

# LANCASHIRE NONCONFORMITY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### WIGAN AND NEIGHBOURHOOD.

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#### I.—EARLY NONCONFORMITY AT HINDLEY.

IN his valuable little work, "Memorials of Hindley," Mr. Leyland begins by saying :—" History, speaking in the general acceptation of the term, Hindley has none. No great event of war or politics has ever taken place within its boundaries, nor has it ever been distinguished as the birthplace or residence of any person of national celebrity."<sup>1</sup> It may be doubted whether Mr. Leyland does justice in that passage to this very considerable township. The old halls, surrounded by moats, which still linger around the neighbourhood ; Castle Hill, "supposed to have been the site of a watch tower, the existence of which is indicated by the ruins of a moat or trench ;"<sup>2</sup> and the passage through the township of the Roman road suggest associations of an interesting character. If, however, Hindley, "speaking in the general acceptation of the term," is in the happy condition of having no history, it has an ecclesiastical history denied unto many places of greater importance, a history especially instructive to Nonconformists.

The first place of worship erected in Hindley stood upon the site of the present "All Saints' Church." The land was given by a Mr. George Green, and the chapel (for such it was called) was built in 1641, funds for which were raised by public subscription and the sale of pews. The chapel was "regularly built, with a Chancell at the East end of it, distinguished from the body of the Chappell, having a Communion table placed therein, and in ye Chappell a reading desk, pulpitt, seates, with other necessities

<sup>1</sup> P. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Baines's "History of Lancashire" (Croston's Edition), vol. iv., p. 308.

and ornaments.”<sup>1</sup> It is further described thus:—“This chapel, or oratory, with the chancel, contains in itself, from east to west, 19 rods and four thumbs’ breadth in length, and from north to south eight rods, one foot, and five thumbs’ breadth in width, or thereabouts.”<sup>2</sup> “It stood,” says Mr. Leyland, “for 125 years, when it was pulled down, having probably become dilapidated, and too small for the wants of the neighbourhood. The present church was erected in its place in 1766.”<sup>3</sup> For and by whom was this chapel originally built? The answer is not easy. Baines, in his “History of Lancashire,” says it was “built by the Puritans, and so was not consecrated.”<sup>4</sup> Mr. Leyland, from a decree issued by the Duchy of Lancashire, in 1669, concludes that it “clearly appears that the building was destined from the first as a place of worship for the Church of England.”<sup>5</sup> Mr. Leyland is too positive, and concludes too much. The document in question says:—

George Greene, late of Hindley, in the county of Lancaster, deceased, about 30 years ago, having a charitable inclination to promote the erecting of a Chapel within the Township of Hindley, wherein the Word of God and Sacraments might be duly dispensed for the ease of the neighbourhood (being at a great distance from their Parish Church at Wigan), by his indenture or deed lawfully executed, did give and convey to the plaintiffs, together with some other persons, since deceased, and their heirs, a parcel of land then marked, hedged out, walled out, or divided from other of his lands, for the erecting of a chapel therein, and making and fitting of a chapel yard thereunto, and wherenpon at the charge of the plaintiffs, with other of the inhabitants, a chapel was afterwards erected, and a chapel yard made, wherein since the erecting thereof, upon every Lord’s day ordinarily, the Word of God and prayers of the Church, by some orthodox Minister thereto ordained, have been duly preached and said, &c.”<sup>6</sup>

There is nothing here from which so definite a conclusion can be drawn, as Mr. Leyland supposes, respecting the party for whom the chapel was built. The date of its erection—1641—points to a period of English history when important ecclesiastical and religious changes were taking place. Puritanism, the pioneer of Noncon-

<sup>1</sup> “Memorials of Hindley” (Leyland), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. ii., p. 191 (Edition 1870).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> “Memorials of Hindley” (Leyland), p. 16.

*HINDLEY CHAPEL OUTRAGED.*

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formity, was becoming a name and a power. And if there is one thing which the study of these old Episcopal chapels in rural districts makes clear, it is that they were the home of a free, independent spirit, which did not take kindly any outside interference, and which eventually dared to defy the iniquitous enactments of the latter half of the seventeenth century. It was these little village chapels, even more than the towns, which made the 2,000 ejected ministers of 1662. There is evidence of this Puritan or Nonconformist spirit at Hindley Chapel very early in its history. In an account of an outrage committed upon Hindley Chapel in 1642 by the Royalist forces of Wigan because it was the home of the "Round-heads," is the following passage :—

The carriage of the cavaliers about Wigen was most insolent, ye blasphemous, for after they had pulled downe the pulpit in Hendon [Hindley] chappell and plaid at cards in the pews and upon the deske, they surprised the Holy Bible, took it away, and afterwards tore it in pieces, and then stucke up the leaves of it upon the posts in severall places in Wigan saying, "This is the Roundheads' Bible."<sup>1</sup>

In 1646, when Presbyterianism became the established religion of England, the minister of Hindley Chapel was the Rev. Thos. Tonge, who was thought "fit to be of the fourth classis." In 1650 the Parliamentary Commissioners report :—

There is a Chappell lately erected and built in Hindley aforesaid vpon the Charges of many of the Inhabitanes thereof, and some of the Inhabitanes w<sup>th</sup>in Abram, and also some of the Inhabitanes w<sup>th</sup>in Aspull; and that Mr. Willm Williamson,<sup>2</sup> an able, godly, and painfull Minister, and of good lyffe

<sup>1</sup> The letter from which this extract is taken is dated Dec. 17, 1642, and is printed in "Civil War Tracts," being vol. ii. of the "Chetham Society Series," p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Williamson had several children born to him at Hindley, as the following extracts from the baptismal register show :—

Jonathan, y<sup>e</sup> son of W<sup>m</sup> W<sup>m</sup>son, minister of this chappell, was borne August y<sup>e</sup> 30<sup>th</sup>, at midnight, and baptized September y<sup>e</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1654.

Mary, y<sup>e</sup> daughter of William Williamson, minister of this place, was born Aprill y<sup>e</sup> 19<sup>th</sup>, 1656, about sunrising, and baptized Aprill y<sup>e</sup> twentyeth day.

[Name cannot be deciphered], y<sup>e</sup> daughter of W<sup>m</sup> Williamson, minister of Hindley, was borne September y<sup>e</sup> 24<sup>th</sup>, about midnight, and baptized y<sup>e</sup> 29<sup>th</sup>, 1650.

