church at Lord Street sent an invitation to the Rev. Benjamin Millard, of Bath, in Somerset. The invitation was accepted, and within a very short time the new minister arrived in Wigan. Only a few weeks were needed to convince him that he had come to a tragically divided Church, and that no success could possibly be won. Mr. Millard, therefore, resigned his charge at once. He did not, however, leave Wigan. He was:—

"Moved with a consideration of the destitute state of Wigan and its vicinity in reference to the means for spiritual instruction; and he ultimately conceived the design of attempting to raise, in a more central part of the town, a second Baptist interest of the same faith and order."

Let it be said at once that here is no distressing story of a church divided by differences between people on matters of personal spite. These people never despaired of finding a *via media*. They never looked for one. They felt they were stewards of the mysteries of God; and, if it caused them pain, they were prepared to bid good-bye to each other, rather than in the interests of peace, to bid good-bye to what they held as the faith once delivered to the saints.

It was Mr. Millard's purpose to go out alone. He bade those who had gathered about him at Lord Street to stay with their brethren, to choose from among the preachers who came to them a man whom they could unanimously invite to the Pastorate. They replied, however, that they had no hope of such a circumstance; that if they had failed after five years they would fail again; and that if he were led to found a new cause they would go with him.

The first task that awaited this little group of people was to find a home—some place to be hallowed by prayer, by the reading and preaching of the word, into a House of God. Mr. Millard found such a place right in the heart of the town, in what was then known as the Commercial Hall. It was really an Exchange for the Textile Industry. Weavers came to it twice a year from Lancashire and Yorkshire, and made their bargains and sold their goods. The Wigan Fair is a survival of that old-time custom, and explains one of the minutes recurring in the records of the Church. Again and again the minute appears: "No Church Meeting because of the Fair." The minute rather intrigued the editors of these notes. Did these Puritan fathers of ours twice a year unbend so far as to go to the fair—some sort of spasmodic rising up of the appetite for the flesh pots of Egypt? Further investigation, however, has completely exonerated them from any such suggestion. The minute means: "No Church Meeting because of no place in which to meet."

Mr. Millard hired some rooms in this hall, at a rental of £7 Os. Od. per annum, and after some private meetings, public worship was held for the first time on June 18th,

Members' Names

- 1 David Brown
- 2 Henry Heyes
- 3 Robert Jackson
- 4 Ann ~~+~~ Heyes since Ball
- 5 Jesse Taylor
- 6 Jane ~~+~~ Taylor
- 7 Jas Walker
- 8 Jane Walker
- 9 William Brown
- 10 Mary Brown
- 11 Mary ~~+~~ Heyes since Hollings
- 12 Betty ~~+~~ Sutton since Leech
- 13 Tho^s Bennett
- 14 Mary Ann Morison
- 15 Tho^s Sutton.
- 16 Benⁿ Millard. Pastor

Deacons

formed into a Gospel Church 6th March 1827

1826. There the people continued to meet for nearly twelve months, simply as a meeting, until on the 6th and 7th of March, 1827, the Church was formed and Minister and Deacons ordained. The proceedings of those two days are a model of what such proceedings should be. The record is as follows:—

The fifteen persons, whose names are first hereunder subscribed, shortly after requested and received their dismissal from the Lord Street Church, and, after attending Mr. Millard's ministry for a considerable period, with entire satisfaction, signified to each other their desire of being formed into a new Church, and of giving Mr. Millard a call to become their Pastor. They accordingly conveyed to him a unanimous invitation to be ordained over them, and received from him a reply in accordance with their wishes.

On the 6th and 7th of March, 1827, the Church was formed, and Mr. Millard ordained. The Rev. James Lister, of Liverpool, stated the nature of a Gospel Church, and, assisted by the Rev. Dr. Steadman and Rev. Benjamin Godwin, both of Bradford, Yorkshire, set apart to the office of Deacons, by the imposition of hands, the brethren: David Brown, Henry Heyes, and Robert Jackson, and formed the Church in the order of the Gospel. The Rev. B. Godwin proposed the usual questions to Mr. Millard, received a statement of his Christian experience, of his call to the Ministry, and his confession of faith. The Rev. Dr. Steadman offered up the Ordination Prayer and, in conjunction with his brethren Lister and Godwin, set apart Mr.

Millard by solemn imposition of hands to the office of Pastor over the Church, and delivered to him an affectionate charge. The Rev. B. Godwin concluded the services by addressing to the Church the word of Christian counsel and exhortation.

During the interval, between the opening of Commercial Hall for public worship and the founding of the Church, a beginning was made on Sunday School Work. The school commenced on September 17th, 1926, with eight scholars and three teachers. Mr. Wm. Brown, familiarly and affectionately known among the children as "Mr. William," became its first Superintendent. The venture met with instant and even dramatic success. Within seven years, the three teachers and eight scholars had increased to thirty teachers and three hundred and eleven scholars.

The Church itself gained no such manifest success. Rather it went "with weary steps and slow." If Pentecost came during those early years, it came to individual men and women, not on the congregation as a whole, constraining numbers of people to cry "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Moreover, whatever the nature of congregations on the Sundays, the Church, as a Church, showed little interest in its own welfare. The commonest minute in the records is "Church Meeting, no quorum present. No resolutions passed." Women were not recorded as being present. The quorum was seven. Afterwards it was reduced to five. Mrs. Millard, the minister's wife, began to be counted, but still the old record continues, "Church meeting, no quorum present, no resolutions passed."