Elizabeth Williamson, the minister's mother, died "february 13, was buried y<sup>e</sup> 14<sup>th</sup>, 1651."

and convsacn, doth execute the pnte Cure, and hath for his Satarye or manteynance fflowre score pounds p. ann. payd by the Rector of the Parish Church of Wigan, or in default thereof the Tythes of Hindley and Abram (both being one towneshipp) w<sup>ch</sup> are of the yearly value of ffourescore pounds pt of the before menconed sume of ffoure hundred Seaventeene pounds Tenn shillings and Eight pence, as by order of pliam<sup>t</sup> may appeare.<sup>1</sup>

From all this it will be evident that during the first ten years of its existence Hindley Chapel was more Nonconformist than anything else. Pointing in the same direction is another fact now to be mentioned. According to Mr. Leyland the registers of All Saints' Church begin with the 24th of June, 1698, when the Rev. John Jackson was incumbent. In 1841, however, was issued a list of "Non-parochial Registers and Records," which had been taken from the different Nonconformist Churches of England and Wales, and which are now preserved at Somerset House, London. In the list appears Hindley Presbyterian Chapel, with John Ragland as minister, which sent up the following documents:—

Vol. 1.—Baptisms.....	1644—1754
Burials .....	1642—1754
Marriages .....	1644—1677
Vol. 2.—Baptisms.....	1786—1813
Vol. 3.—Births and baptisms .....	1739—1836

Enough has been said to show, and it is all I care to do, that at Hindley Chapel from its commencement the Puritan or Nonconformist element was strong, and that there is something to be said in favour of the statement by Baines that it was built "by the Puritans."<sup>2</sup>

In 1662 the minister at Hindley Chapel was the Rev. James Bradshaw, who suffered ejection here in that year by the Act of Uniformity. He is said to have been born at Hacking, in the parish of Bolton. The Bradshaws for many generations were associated with Bolton and district, and they are prominent figures in the great civil contest of the seventeenth century. Mr. James Bradshaw received his training in part at the Bolton Grammar

<sup>1</sup> "Commonwealth Church Survey" (Record Society Series, vol. 1), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Croston, in his recent edition, has deleted this clause, and in a footnote repeats Mr. Leyland's statement.



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School, and afterwards at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Calamy who is our principal authority respecting these Nonconformist divines, says :—

Through the influence of his uncle, Holmes (a worthy divine in Northamptonshire) he left the university without taking any degree. Having pursued his studies for some time under his direction, he returned into his native county, fixed in this place [Hindley], and there was ordained by the classis, of which Mr. Earl was moderator, where he continued till he was ejected. In conjunction with many others, he had a concern in the rising of Sir George Booth, with a design to make way for the restoration, for which he afterwards had very unsuitable returns. After Bartholomew Day, 1662, he suffered some months' imprisonment for the crime of preaching, through the malignity of a neighbouring justice of his own name; but he was not to be frightened from his Master's service or discouraged in it.<sup>1</sup>

After his ejection he went to Rainford, where by an ingenious contrivance he managed to retain the chapel for the Nonconformists. He remained there until his death, which took place in 1702, in his sixty-seventh year, caused by a bruise on his leg got by riding during his preaching expeditions. He had a large family, and, having but a poor charge, was often in straitened circumstances. He is said to have been "frequently concerned in ordinations. He was a hard student, and a smart disputant; very lively in his family exercises, and ever zealous for the national interest and the public good."<sup>2</sup> His son, Ebenezer Bradshaw, was for many years pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Ramsgate, in Kent, where he died March 11th, 1741, aged eighty years. "Two practical treatises" are named as from the pen of Mr. Bradshaw, senior—"The Alarm to the Sleepy Spouse" and "The Trial and Triumph of Faith." Calamy<sup>3</sup> mentions another James Bradshaw, for some time minister at Wigan, and afterwards ejected from Macclesfield. The two are confused by Dr. Halley and Canon Raines in the "*Notitia Cestriensis*," by Baines in his "*History of Lancashire*" (Edition 1870), and also in Sinclair's "*History of Wigan*," who describes Mr. Bradshaw as a "ranting turncoat Presbyterian," and, 'like a weather-vane, turned with every religious or politico-religious

<sup>1</sup> "Nonconformist's Memorial" (1802), vol. ii., p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 337.

breeze." The picture drawn of Mr. Bradshaw by the historian of Wigan is scarcely just in the light of Calamy's account of him, and it would be interesting to know his authorities. After the ejection of Mr. Bradshaw from Hindley Chapel, Mr. Sinclair says for some time there was no minister. The following list of ministers who served here is given by Mr. Leyland in "Memorials of Hindley," but whether they were Conformists or Nonconformists is not known:—

1668.—William Dennys.

—, Atherton.

John Wood.

Richard Croston.

Robert Bradshaw.

Samuel Shaw.

James Shaw.

1698.—John Jackson.

It was not until this year—1698—that Hindley Chapel received episcopal consecration. In the "Copy of the Petition to the Bishop of Chester to Consecrate Hindley Chapel (1698)" appears the following passage:—

Some Dissenters from the Church of England (which God Almighty preserve) have (as your Lordship very well knows) by a long and obstinate suit attempted to seize ye said Chappell, and to pervert it and the said gifts and devices from ye said uses to which they were piously devoted, and had probably succeeded had not your Lordship interposed as well your indefatigable pains as your purse.<sup>1</sup>

That sentence shows that the Dissenters of Hindley Chapel were neither few in number nor without influence. To the same effect is the passage from "Notitia Cestriensis" here subjoined:—

"The Dissenters attempted to seize this Chapp, and to pervert y<sup>e</sup> Gifts and Legacies to it to different Uses; but, after a long and obstinate Suit, they were cast by y<sup>e</sup> Bp, who obtained a definite Decree, in y<sup>e</sup> Duchy Court, some time before y<sup>e</sup> Consecration."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Memorials of Hindley" (Leyland), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Chetham Society Series, vol. xxi., p. 256.

"In 1698," says Mr. Sinclair, "they [the Hindley people] were in great trouble, as they were not unanimous whether to have a Conforming or a Nonconforming clergyman."<sup>1</sup> As already stated, it was in this year the chapel was consecrated, and the "conforming clergyman" seems to have got it, and so, two years afterwards, the Dissenters erected for themselves a place of worship, whose history must be given in the next section.

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## II.—HINDLEY: THE OLD PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL.

THE Nonconformists of Hindley up to 1698 worshipped in the Episcopal Chapel of 1641. On the appointment, in that year, of the Rev. John Jackson, the conforming clergyman, they sought another place, and in 1700 a chapel was erected for them by Mr. Richard Crook, of Abram. In addition to documentary evidence, a tablet hanging upon the wall of the chapel makes this certain:—

This chapel was erected  
by Richard Crook, of  
Abram, Anno. Dono., 1700.

"The chapel remained," says Mr. Leyland, "Mr. Crook's private property for the seventeen following years. On the 16th of November, 1717, a deed was executed by Mr. Crook conveying an acre and a half of land, and the new edifice, oratory, or chapel, lately built and known as Hindley New Chapel, with the houses, barns, stables, thereon unto Thomas Sargeant," &c.<sup>2</sup> [The names of twelve trustees follow.]

The first minister of this new chapel was the Rev. Thomas Whalley. It is probable that he was the son of Thomas Whalley, of Rishton, gentleman, lay-member of the Blackburn Presbyterian Classis, who died in January, 1672-3.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Whalley received his

<sup>1</sup> "History of Wigan," vol. ii., p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> "Memorials of Hindley," p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> "Independency in Blackburn," by W. A. Abram, p. 64.

training for the ministry at the Rev. Richard Frankland's Academy at Rathmell, entering it August 27th, 1679. The date of his appointment to Hindley Chapel is not known, but he was here up to the time of his death in 1706. In the "Northowram Register," his death is thus recorded :—

"Mr. Tho. Whaley, Minr. at Hinley, in Lancashire, died abt. Midsummer [1706]." <sup>1</sup>

Probably he was interred at Blackburn. In the Parish Church Registers of that town is a notice of one "Thomas Whalley, of Blackburn, a Dissenting minister," being buried there on the 3rd of July, 1706. Mr. Whalley was succeeded at Hindley by the Rev. James Brownlow. He also was one of Mr. Frankland's students, entering the Academy at Rathmell on the 24th of March, 1698. In October of that year Mr. Frankland died, and Mr. Brownlow amongst others was transferred to an academy in Manchester, under the direction of the Rev. John Chorlton, where he completed his training. In Dr. Evans's list of Presbyterian Chapels, drawn up between the years 1717 and 1729, the only name given against Hindley Chapel is that of Mr. James Brownlow. I gather therefrom that his pastorate was a long one, but neither the date of its commencement nor that of its termination has been preserved. The next minister concerning whom we have information is the Rev. Joseph Bourn. He was the son of the Rev. Samuel Bourn, of Chorley, afterwards of Birmingham, and grandson of the Rev. Samuel Bourn, of Bolton. His brother was the Rev. Samuel Bourn, of Rivington. Mr. Joseph Bourn first saw the light in 1713, and pursued his academical studies at Glasgow; but his progress in literature was much "impeded by a severe fever in his youth." His first settlement was Congleton, in Cheshire, whence he removed in 1746 to Hindley. In 1748 he married Miss Farnworth, who is described as "the daughter of one of the best of men; a young lady of considerable female accomplishments." <sup>2</sup> In 1765 Mr. Bourn died, and was interred within the chapel at Hindley. A marble tablet, erected to his memory, is thus inscribed :—

<sup>1</sup> P. 239.

<sup>2</sup> "Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Bourn," by Dr. Toulmin, p. 121.

## *A NIGHT ATTACK.*

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Sacred  
To the memory of the  
REV. JOSEPH BOURN,  
Minister to this Society  
Nineteen years.  
He died February 17th, 1765.  
Aged 52 years.

He left a widow with six children, and another was born shortly after his death. Mr. Bourn's successor was the Rev. Wm. Davenport, who was educated partly by Dr. Caleb Rotheram, at the Kendal Academy, and partly at Glasgow. His first settlement was Chowbent in 1751, whence he removed to Hindley in 1765. Differences eventually sprang up between him and his congregation. Tradition has it that they originated with an attempt on his part to carry the endowment to the Presbyterian Chapel at Wigan. I copy from Mr. Leyland's book the following interesting account of this matter :—

Mr. Davenport received an anonymous letter signed A. B. C., "informing him that if he did not immediately leave the chapelry he then held in Hindley, some very disagreeable consequences would soon ensue, it being the intention of some part of his congregation speedily to execute them; and that nothing but a direct resignation on his part would avert the stroke; and telling him that a wise man would endeavour to keep himself secure, and a good shepherd would strive to for the love of his sheep, and that a word is sufficient to the wise." On the night of the preceding 4th of September, Mr. Davenport was "assaulted, battered, and wounded" on his return from Wigan to Hindley by some, as it was supposed, of his opponents. The quarrel was thus brought to a crisis, and it was ultimately agreed to refer the case to arbitration. Accordingly Robert Taylor, of Bolton-le-Moors, gentleman, the Rev. Richard Godwin, of Gataker, minister, and the Rev. John Hughes, of Bury, minister, were appointed arbitrators in the dispute; who, after careful inquiry, gave their decision in writing on the 1st of June, 1788 [1778], which was that Mr. Davenport should resign his office on the 1st of the following July, and that the trustees should pay him the sum of £31 19s. 9d.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Davenport retired to Wigan, and died in August, 1791, at the age of sixty years. The Rev. Jonathan Hodgkinson, who was educated at Daventry Academy, being a student there in 1763, followed Mr. Davenport at Hindley in 1779. From a copy of

<sup>1</sup> "Memorials of Hindley," p. 70, note.

the accounts for 1786-7 the minister's stipend does not seem to have been very great. For that year Mr. Hodgkinson received £29 19s. 4d.! Mr. Leyland says he was a man of great amiability, and earned the love not only of the members of his own religious body, but of the entire neighbourhood. For some years after his appointment he kept a boarding school at Birket Bank, two miles distant from Hindley, and used to ride on horseback on the Sunday to officiate, with his wife on a pillion behind him. "Now, Bess," he would say to his mare as he rode along, "a little faster, Bess," and touch her at the same time gently with his whip.<sup>1</sup> During his ministry the chapel was repaired. The fact is recorded by a second tablet hanging from the chapel walls in the following terms:—"This chapel was repaired by subscription, 1798, under the superintendence of Peter Gaskell, of Hindley." He also succeeded in collecting funds for the erection of a manse, to which he removed, but died shortly afterwards. A tablet erected to his memory in the chapel contains the following inscription:—

Sacred to the memory of  
THE REV. JONATHAN HODGKINSON,  
Of Birket Bank, near Wigan,  
And minister of the congregation assembling in this chapel  
during a space of 33 years.