The minutes of the Church are, therefore, rather the records of the Deacons' proceedings, with the few people who from time to time met with them. It is for the most part a very matter of fact document, containing resolutions dealing with appointment of visitors to interview candidates for baptism, discussions of ways and means, invitations to be given to Preachers for the school sermons. A reference here and there shows that poverty came very near to some of the members. Here, for example, is a minute which says: "Resolved that the bread left over from the Ordinance be given, with 2/6, to M....." It sounds strangely in our ears, taking us back into the Old Testament to the story of a time when David was given the shew bread from the altar.

The question of the Minister's Stipend is responsible for some intriguing references. The first minister received £80 per annum. The second minister, Mr. Hayward, commenced with £85. Mr. Drew was promised £120, but he did not always receive it—at least he did not always receive it at the appointed time. "A shyness having ensued" between the Minister and the Treasurer, on a question of doctrine, the latter had rather the advantage, and sought to bring the minister to reason by stopping his bread. The Church, however, came to the Minister's aid and rescue. It bade the high-handed Treasurer pass in his books and money, and depart, to leave the Church in peace. Mr. Robert Aikenhead received £120 per annum, "with £10 to help pay his removal expenses." A few months after his settlement, he received £10 as an expression of the Church's goodwill towards him. A few

months more, and the stipend itself was increased to £150. Then, but a little while later, the minutes contain the delectable record "Resolved that £10 be given Mr. Aikenhead towards the expenses of his summer holiday," all of which goes to show not only that the Church members must have been faring better, but that Mr. Aikenhead must have had a "way with him."

The main impression received from this old Church minute book is that of a Church, such part of it as met in the week as well as on Sundays, watching for souls. Watching indeed, sometimes censoriously, yet with one object: the winning of, and keeping disciples in the narrow way. Hence you see the Church sending forth from its meeting ambassadors, clothed with the authority of the Church. They went to enquire of experience before baptism and membership. They went on errands of exhortation and appeal. The life of a man in the world was of their concern. Did he walk carelessly? Then was he a peril to the good name of the cause. Did he not come to the Lord's Table? Then was he reminded of the Lord's command of remembrance, and appealed to to amend his ways. If such an appeal brought no alteration, then, in the solemn meeting of the Church, his name was excised from the Church roll, and he ceased to be a member of the visible Body of Christ. To the little group of people who formed the heart of the Church, religion was everything. And if at times there appears too much of iron and too little of silk, yet the vigour of the demand is a testimony to our fathers' passion for fidelity and truth.

Only a James Barrie, or an Ian Maclaren, could tell adequately some of the stories that lie hidden away in this

old musty Church book. Here, for example, is the story of a man and woman, husband and wife, received with joy and hope into the Fellowship of the Church, and then, from irregular attendance, passing to complete severance from its meetings. Two brethren are appointed to wait upon them, and, having done so, they report that these two friends feel themselves aggrieved by the "neglect and shyness of the Church" towards them. The Church convenes a meeting to consider the charge so brought against them. Whereupon it is resolved:—

That the complaint is not without *some* justification, but that the shyness has been *mutual*, and that, therefore, the deputation wait upon them again and propose, in the name of the Church the exercise of mutual forgiveness, and a return of reciprocal cordiality and Christian communion.

Not a few engaging records occur, showing how thoroughly the preaching of the ministers was watched and any failing duly noticed. Here is the story of four men who combined together to declare that Mr. Millard's preaching was no longer profitable. It proved an occasion for the Church to gather about its minister and to warm his heart with a great assurance of their affection and loyalty. Another record tells of an appointed visitation to an absentee member, who bade his visitors return with the report that he was not satisfied with the minister's gospel preaching. Asked to state with some preciseness the reason for this avowal, he declared the minister "was preaching to sinners and not to saints, and to the elect, and, therefore, the Church was not being edified." The Church despairing of defending its

minister against such a charge, bade the offended member discover some place where he would feel more at home.

How solicitous was the Church for the spiritual welfare of its members is well illustrated in a series of minutes concerning a young woman whose affections, they felt, were leading her into peril.

“ She has for several months encouraged the addresses of an individual who neither made any profession of experimental religion, nor, it was understood, even attended the ordinary means of grace; and whose moral deportment itself was reported, and believed to be, of a decidedly objectionable character. The knowledge of this attachment led the Pastor and members of the Church to employ the most faithful and affectionate remonstrances against such an alliance. An appeal was made to the authoritative injunction of the Word of God, that Believers should marry only in the Lord, and the consequences of a wilful violation of so explicit a command, both in a domestic and an experimental point of view, were affectionately and repeatedly pressed upon her.”

Rachel, however, went on her way, and soon was lost to the Church.