His mild, frank, and unassuming manners endeared him to the society of his family and friends, and he discharged the duties of a Christian brother with unaffected seriousness, simplicity, and candour. From an early period of his life he devoted a considerable portion of his time to the education of youth, and in this honourable employment, his assiduity and knowledge united with a temper distinguished by forbearance and lenity, rendered his exertions peculiarly successful. His surviving pupils remembering with gratitude the days which they passed under his faithful and judicious care, have erected this tablet as a testimony of affectionate esteem for their instructor and friend.

He died 13th July, 1812, aged 68 years.

The Rev Abraham Manley was the next minister. He entered the Manchester College, York, from Chowbent, and settled first at Hindley in 1813. In 1818 he resigned for Walsall, in Staffordshire, where he remained until his death, which took place May

<sup>1</sup> "Memorials of Hindley," p. 72.

## RIVAL CHOIRS.

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19th, 1822. His successor at Hindley was the Rev. James Kay, who was here from 1819 to 1821.<sup>1</sup> The Rev. John S. Ragland followed Mr. Kay in 1822, and remained here for about forty years. In 1852 the chapel was again beautified and altered, a third tablet witnessing to this as follows:—"This chapel was repaired by subscription A.D. 1852, under the superintendence of Thomas Gaskell, of Hindley."

Mr. Ragland's ministry was not altogether smooth. In the *Preston Chronicle* for June 29th, 1833, appears the following:—

It is said that rather a ludicrous scene took place at the Presbyterian Chapel at Hindley, near Wigan, on Sunday last. Some portion of the congregation have been for some time dissatisfied with their minister, and have frequently intimated to him that they wanted a change, but the rev. gentleman, unwilling to quit, entered the chapel on Sunday and began the service, and when the singers commenced with the hymn appointed by the minister, another party began singing from a different author. This discordant medley was not finished when my informant left. It appears that one part of the congregation professes Trinitarian, the other Unitarian, principles.

Mr. Ragland held on nearly thirty years after that, resigning from old age in 1861. He, however, retained an interest in the endowments until his death in 1870. His wife, Maria Ragland, died on the 12th of March, 1856, at the age of seventy-three, and was interred at Rivington. The Rev. George Hoade followed in 1862. His previous pastorates were Battle, Selby, Oldham, and Newchurch. His ministry at Hindley terminated with his death in 1868. In the chapel is a marble tablet, upon which is inscribed the following:—

In memory of  
THE REV. GEORGE HOADE,  
For six years minister of this chapel,  
Who departed this life February 14th, 1868,  
Aged 51 years.

His wife, SARAH HOADE, died  
June 18th, 1885, in the 74th year of her age,  
And both are interred in the chapel graveyard.

<sup>1</sup> Was this the Rev. James Kay who was ordained pastor of the Congregational Church at Kendal, July 29th, 1801, and who eventually seceded, forming a new interest under the name of "Unitarian Baptists?" I am inclined to think so. He ultimately went to America.

His successor was the Rev. Adam Rushton, who was educated at the Home Missionary Board, began ministerial work at Padiham in 1859; was at Blackley, near Manchester, in 1863, whence he removed to Hindley in 1868. During his ministry in 1879 the chapel was again renovated—a further tablet witnessing to the fact. The following is inscribed upon it :—

This chapel was  
Thoroughly renovated  
At a cost of £730,  
In the year 1879,  
Revd. Adam Rushton,  
Minister,  
John Jones, Trustee.

In 1880 Mr. Rushton removed from Hindley, and he is at present residing near Macclesfield without charge. The Rev. Philip Vancesmith, M.A., who is the son of Dr. Vancesmith, was educated at the Manchester New College, and began ministerial life at Hindley in 1881. After being painted and beautified, the chapel was re-opened on the first Sunday in July, 1881, with the commencement of Mr. Vancesmith's ministry. Failing health brought about his resignation in 1891, and he is now living at Bath without charge. The Rev. John Moore, late of Swinton, near Manchester, is the present minister.

The chapel lies a little off the main road, and must be sought for if found. Adjoining it are the handsome school buildings erected during Mr. Rushton's ministry in 1877, and around it is a considerable graveyard. Mining operations are beginning to tell seriously upon the walls, for cracks and fissures of a somewhat threatening character are in many directions visible. Alterations and improvements at different times have been already referred to, and so the chapel of to-day will be very different from that of nearly two centuries ago. The old pews have been superseded by the present ones, which are all open and made of pitch-pine. The windows, three in each side, are quite modern, the panes in which being frosted, and varied by a little coloured glass, have a very pleasing appearance. Amidst all these changes, however, the walls have stood, and are those of the original building. The ceiling is parted into three divisions, and



the pulpit is of the platform style. Over the entrance is a small gallery used by the choir and by the children, from which there is a passage to the school. Perhaps the most noteworthy objects in the chapel are the series of tablets hanging against the walls, the inscriptions upon which have been given. They make quite a history in themselves. The chapel, which seats some 220 people, is light, handsome, and comfortable looking. A bell upon the top, which is well rung, calls the worshippers together morning and evening. In the days of Mr. Brownlow Hindley Chapel had a large and influential congregation. In Dr. Evans's list it is credited with a congregation of 490, of whom thirty-three were county voters. How so many could be squeezed into a chapel which would be well filled to-day with half that number is more than I can say. In its early days Matthew Henry is said to have been a frequent preacher here during his "visits to Lancashire." The congregation is Unitarian, though at what date it became so is not easy to say. The extract from *The Preston Chronicle* previously given states that there was a strong Unitarian party here in Mr. Ragland's days. It is, however, certain that long before this the ministers were Arian, if not Unitarian, and preached accordingly. It is stated in the previous section<sup>1</sup> that the registers were taken to Somerset House in the days of Mr. Ragland, and that the births begin with 1642, and the baptisms and marriages with 1644. This was when worship was held in the Episcopal Chapel. There are many chapels as old as 1700, if not older, but if the Hindley Nonconformists must date the commencement of their history with the date of their registers it is about one of the oldest Nonconformist foundations in the county.

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### III.—HINDLEY: ST. PAUL'S CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

IN a MS. account of Congregationalism in Hindley it is said that in the year 1794 a number of individuals here "having expressed a desire that the Gospel might be preached amongst them several accredited Nonconformist ministers complied with their request and gave occasional assistance." This effort not being attended

<sup>1</sup> Vide ante p. 4.

with success, partly because of the difficulty in obtaining regular preaching supplies, "the attempt to introduce the Gospel was abandoned for a time." The second effort was successful. During his residence at Prescott from 1802 to 1811 the Rev. W. Alexander was accustomed to itinerate in the surrounding districts, and considerable as is the distance from Prescott to Hindley, yet he frequently came hither to preach. The Rev. Joseph Parkin, of Wigan, and the students of the Manchester Academy, under the superintendence of the Rev. William Roby, are also mentioned as giving "very effective aid" at this time. The first mention of Hindley in the Reports of the Lancashire Congregational Union is in the one for January, 1811, when, along with Upholland and some other places, it is said "to have received the kindly assistance of the Union." Some years, however, previous to this it appears the people at Hindley had been accustomed to meet for worship in the Congregational way. The historic sketch referred to says:—

When the Nonconformists commenced their work of faith and labour of love in Hindley, many were the annoyances to which they were subjected. They first met together in a thatched-roof cottage near the Lord Nelson Inn, which is now pulled down, afterwards in a joiner's shop belonging to a Mr. Wm. Livsey, who was mainly instrumental in introducing the gospel in its simplicity and purity into this our village, and so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed that the band of Nonconformists saw the necessity of increased accommodation, and they removed to an upper room in the lower part of Market Street, where divine worship was conducted until the erection of St. Paul's Chapel.

This "upper room" was in Mill Lane, then occupied by a Mr. Joseph Bullough, and in 1807 at a meeting held there, "to devise plans and means for the erection of a new chapel," the following was agreed to:—

We, a few Protestant Dissenters of the Independent Denomination, in the township of Hindley, in the County of Lancaster, bumbly beg the assistance of all well disposed persons of every description, for the purpose of building a chapel in the village of Hindley aforesaid, and hope they will be actuated by a spirit of divine philanthropy, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus as contained in the 38th verse of the 6th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, "Give and it shall be given unto you good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over shall men give into your bosom."

## *DARK NIGHTS AND ROUGH ROADS.*     15

At a ministerial gathering held at Wigan on the 20th of August of the same year, "a plan for building a place of worship in Hindley was proposed," and "a begging case submitted," which met with their "cordial approbation." The work was not, however, undertaken until some years after. In the Union Report for January, 1812, Mr. Alexander, who was then stationed at Leigh, states that "he preaches amongst several other places at Hindley." "Dark nights and bad roads," says he, "make my journeys home unpleasant; but, while the people are willing to attend, I hope I shall find pleasure in spending my legs and my lungs in the service of their precious souls." Other occasional helpers here, whose names ought not to be overlooked in an account of early Hindley Congregationalism, were the Revs. W. Maurice, of Bolton; W. Roby, of Manchester; A. Steill, of Wigan; D. Atkin, of Warrington; Benjamin Nightingale, of Tockholes; L. Redmayne, of Horwich; James Kenworthy, also of Horwich; and Mr. R. Brown, of Prescott. In the Report for 1812 Mr. Brown, of Prescott, is said to have "preached here on the Lord's Day once a fortnight." It also states that "ground has been offered unto them gratuitously for the erection of a place of worship; and they have raised amongst themselves a considerable sum towards the expenses." Hindley appears to have been worked along with Orrell for a short time; for in the next Report twelve guineas are said to have been voted to the "Hindley interest, per Mr. Capper," the then minister at Orrell. On the 5th of November, 1812, a church was formally constituted by the Rev. A. Steill, who delivered an address appropriate for the occasion. The MS. account says there were thirty-eight members, but this can scarcely be accurate, as the Union Report for 1815 gives the number of members as only twenty-two. On the 4th of July, 1813, "two sermons were preached in the Independent Meeting-room for the benefit of the Sabbath school." The school, therefore, is nearly as old as the church. In 1814 "the congregation having collected in various ways themselves and other kind and liberal friends the sum of nearly £200, and the late Mr. John Aspinall, senior, of Hindley, having generously offered to give the land on which St. Paul's Chapel and old schools now stand, the people were encouraged to go forward, but finding that the estimate given for building the chapel and old school amounted to £700, they

were under the necessity of making an appeal to the Congregational churches generally for pecuniary aid." The Trust Deed of the chapel is dated April 1st, 1814; but the building was not completed and ready for opening until September 12th, 1815. The preachers on the occasion were the Revs. Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool, Samuel Bradley, of Manchester, and William Roby, of Manchester. No regular minister was appointed until 1822, the pulpit being supplied principally by Mr. Brown, of Prescot, Mr. Atkin, of Warrington, and students from the Blackburn Academy. In March, 1822, the Rev. William Turner became their first minister. He was born at Beeston, Leeds, in 1784, and educated for the ministry at Rotherham College. On the completion of his college course he settled at Bethel Chapel, Bury, in 1815. Here he remained for seven years, removing for Hindley in the early part of 1822, "accepting the call of a small church in an unfinished chapel." After nine years' successful labours "dissatisfaction crept in among a few of the people," and he resigned in 1831. He did not, however, leave Hindley, but commenced a second Congregational interest at Bridgecroft. An account of this church will follow, and fuller information about Mr. Turner will come more properly there. The Rev. Wm. Howe succeeded Mr. Turner. He was a native of Ireland, being born there in 1797 or 1798. Early bereft of his father, his "widowed mother was obliged to flee to England to escape the fury of the Papists," and so he was brought up in Manchester. Eventually he joined Mr. Roby's church there, and became much occupied with village preaching. Wharton, Stand, and Hindley sought him as their pastor, and his decision was given in favour of the latter place, where he entered upon duty towards the end of 1831. His ordination took place on the 15th of August, 1832, when the Rev. J. Deakin, of Stand, "commenced the services by reading the Scriptures and prayer, in the absence of the Rev. R. S. McAll, of Manchester, who was detained on the road through the mistake of an individual"; the Rev. Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool, delivered the introductory discourse and asked the usual questions; the Rev. J. Dyson, of Halshaw Moor, offered the ordination prayer, "accompanied with the laying on of hands;" the Rev. Dr. Raffles charged the minister; and the Rev. R. Fletcher, of Manchester, did the same to the people, and "concluded