Such were the concerns of the fathers, sixty or more years ago. Little of campaigns; much of one another. As the pages are turned over, one by one, familiar names begin to appear. Here are Hy. Heyes, Joseph Mears, Wm. Leach, John Gibson, Wm. Heaton, John Johnson, James Starr, John Smith, Hy. Naylor, Thomas Naylor; men whose sons

and daughters are yet with us. There are lines that gleam with interest such as these: "Mr. Wm. Heaton was appointed Superintendent of the Sunday School for one year." "James Starr and John Gibson, having been baptised, were received into the fellowship of the Church." "Resolved that brethren Joseph Barton and Thomas Hazelton visit Hy. Naylor, with a view to his baptism." "The following were accepted for baptism and Church membership: Thomas Naylor and Mary, his wife." The following were proposed for baptism: John Smith, Elizabeth Lowe, Sarah Heaton." And so we begin our entrance into the actual remembrances of present members of the Church.

CHAPTER II.

THE Church and Sunday School continued to meet in the Commercial Hall for twenty-eight years. The premises, however, were extremely inconvenient. Moreover, owing to the fact that they were let from time to time for other public purposes, the Church and School frequently had no proper accommodation, especially for its week-night services and classes. The Sunday School, again, had met with such numerical success, that a larger, as well as a more secure place, became the foremost consideration of the leaders. How evident that numerical success in the School was, may be gathered from figures given in a survey made by the Superintendent on the occasion of the completion of the Building Fund in 1860. Among other statements is one which shows that from the time the School opened, to the end of 1859—some thirty-three years—no less than 2,600 children and young people had been subject to its teaching.

It was this shortness of accommodation which accounts for the following minute:—

“Resolved: That the brethren Johnson, Walker, and Heyes, be a deputation to the landlord of the “Bear’s Paw” to ascertain on what terms he will let to this Church the large room, newly fitted up, in his Inn: the deputation, however, not to engage the room at a rent higher than eight pounds per annum.”

Apart from the question of room, the minute is interesting as giving some indication of the change of opinion to which we have come with respect to the law of association. These negotiations evidently came to nothing, for there is no further allusion to the "Bear's Paw."

In 1851 the leaders of the Church and School drew up a statement of their need, and issued an appeal to the public of Wigan. It was "signed by influential ministers and others; and by the superintendents in the Wigan Sunday School Union. The Church and congregation put down their names to promises amounting to £230 (afterwards augmented to £400); and a box was sent round the School each Sunday afternoon for donations, which continued till the opening of the Chapel. Land in King Street was engaged, to cost £200 16s. 8d. This was held on lease eighteen months, and afterwards purchased, and the whole premises vested in Trustees."

The actual date of the commencement of the building is uncertain. What is certain is, that the work brought endless anxiety to the Building Committee. A contract was obtained for the wood work, and accepted. Unfortunately, however, the agreement was not stamped, and the wood-worker determined to profit by the omission. Something more than a "shyness" ensued between him and the members of the committee; and, when finally the building was completed, this somewhat rapacious, and certainly dishonest contractor, refused admission to the building until all his demands were met. Mr. John Johnson had right of entrance as the contractor for the brickwork, and, using his right, he



KING STREET BAPTIST CHURCH BEFORE
RE-BUILDING IN 1907.

broke one of the windows, and so entering, unlocked the doors, and gave admission to the people waiting outside.

Out of this incident there rose a fervent discussion as to the means adopted by the Church for raising funds for the building. It appears that at a Bazaar, held in Commercial Hall, in the year of the migration, (the effort realised £137) raffling had been allowed. People were not wanting to declare that the distressing circumstances connected with the erection of the new Chapel was God's punishment upon a raffling people! It never seems to have struck these people, as indeed it does not to-day—that the punishment that falls upon a raffling people, is to be condemned to silence in the face of what has come to be one of the most malignant evils of our public life.

The Chapel and School were opened for worship and religious education on May 4th, 1854. Together, they made an utterly plain building—the Chapel above, the School below. The following particulars will give some idea of the nature of the first King Street Chapel and School:—

Large School: Height 12ft., length 54ft. 4in., breadth 36ft. 8in.

Chapel: Height 23ft., length 54ft. 4in., breadth 36ft. 10in.

At the back: Separate entrance and yard.

Over these, four rooms averaging in height 11ft. 6in., in length 14ft. 3in., in width 11ft. 3in.

The total cost, including the purchase of ground, and interest on money lent, was £2,342.

At the close of the opening services, the Church found itself with a debt of £1,050. Within six years, however, the debt was entirely extinguished—a tribute not only to the zeal of the people themselves, but also to the generosity of the churches in Lancashire and Cheshire. Of the sum required King Street people gave £800. The Sunday School scholars and their friends £125 10s. 4d. The remainder was collected—some part of it from generous friends in other Wigan churches—the major portion by Mr. Wm. Heaton from the Baptist Churches in the counties mentioned above.

During the time occupied by plans for the new chapel, its building, and the meeting of the charges, the Church had no ministerial oversight. Mr. Millard's ministry came to a close in 1849, and it was not till December, 1861, that the Rev. Wm. Hayward, a student from Spurgeon's College, was invited to undertake the pastorate. The minutes recording the settlement of Mr. Hayward include a characteristic letter from the revered C. H. Spurgeon, commending him to the people:—

“ I believe that he will year by year improve, and that in him you will not find a man who will dazzle with a flash, but one who will blaze with a steady flame. I trust you will see a powerful interest raised in Wigan, based on truth, cemented by union, beautified with love, and sustained by grace.”

In the meantime it must be said that the choice diction, the fine handwriting, and something of the gracious spirit

of the first secretary have given place to another writer of a different order. The minute particulars, so laboriously set down, and always with due respect for the law of association, have given place to paragraphs which sum up the general contents of Church discussions, and it is not always clear where one discussion ends and another begins. Here, for example, is a page of the minute book in which the discussions and interests of the Church are somewhat curiously gathered together:—

“September, 1861. Mr. Hayward reported that he had received several sums of money for the relief of the needy of the Church and Congregation. It was resolved that a sewing club be formed, trusting in God for means of supporting it. The sewing club to be held in the School.”

(This is a reference to the Cotton Famine.)

“October, 1861. Mr. Hayward signified his intention of entering matrimony. He also expressed a wish to be absent for a few weeks for the purpose of collecting money for the support of the sewing club, which now numbers 20. The Church unani- mously acquiesced.”

“November, 1861. In consequence of dissatis- faction expressed with Mr. Hayward’s ministry by Mr. —, a Church meeting was held after the ad- ministration of the Lord’s Supper, and the following resolution was passed: ‘That the Church expresses its deep sympathy with its Pastor’s trial, and has full confidence in his ministry.’”

It is somewhat of a medley ; and, in view of the last paragraph there is no surprise to find that Mr. Hayward's ministry continued but a little less than two years. Thereafter the Church remained without a pastor for over three years.

Yet it is possible to see within these clumsily paragraphed minutes that the Church was growing in strength and broadening its sympathies. In 1867 the Rev. Wm. Drew was invited to undertake the charge of the Church. He brought with him from mission work in Norwich an unwonted evangelism. The male members of the Church were sent out to organise "cottage meetings"; closer fellowship with Scarisbrick Street Church was sought for denominational purposes; appeals are made to other Nonconformists' communions to unite at the Lord's Table, and in the first year of his ministry alone, thirty-eight new members were received into the Church. To many there must have come the vision of a great church, but the vision soon faded. It was in the midst of this time that the signs of a coming storm appeared. The separation from the mother Church at Lord Street was caused by theological differences. The men and women who came out to found the new cause did so as a protest against any softening of the iron doctrines of Calvinism. Nearly fifty years later their immediate successors were set once more to defend the doctrines of their fathers. Within the formalism of the records, it is easy to see a growing and distressing uneasiness; there is obvious manœuvring for strategic positions, as, for example, the officership of the Sunday School; men agree to election only if

other particular men are elected with them; the proposal of names for leading positions is followed by amendments suggesting other names; the prevalence of long and warm discussion is indicated by a minute which says that no Church meeting in future is to be continued beyond 9-15 p.m., to be followed a little later by a pathetic resolution that for six months no discussion shall be allowed in any Church meeting, and that members shall meet only for prayer.

How long the truce of prayer lasted it is not possible to say. It is clear that it was only a truce. An agitation was commenced, the purpose of which was to urge the Church to draw up a covenant, cause it to be printed, and to make it the final point of appeal in any dispute. The covenant was drawn up and agreed to at a formal Church meeting. If the members imagined that their assent to such a document would bring peace, they must have been bitterly disappointed. It did but add strength to the storm. The Church discovered that some of the visitors appointed to interview candidates for baptism and membership, were not content to enquire of spiritual experience, but were confronting them with, and demanding from them assent to, the written covenant. A resolution was thereupon moved in the Church meeting in the following terms:—

“That the document called ‘the confession of faith’ shall not be applied as a test in the visitation of candidates for baptism; nor on their reception into the Church. That the Church as a church of Calvinistic believers only, while regarding Christ

Jesus as the only mediator between God and man, and Who gave Himself as a ransom for all, also regards Christ in His life as the test and pattern of sound doctrine, and that the Church in all matters of doctrine, faith, and practice, shall appeal to that pattern and to the word of God only, and not to any confession of faith, nor other work of human hands."

The resolution was finally accepted by a majority of the members present. In subsequent meetings vigorous and repeated attempts were made to re-open the matter. The reading of the minutes was challenged; the Minister's conduct of the meeting was criticised; the Treasurer, as has been stated earlier, sought a short way to bring the Minister to reason; several officers resigned, to be greatly surprised by the acceptance on the part of the Church of their resignations, and the echoes of the controversy continue to be heard long after the actual dates of resolutions.

It is not to be forgotten, that both in matters of religion and politics, the times were marked by controversy. It was, indeed, the characteristic mark of the day. So far as the Baptist Church generally is concerned, it was the forerunner of the fusion of the Strict Baptist Church, and the General Baptist Church into one church, united under the paternal ægis of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. One tendency towards that fusion is seen in the opening of the Lord's Table to Christians other than those who had submitted themselves to immersion. It is interesting, as indicating the care the Church exercised over its membership, to note how accurately

the votes of members on that subject are set forth. At the time there were eighty-five members entitled to vote. (Members under seventeen, and members not attending the Communion Service, were not allowed to vote.) Of the eighty-five, sixty-six voted for, and twelve against, the admission to the Communion of unbaptised believers, and seven were neutral.