*HEATHEN VERSUS BRITONS.*

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the interesting services of the day with prayer.”<sup>1</sup> Shortly after Mr. Howe began his labours an infant school was commenced, which is said to have been the “first institution of that nature in the neighbourhood.” In October, 1832, the schoolrooms behind the chapel were opened by the Rev. Wm. Jones, of Bolton, and about the same time a Tract Society was formed which led to 370 families being visited once a fortnight. Besides his own place, Mr. Howe preached for some time at Ince, Aspull Moor, Hindley Green, and the Hindley Workhouse. Members were added year by year, and the Sunday School increased to such an extent that enlargement became necessary. This was effected at a cost of £250, towards which friends in Manchester, Liverpool, &c., contributed £100; at the opening sermons by Mr. Jones, of Bolton, the collections reached £20; and the remaining debt of £130 was paid off in a few months by the people’s donations, one member of the church contributing £50. In 1837 the church declared itself free from County Union help. The membership at this time is put down at fifty-three, the congregation at 200, scholars 240, infants ninety, and teachers forty-one. In the midst of these useful labours Mr. Howe, “overwhelmed with the conviction that the heathen demanded his services more than Britons,” resigned, and on the 8th of Nov., 1838, sailed in the “Lord William Bentinck” for Tahiti in connection with the London Missionary Society. French aggression in that island led to his return to England in 1844, where he devoted himself to revising and carrying through the press the Tahitian Scriptures. Towards the end of 1846 he went again to Tahiti on a special mission, and remained there for sixteen years. Failing health led him to seek a change, and on the 7th of May, 1863, he reached Raratonga, where he died somewhat suddenly on June 9th of the same year. In the graveyard of St. Paul’s Chapel, Hindley, is a tombstone, the following inscription upon which will explain itself:—

Sacred to the memory  
of Lydia Howe, who  
departed this life the  
14th day of July, 1837.

<sup>1</sup> “Congregational Magazine” for 1833, p. 186.

Mother of the Rev. Wm.  
Howe, who was minister  
of this chapel for six years  
and a half, and left his  
affectionate and beloved  
people in Sept., 1838, to  
preach the glorious gospel  
of the blessed God to the  
Islanders of the South  
Seas. She died in Jesus.

Also of  
Edward Wall, nephew of  
the above Rev. Wm. Howe,  
who died 12th July, 1853,  
Aged 29 years.  
"Because I live, ye  
shall live also."

The Rev. John Jones followed Mr. Howe in December, 1839. He was born at Bangor in 1811, and educated at Hackney. His first charge was a small Welsh congregation in Liverpool, where he remained but a year or two, removing for Preeshenlle, near Oswestry. From this place he came to Hindley. He remained only until the spring of 1841, when he removed to Horwich. His stay at this place also was short, and he removed to Manchester, where he determined to break up fresh ground. Through his labours Oldham Road Congregational Church came into being. He next laboured at Runcorn (Countess of Huntingdon's) for some time, and his last charge was at Chester, where he died on Sunday morning, November 9th, 1851, after a ministry of twenty-five years. The pulpit remained vacant until 1846, when the Rev. W. T. Craig, who had previously laboured at Belthorn, near Darwen, and at Garstang, became the minister. He resigned his charge at Hindley in 1851, and was resident for some time in Manchester without pastoral charge. No minister was appointed to succeed Mr. Craig until August, 1857, when the Rev. Robt. Berry began his labours here. He is the son of the late Rev. Geo. Berry, for many years pastor of the Lower Chapel, Darwen. His first charge was Hindley, where he remained until September, 1861, removing to Whitworth, near Rochdale. He left the latter place in 1866, for York Road, London, and is now labouring successfully at Islington. There

*ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL.*

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was another vacancy of five years, after which the Rev. Fenton Smith came. He was trained at Airedale College, and began his ministry at Hindley in February, 1865, which was his first charge. He resigned in 1868, and made his way into the Established Church. In the early part of 1870 the Rev. Henry Banks, who was trained for the Wesleyan ministry at Didsbury College, entered upon duty here. Mr. Banks closed his ministry at Hindley on Sunday, February 6th, 1881, his being considerably the longest pastorate the church has known. He removed to Park Chapel, Ramsbottom, resigning his charge there in 1890, and is now living in Manchester without a pastorate. His successor was the Rev. Miles Duffill, from Manchester. His ministry here began in October, 1881, and terminated in 1883. He removed to Barnsley, in Yorkshire, was afterward at Sheffield and Swansea, and is now in London. The present minister, Rev. S. G. Preston, a student from Lancashire College, began his labours on the first Sabbath of January, 1884. His ordination took place on Wednesday, November 12th, of the same year, when the charge to the minister was delivered by the Rev. Professor Scott, B.A., LL.B., of Lancashire College, the Rev. Dr. Hodgson, from the same College, explained Congregational principles, the Rev. T. Robinson, B.A., of Hyde, offered the ordination prayer, and the other ministers assisting were the Revs. P. W. Darnton, B.A., and T. Wilkinson, of Wigan, and J. W. Greenhalgh, of Hindley. The charge to the people was given on the following Sunday by the Rev. John Chater, of Southport.

The chapel, which takes its name probably from St. Paul's Chapel, Wigan, stands in a street off the main road, called Chapel Street. It is a large brick structure, almost square, and is well protected by an iron gate and a tolerably high brick wall. Its surroundings were probably more inviting seventy-five years ago than they are to-day, though our fathers did not always select sites "beautiful for situation" for their meeting-houses. Over the entrance to the chapel is a stone thus inscribed:—

ST. PAUL'S  
CHAPEL,  
1815.

A moderate-sized graveyard stands in front and around it, in which are a few tombstones broken and disfigured. Adjoining the chapel in the yard behind is the old school, which is in a dilapidated condition. A little apart from it stand the new school premises, upon the corner stone of which is inscribed the following :—

This Stone was laid		
by		
R. Pennington, Junr., J.P.,		
Novr. 19th, 1881.		
Rev. M. Duffill.		
John Platt,	} Deacons.	T. Lowe, chairman.
W. Pilkington,		T. Gerrard, secretary.
James Lowe,		J. Shuttleworth, treasurer.