It may be convenient at this point to turn aside from the controversial questions of the Church's faith to recall the more domestic side of its life. It is easy to see that financial questions loomed large in the discussions of the Church, and that not infrequently heavy strain was put on the resources of the people, and it is interesting in this connection to observe the favourite method of augmenting the income. It was the popular lecture and the special sermon by preachers of note, upon which these sons of the Puritans depended to make the balance straight at the end of the year. Mr. Hugh Stowell Brown and Mr. Mursell, of Leicester, came to the Church's aid in this way. Of course it must not be supposed that the people never unbent and gave themselves to what was lighter than sermon and lecture! They had their social gatherings—especially their tea parties. The most famous of these was the New Year party, an event for which young people only qualified by growing older, and of which there is still on New Year's Day some attenuated reminiscence. It was in the Sunday School, and through the senior classes, that the social intercourse of the people was steadily fostered, and it is happy to note that the storms that agitated the Church had but little effect on

the work in these classes. The school continued its flourishing way even when the Church was brought to a halt by its fiery discussions. From the beginning it won into its service the best dowered of the people. Messrs. Wm. Brown, Wm. Marsh, John Johnson, Wm. Heaton, John Smith, and John Alfred Johnson, J.P., gave, in succession, inspired leadership, and with them there gathered men and women whose love and service for the School went unabated through the years.

Returning now to the general movements of the cause. The period covered by the ministry of Mr. Drew, though swept by controversy, was yet marked by useful organisation of the Church's life. The annual revision of the Church roll was instituted. The system of appointing visitors to aid the Deacons in the work of the oversight of the Church was begun, and generally, perhaps demanded by somewhat intractable spirits, laws were formulated, and insisted upon, to bring order into the conduct of its meetings.

The ministry of Mr. Drew came to a close in 1872. Thereafter, for a period of twenty years, came a succession of short pastorates, sometimes with long vacancies between. The following are the names, and the order of their succession, of ministers during the period above mentioned: The Revs. Robert Aikenhead, Hy. Hall, Andrew Miller Mills (now Hon. Pastor of Carmarthen Baptist Church, and thrice Mayor of the town), John Joseph Berry, Daniel Power Packer, George James Cliff (now of Salterforth, Colne).

It will be evident from these very short pastorates that the Church in its history has few of those traditions of the ministry that are symbolised by such phrases as "Chown, of Bradford," "Hugh Stowell Brown, of Myrtle Street," "Maclaren, of Manchester." The Church, however, from its beginning had stalwart laymen. They led the Church with conviction and courage, and, under the providence of God, caused it to have a distinctive place in the religious and philanthropic life of the town and beyond. Its missionary interest was fostered by the fact that one of its own members—a nephew of the first minister—was a missionary in Jamaica. The Church gave the Wigan Infirmary almost its first inspired leader. In the great missions which followed the coming of Messrs. Moody and Sankey, King Street took a notable part, and continued to do so beyond the period covered by this chapter. When, again, the abuses of the liquor traffic had to be confronted, though it brought odium on those who opposed it, members of the Church took a valiant share in an attack which resulted in the proper exercise of magisterial control over the licensed trade in Wigan.

We may bring this chapter to a close by recalling the words of Mr. Hy. Newbolt, as he stood before Clifton Chapel :—

This is the chapel; here, my son,
Your father thought the thoughts of youth,
And heard the words, that one by one
The touch of life has turned to truth.

CHAPTER III.

THE period covered by this chapter may be conveniently set forth as that which includes the ministries of Revs. N. Bosworth, Ambrose Lewis, and the present minister, J. H. M. Johnson. Mr. Bosworth commenced his pastorate in 1897, and remained until 1907. Mr. Lewis came immediately afterwards, and remained till 1913. Mr. Johnson took up the work in the Spring of 1914.

Reference has been made in the previous chapter to the extreme simplicity of the original King Street Chapel and School. As the time went on and the work of God prospered, the narrow limits imposed on the builders by the site, came to be severely felt.

It must not be thought that the workers were content at any time with the accommodation provided for them. For many years the difficulties had been recognised and seriously discussed. King-st. is a congested street, and it offered no ample space for extension. All available land was in use. In course of time, however, there came a rumour that some land lying at the rear of the Chapel and running back to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, was in the market. The land had been occupied in earlier days as the site of a coach builders' works and later as a dressing room connected with the Theatre Royal. Immediately

Mr. Wm. Heaton made strenuous efforts to purchase it, but with no success. On his death, the late Mr. John Johnson continued negotiations with no greater success, and he too passed away with this desire unfulfilled. The negotiations then passed into the hands of those who are yet with us, but with no better results, and the chances of obtaining the land appeared to be as elusive as the Will-o'-the-Wisp.

As time went on the difficulties of accommodation increased to such extent that all felt something must be done. A Building Committee was formed and an architect engaged. Plans were submitted showing how by raising and altering the back premises within the limits of the land belonging to the Church, the accommodation could be increased. The suggested improvements, however, were not sufficient to justify the estimated cost. The question then arose of erecting entirely new premises on a different site, but the difficulties of finding a new site and the disposal of the old were too great, and it appeared as though there was nothing to do but put up with the difficulties, and do the best possible with them.

It was just then that a rift appeared in the clouds, and a meeting was arranged with a representative of the Company owning the land. A price was fixed upon for its purchase, subject to the approval of the Managing Director of the Company, and though some delay took place before this was obtained, eventually the purchase was completed. Amended plans were at once drawn and building commenced. The buildings, as they now stand, were completed in 1905, at a cost, including the price of the land purchase, of

upwards of £5,900; and on February 1st, 1905, Dr. Clifford came down to conduct the opening services, and at the close of the day there remained a debt of £2,000.

On December 11th, 1902, a meeting was held to initiate a subscription list, when a sum of over £1,100 was promised and subscribed. It was also decided to augment this by holding a Bazaar, the work of which was promptly entered upon, and much energy and enthusiasm was displayed by all friends. The Bazaar was held in the Drill Hall, Powell Street, in October, 1904, and resulted in a sum of £1,000 2s. 9d., after all expenses had been paid, being transferred to the Building Fund. Truly a most satisfactory effort. At the close of the Bazaar it was announced that by the kindness of Mrs. Heaton a sum of £1,000 would at once be paid by the Exors. of Mr. Heaton to the Building Fund Account. Considerable sums were also raised by the Laying of Memorial Stones, Concerts, etc.

In the years following the re-opening of the premises, 1905-6-7-8-9, Sales of Work were held for the reduction of the debt, a guarantee fund was initiated, and other efforts were adopted which resulted in the raising of very substantial amounts.

It would be interesting at this point to give the alterations and extensions that were made in the years 1904-5, making the commodious premises as we know them to-day

- 1.—A new Terra-cotta front, said to be the finest example of Norman Architecture in the district, a new roof and a loftier ceiling for the Church.

- 2.—The removal of the Organ to a recess behind the Pulpit, also a new Baptistry.
- 3.—The enlargement, ventilation, and re-flooring of the School, and the adding of two classrooms.
- 4.—An entirely new block of buildings at the back of the old premises, which contain twelve classrooms, a ministers' vestry, kitchen, boiler-house, storage, and lavatories.
- 5.—The installation of electric light, and the embellishment of the interior of the buildings.

Recently the installation of indirect lighting and an electric fan in the School have greatly added to its beauty and comfort.

In the Church also were placed two beautiful Stained Glass Memorial Windows. One to the memory of Mr. John Johnson J.P., representing the Parable of the Ten Talents, given by his family; one to the memory of Mr. William Heaton, representing the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and presented by Mrs. Heaton. These were unveiled at the re-opening ceremony, on the 5th February, 1905. Some years later, a third was added, in memory of Mr. and Mrs. James Starr, by the members of the family, representing "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

There are also two Brass Memorial Tablets; upon one is inscribed the early leaders of the Church who had been called to the higher service: Rev. Benjamin Millard, William Brown, James Walker, William Heaton; the

other bearing the names of those who had laid Memorial Stones: James Scarisbrick Walker, Mrs. William Heaton, Samuel Melling, J.P., Richard Lee, William Johnson, J.P., and James Starr.

Such then is the King Street Baptist Chapel and School as we know it to-day.

In the meantime the Church was making a growing contribution to the religious life of the town. The strong controversies, of which some description has been given in the previous chapter, had ceased, and the Church was happy, and is still blessed by unbroken unity.

Note may be taken at this point of the part taken by its members in the various movements, especially within the Free Churches generally, and the Baptist denomination. They had the keenest interest and a foremost share in the formation of the Wigan and District Free Church Council. Led by Mr. Bosworth and Mr. William Johnson, J.P., they were the strongest resisters to the 1902 Education Act—an Act which still operates, and is an offence to righteousness, as well as an affront to the best traditions of British politics. Its S.S. Officers and Teachers have been amongst the most enthusiastic workers of the Wigan S.S. Union, taking no small share in the propaganda which has brought about the re-organisation of work among children and young people. Three of its members held the officership of the Temperance and Rescue Mission, and continued to do so until it ceased its undenominational character. It gave leading spirits to the Christian Endeavour movement. In the last

25 years there is scarcely a religious or philanthropic movement in the town, and of the town, as distinct from any one church, but has numbered King Street people among its most resolute supporters.

The period under review has witnessed a marked deepening in the missionary interest of the Church. This is doubtless in no small measure due to the fact that one of its members, in the person of the Rev. Granville Gibson, B.D., is a Missionary in India. Year by year the Sunday School makes a notable contribution to the Baptist Missionary Society. The average contribution to this work from the Church and School for evangelising the world through preaching, teaching, and medical work has been during the past three years, over £200 per year.

The relation of the Church to the Denomination has been of the most generous character. During the ministry of Mr. Lewis the Church contributed £350 to the Sustentation Fund, a fund for the better support of Ministers and smaller Churches in the country, and in town districts where the situation has become difficult through the removal of people from the centres of such towns to their suburbs. To the United Fund—a fund to be divided between the Missionary Society and the work of the Sustentation Fund, the members of the Church, Congregation and School contributed £1,460.

In the period under review, however, the distinguishing fact is the deepening and strengthening of the spiritual life of the Church, and the steady success of its appeal for discipleship among its young people. In 1905, the Church

entered into possession, for the first time in its history, of adequate premises, premises that were alike a credit to the sacrificing spirit of the people who gave of their substance, and to the men who refashioned the old buildings until they were new. Both the Church and School proceeded to make fine entrance into the new opportunities presented to them; and by putting first things first, the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of the Son of God, they re-emphasised the chief ministry of their organisation, and laid deeply the foundation of that success, which, in the goodness of God has made the Church one of the centres of persistent evangelism in this part of Lancashire.