This is a really handsome building and is used for Day and Sunday School purposes. Internally the chapel may be thus described :—Two aisles lead up to the pulpit, which is the one placed in the chapel when first erected. The pews are straight-backed, deep, free from paint or varnish, and are made of plain deal. A few of them are large and square. Beneath the pulpit is the communion pew made in the form of a semi-circle. This is modern and has been altered to this form during the present pastorate. Originally the singing pew was here, but now the choir occupy the four front seats below. The organ is some distance from them, being in the gallery to the right of the pulpit. Upon the communion table is a handsome crimson and gold cloth worked and given by a lady member of the congregation. There are galleries round the chapel except where the pulpit stands, added a little over fifty years ago. The gallery front is varnished a deep brown, and to it is affixed that indispensable piece of chapel furniture a timepiece. The pews below present some curiosities, some of them being square, others long and narrow, one is painted yellow, another is varnished dark yellow and marble, a third is covered with green baize, and a fourth with crimson. The chapel is well lighted. Two sets of windows, three each, go up each of the long sides, and in front there are three windows above and below. It is tall, comfortable looking, and when erected would be considered as handsome as most chapels in the county. It will seat some 550 people.



## SECESSION.

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### IV.—HINDLEY: BRIDGECROFT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

IN the previous section<sup>1</sup> mention is made of the origin of this second Congregational Church at Hindley. During the pastorate of the Rev. William Turner at St. Paul's some differences arose which led to his retirement about 1831. At Bridgecroft, a little distance from the chapel he left, a temporary building was opened, in which he and his friends worshipped. Fifty years have seen considerable alterations here as elsewhere. Bridgecroft, when Mr. Turner and his people began their meetings here, was what its name suggests—a croft or field, and not as now packed with houses. For seven years worship was conducted in this temporary building. In 1838 the present chapel was erected at a cost of £454 13s. 1½d. It stands only a few yards from and is nearly opposite the building where the friends first met for worship, which has since been converted into cottages—a little garden and graveyard dividing the two buildings. The chapel, which is entered by a porch of considerable size, is made of brick, and has in it windows with small panes not unlike those at St. Paul's Chapel. Over the entrance is the date stone thus inscribed :—

Bridgecroft  
Independent  
Chapel,  
1838.

Joined to it is a second building, which is new and handsome. The following inscription upon a stone, which occupies a prominent place in the edifice, is self explanatory :—

Bridge Croft Sunday School.  
Memorial Stone  
Laid by Miss Matilda Pennington,  
Muncaster Hall, Rainford,  
May 27th, 1882.

M. Hilton, Superintendent.	J. Taylor, Chairman.
W. Taylor,	J. Sharples, Secretary.
M. Hilton,	T. Elliott, Treasurer.
}	Deacons.

This building is used both as a Day and Sunday School. Internally

<sup>1</sup> Vide ante, p. 16.

it is apparent that the hand of the moderniser has been at work about the chapel. To the left of the entrance is the old gallery chiefly used for scholars, where the pews are of plain deal, and unpainted. From it there is access into the school. To the left of the pulpit, which is in the platform style, is the organ gallery, and below the pulpit is the communion pew. In 1885 the chapel was thoroughly renovated and beautified. The old pews were removed and modern ones substituted, so that now it has quite a neat and comfortable appearance. The cost of the whole undertaking, including the new or enlarged school, was about £700. At the same time an organ was added, the gift of Mrs. and Dr. Monks (who was formerly a scholar in the school), now resident at Southport. The chapel was re-opened in October, 1885, by the Rev. W. C. Russell, M.A., of Darwen. About three years ago the present organ was placed in the chapel, and the other one was taken to the schoolroom. The Rev. Wm. Turner, the first pastor, continued his labours until 1862, when age and infirmity brought about his resignation. Particulars about his life previous to coming to Hindley were given in the account of St. Paul's,<sup>1</sup> and need not be repeated. He continued resident at Hindley after his resignation. "His last days," says his biographer in the "Congregational Year Book" for 1870, "indicated the gradual breaking up of the material and the mental fabric. His mind often wandered, but was instantly recovered when a text of Scripture was quoted, or reference was made to Jesus." His death took place on December 8th, 1868, in the 84th year of his age, after a ministry of nearly sixty years. He was interred at Leigh. The pulpit remained vacant after Mr. Turner's resignation until August, 1867, when the Rev. Wm. Scott, who received his theological training at Edinburgh, accepted the charge. He was ordained here, but removed in December, 1868, to Manchester, where he took charge of Wood Street, now Greenheys. Mr. Scott subsequently laboured at Tottenham, Ipswich, and Albion Chapel, Hull. The pastorate of the latter place he resigned a short time ago for an important charge at Brisbane, Queensland. No minister was chosen for Bridgcroft after Mr. Scott's removal until 1882. Services continued to be held, but the place was merely "supplied,"

<sup>1</sup> Vide ante, p. 16.

*WHERE IS TUNLEY?*

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and as a consequence the interest got very low. On the first Sunday in June, 1882, the present minister, Rev. J. W. Greenhalgh, began his duties here. For several years previously Mr. Greenhalgh had been engaged in evangelistic work in Bolton, Bury, and other parts of the county. In particular he was associated with the Rev. Franklin Howorth, formerly minister at Bank Street Unitarian Chapel, Bury, but who, on renouncing Unitarianism, established in that town the Free Christian Church, of which he remained pastor until his death. Largely through Mr. Howorth's advice, Mr. Greenhalgh was led to give himself to the work of the ministry. His ordination took place on Thursday, January 17th, 1884, and his certificate is signed by the following Congregational ministers:—Revs. Thomas Willis, Manchester; William Roseman, Bury; P. W. Darnton, B.A., Wigan; and Thos. Wilkinson, Wigan. Mr. Greenhalgh is known in the district as "the blind minister of Hindley," but his sense of hearing and of touch have become so acute that he experiences but little difficulty in going about the neighbourhood. The chapel will seat about 300 people, and the school has in it some 200 scholars. The anniversary is held on Easter Sunday, and has been since the opening of the chapel on that day in 1838. It is said that the first anniversary sermons were preached in a mill on Castle Hill in 1837, before the chapel was built. For both Congregational churches, which are a fair distance from each other, there is room in Hindley, and certainly need.