This was the outstanding mark of Mr. Lewis' ministry. By unceasing pastoral visitation, by faithful preaching, and by urgent appeal, he was used by God to bring men to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and to unite in membership with the Church. It was during Mr. Lewis' ministry, and under his guidance, that the people accepted a more Christian method of meeting its building costs—the principle of the Thank-offering. By this offering, spread over a number of years, the debt on the alteration and extension of the present buildings was paid.

It may be useful to officers and members of other churches if the method be briefly indicated. It is an annual offering, and is always fixed for the third week-end in October. A fortnight before, a circular is sent through the post to the members of the Church and School, and on the Sunday previous to the offering, envelopes are distributed among the scholars in the School. The circular intimates that the minister and his wife will be in the Church Parlour to receive

friends on the Saturday and Monday afternoons and evenings, and that some appointed friend of the School will receive the children's and young people's envelopes in the School in the afternoon. That is the extent of the organisation. The offerings are quite private—they are dropped into a box provided for the purpose. How successful the method has been, can be seen when it is stated that the least offering in fifteen years was £92, and the best amount £460, a notable offering, which finally cleared away the debt. It may also be stated that only once, in 1923, has the Church had need to resort to a Bazaar to meet the costs either of its ordinary expenditure, or of effecting repairs or re-decoration.

In 1914, the present minister undertook the charge of the Church. A year for ever memorable to the present generation, because of the outbreak of the Great War.

As in most Churches, it proved a hiatus in the spiritual progress of the cause. The happiness of its fellowship gave place to brooding anxiety. Weeks and months passed, and the monotony of sombre expectancy did but deepen in poignancy, men and women coming to the house of God to be sustained, found their thoughts wandering, following through the unimaginable spaces and regions of France, Italy, Egypt, the Dardanelles, Salonica, India, and Africa.

Hereabout, too, the Church suffered severe loss by the removal of families from Wigan to other districts, and two of its most trusted leaders, in the persons of Mr. James Laycock, and Mr. John Naylor, Treasurer and Secretary respectively, passed away ere they had come to the full flower of age.

The Church and School, however, did not stagnate. It steadily preserved its membership, and during the darkest part of the period of the War it turned its attention to the re-organisation of the Sunday School. A beginning was made in the establishment of the Primary Department. Later, the same principle was applied to the Junior Department, and at the present time the School is fully graded, having five departments: Senior, Intermediate, Junior, Primary, Beginners, each having its own Leaders and Staff of Teachers, and meeting in the week time for the consideration of method in teaching, study and preparation for the next Sunday.

The later years of the Church, which bring us to the eve of the Centenary Celebration, have been, and still are, crowned with a gracious success, which make them to merit the bible description of "Times of refreshing from the Lord." Young people, and older people, are confessing their faith in Christ by baptism. The membership of the Church is higher than it has been ever in its history. Throughout the different organisations of the Church there is the warm glow which comes of happy progress. The Sunday evening congregations for worship are notably increasing, and within all, full of fine presage for the future, there is a homely fellowship as fine in itself as it is obvious to the stranger within its gates.

In the foreword to this narrative of the chief events in our history, it has been said that no attempt is made at the appraisal of the distinctive place occupied by any minister or layman. The Church is far more than its outstanding characters. There are those who never lay claim to leader-

ship, and whose voices are rarely heard in Church discussions, yet whose persistent fidelity makes them the very salt of the fellowship of which they have been, and are, members. King Street owes much to such people.

Nevertheless there are men whose memories are alive and fragrant in the respect and affection of all who know and love King Street. Such are Mr. Wm. Heaton, around whom there gather the remembrances of the Sunday School—a born leader of men, and with the added grace of the faculty for winning the confidence of children. His portrait hangs in the School. His truer portrait is in the hearts of older people, many of whom are now in the work to which he gave his life. Mr. John Johnson again, who, though never a member of the Church, gave unstinted service both to the Sunday School and to the work of the Church. It is to him that we must look for the explanation of the strangely small cost entailed in the erection of the first building in King Street. Mr. James Starr, for sixty years associated with the Sunday School; for many years the worthy successor of Mr. Heaton in the leadership of the mixed Adult Class, and holding alternately the Offices of Secretary and Treasurer to the Church. Mr. John Smith, who some time ago celebrated seventy years association with the Sunday School, and is yet with us in the crown of ripe old age, as full of zeal as ever for evangelism, and to whose generous gifts the Missionary funds of the Church, and especially the Baptist United Fund, bear notable testimony. Mr. Thos. Naylor, for thirty years the leader of the Choir and sometime a deacon of the Church—who, passing out from teaching the Choir the cadences of “There is a land of pure delight,” within a few hours entered the land itself.



R. H. ORCHARD,
ALLEN JONES.

G. HAMMOND,
JAMES STARR,
SECRETARY.

E. H. STARR,
REV. J. H. MALINS JOHNSON,
PASTOR.

THOS. CRUMP,
J. T. HARVEY,
TREASURER.

S. P. SILLEY,
JOHN SMITH.

DIACONATE OF THE CHURCH, 1926.

There are yet others, who bring us nearer to our own times. Such as Mr. David Smith, Secretary for many years of the Church, and under whose leadership the Rev. Daniel Packer came to the cause—a minister who while staying but three years, yet did a work which makes his ministry probably the most distinctive in the Church's history. Mr. John Naylor and Mr. James Laycock, together Secretary and Treasurer, and giving together an executive leadership rarely surpassed indeed in the history of any Church. There is Mr. William Johnson, J.P., one-time Missionary Secretary, and whose interest in the Church is for ever before us in the fine buildings now in our possession. There is Mr. R. H. Wood, J.P., to whose enthusiasm the Thankoffering and the clearing away of the debt on the buildings is largely due. There is Mr. T. L. Lace, J.P., who entered into the succession of, and still continues the work of, the mixed Adult Class on Sunday afternoons. Nor do we forget the long services rendered to the School by Mr. John Alfred Johnson, J.P. and Mr. W. Heaton Starr. Mr. Johnson for over thirty years its Superintendent and Treasurer; Mr. Starr for thirty years its Secretary. Nor yet do we forget the work of Mr. E. H. Starr as Treasurer of the Church, with its complete system of Church bookkeeping, of which the present Treasurer, Mr. J. T. Harvey, would bear his testimony.

Such are the men who stand out in the annals of the Church. It is a masculine list. The work of the women of the Church is less public—but not a whit less real. The writers of these notes bear their testimony to the sustaining and unfailing help given to the Church by its womanhood. Through the

wider ministry of the Wigan and District Baptist Women's League, it has made noble contributions to real causes in the denomination, and not a little of the present success of the Church is due to the Christian spirit and service fostered in the Thursday afternoon Baptist Women's League Meeting.

It may not out of place to give at this point the Order of the Weekly Services and Meetings in the Church and School.

Sunday Services, 10-30 and 6-0. The Lord's Supper at the close of the the evening Service on the first Sunday in each month. A Social Half-hour, giving opportunity for fellowship, is held on the third Sunday evening in the Schoolroom.

There is a Young Worshippers' League for Children in connection with the morning service in the Church.

The Sunday School holds two Sessions on each Sunday. In the morning at 9-45, in the afternoon at 2-0.

There is a Young People's Fellowship, on Mondays, at 8-0.

The Devotional Service of the Church on Tuesdays, at 7-30

The Baptist Women's League meets on Thursday, at 3-0.

A Band of Hope for Children, at 7-0, also on Thursday.

The Choir meets for Weekly Practice on Thursdays, at 7-30.

Sunday School Teachers meet with their respective Leaders on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, in each week.

It was a brave adventure our Fathers made 100 years ago. They came out to defend the great doctrines which they considered to be the timeless bulwarks of the truth, and of the supremacy in the Church, of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Times change, and points of emphasis alter ; in essence, we still stand for that which was supreme for them—the Declaration of the Deity of Jesus Christ; that the Christian religion is obedience to God through Him ; and that is the realism of that religion which counts. We still declare that Christ is all, and that Christ is sufficient. We continue to push our way back through declarations of Church Council, back beyond the authority of the Fathers, until we come to the truth of Christ in Scripture, and all who would walk with us in the upward way we ask, “ Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and will you keep His spoken word ? ” We are not a proselytising Church. We count it no part of Christian propaganda to try and win the lambs of another flock. We are content to make our own contribution to the Universal Church. We are under no illusion that we occupy an isolated perfection. We venerate the Methodists for their large charity, in which the greater and lesser churches stand together to their mutual profit. We acknowledge the finer grace with which the Presbyterians have cherished, and do cherish, the value of the Christian Ministry. We rejoice to share with Congregationalists their conception of the meaning of the Church. But we yield to none, and allow none to come between us and our loyalty to Jesus. And we should be less than men if we did not rejoice, not only to be members of King Street, but of the Baptist Church of the world—a church which in point of numbers is the first Protestant Church of our time

In this little history we greet our fellow Baptists, and not less sincerely our fellow Christians in other Churches. For ourselves, on the eve of the Centenary, we challenge not a kindling memory, but a consecration to the beginning of a new chapter, which by the grace of God in the fidelity of His people, may be finer than any that has gone before.

Officers of the Church & Sunday School.

The present Officers of the Church and Sunday School with their records of Service, are as follows:—

Rev. J. H. MALINS JOHNSON, Pastor 12 years.

J. T. HARVEY, Treasurer and Deacon 6 years.

JAMES STARR, Deacon 10 years; Secretary 6 years; Choir-master 18 years; S. S. Teacher 30 years.

JOHN SMITH (Hon. Life Deacon) Deacon 15 years; S. S. Superintendent 10 years; S. S. Teacher 61 years.

THOS. CRUMP, Deacon 11 years; S. S. Teacher 11 years.

ALLEN JONES, Deacon 25 years.

EDWARD H. STARR, Deacon 16 years; S. S. Teacher 40 years.

GEORGE HAMMOND, Deacon 17 years; S. S. Teacher 35 years;
Leader of Men's Class.

S. P. SILLEY, Deacon 9 years.

R. H. ORCHARD, Deacon 6 years; S. S. Teacher 13 years.

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

J. A. JOHNSON, J.P., Superintendent 32 years; Treasurer 30 years.

J. H. STARR, Secretary 1 year.

STATISTICS—FEBRUARY, 1926.

Members of the Church, 308.

Scholars in Sunday School, 288.

Teachers, 44.