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V.—THE OLD PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL AT TUNLEY OR  
MOSSY LEE.

It will be necessary to devote a few sentences to the identification of this hamlet, village, or cluster of houses before proceeding with the history of its chapel. It is not well known; indeed it will be more true to say that it is not known at all. Partly, no doubt, this is due to the fact that the place has almost ceased to be called Tunley. The writer found that it is possible for people to live within a few miles of a spot and not even know of its existence.

"Never heard of it," was the uniform reply from gentle and simple, policemen, railway officials, and postmen to the inquiry, "Where is Tunley?" And yet the place is, and a chapel is there, one of the oldest in the county, whose history is full of interest. Taking a map and looking south from Preston, a triangular piece of land is formed by three railways. There is the line from Preston to Wigan, the line from Preston to Burscough, and the line from Burscough to Wigan. Inside this triangle lies Tunley or Mossy Lee, and though the most extreme point of the triangle from Preston is not more than fourteen or fifteen miles, yet, as already stated, Tunley is almost an unknown quantity. By road it will be some twelve miles from Preston, some five or six from Wigan; and the nearest station from Preston is Coppull, from which it is distant not more than three miles. The country is somewhat flat, the houses are old-fashioned, the people gain a livelihood largely by farming, coaling, and basket-making; and altogether to a town resident going into this little triangle so near at hand is like going into a new world, or an old one, at any rate a different one. If anything more is required to fix the geographical position of Tunley, then it may be said that it is in the township of Wrightington, in the parish of Eccleston, and Hundred of Leyland. How came this little chapel to be in this out-of-the-way place? The answer is to be found in the Acts passed against Dissenters, and the consequent persecution to which they were subjected during the latter half of the 17th century. A few miles south of Tunley is Douglas, the pulpit of whose parish church was occupied by the Rev. Jonathan Scolefield, or Schofield, when the Act of Uniformity was passed in 1662. As the minister of Heywood Chapel, near Rochdale, he signed "The Harmonious Consent" in 1648, and "The Agreement of the People" in 1649. The Parliamentary Commissioners in their report of 1650 speak of him whilst yet at Heywood as "orthodox for divinity, well qualified for lyffe and conversacon."<sup>1</sup> Calamy says that he removed from this place to Douglas Chapel in 1659,<sup>2</sup> whence he was ejected in 1662.

<sup>1</sup> "Commonwealth Church Survey" (Record Society Series, vol. i.), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Fishwick ("History of Rochdale," p. 197) names him as probably at Littleborough in 1636, Heywood in 1648, and says that he was appointed to Whalley, Sept. 12th, 1653.

"In the course of his life," he says, "he met with a great variety of family afflictions. When he was silenced he had many children, and no visible way of subsistence for them; but God raised up friends to him and his, so that they were never brought to extremity."<sup>1</sup> The Wilson family, then living at Tunley Hall (now Tunley Farm), were amongst those who befriended the ejected minister. He was received by them into the Hall, where he conducted a private school, and held worship for the family and the people in the neighbourhood. Mr. Schofield died in 1667, at the age of sixty.<sup>2</sup> There is a big break after this, during which we have no information about the Nonconformists of this place. That there would be those who sympathised with the persecuted minister there can be no doubt. One family—the Wilson family—certainly did. How and where they worshipped after Mr. Schofield's death cannot be determined. The statement in Baines's "History of Lancashire" is altogether wide of the mark. "There is," says he, "at Mossy Lee an old Presbyterian Chapel built for the minister ejected in 1662 from Standish or Douglas Chapel."<sup>3</sup> We shall see later that the chapel was not built until 1691, and Mr. Schofield, as previously stated, had then been dead nearly twenty-five years and the ejected minister of Standish nearly thirty years. The Rev. W. Roaf, in a historical pamphlet entitled "Ebenezer," addressed in the form of a letter to his church and congregation of St. Paul's, Wigan, and which bears date August 24th, 1846, says respecting Tunley Chapel:—"Its singular position seems to connect it with the infamous Five Mile Act." Its position does suggest that, but the date of its erection does not. It is quite possible that the Wigan Nonconformists came out here to worship in secrecy, but it is also quite possible that they went to the older and nearer Nonconformist interest at Hindley. I imagine it was at Tunley, as in so many other places the Nonconformists retained some sort of

<sup>1</sup> "Nonconformist's Memorial" (1802), vol. ii., p. 361.

<sup>2</sup> So Calamy; but Colonel Fishwick says seventy. Calamy says that Mr. Schofield, of Birmingham, whose father was minister of the Whitworth Congregational Church, near Rochdale, was a descendant of the Rev. Jonathan Schofield.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. ii., p. 150. (Ed. 1870). This, like many other inaccuracies, is repeated in Croston's Edition now being published.

hold upon the Episcopal Chapel—the chapel of their fathers—until towards the end of the 17th century, and the date of the erection of the Nonconformist chapel fixes the time approximately when this privilege was finally taken from them. There is an interesting passage in the life of Adam Martindale, who was ejected from Rostherne, in Cheshire, in 1662, which suggests that the Nonconformists of this district may have had his occasional services about the time of Mr. Schofield's death. "When I had done there [Hoghton Tower]" says he, "I taught Mr. Wilson, of Tunley, for a short time, and Mr. Bankes, of Winstandley (till about Lady-day, 1666), who was also very civil and liberall to me, lamenting that the Five-mile Act, and the propinquity of his house to Wigan, forced me to desist there."<sup>1</sup> After this we have no information until the building of the chapel in 1691 by Dame Wilson, who also endowed it. The first known minister after the erection of the chapel was the Rev. Edward Rothwell. His training he received at Mr. Frankland's Academy, Rathmeil, where he was ordained on the 7th of June, 1693, being probably the minister of Bispham, near Blackpool, at the time. The year of his settlement at Tunley has not been preserved. About the year 1706<sup>2</sup> Mr. Rothwell removed to Holcombe, near Ramsbottom, where he laboured until his death in 1731. The event is referred to in the "Northowram Register" in the following words:—"Mr. Edward Rothwell Preacht at Bury, Jan. 31; died Febr. 8 of a suppression of urine; bur. in

<sup>1</sup> Chetham Society Series, vol. iv., p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> In vol. iii. (p. 158) of this work the date is given as 1699. I am indebted to the Rev. T. B. Johnstone, of Bolton, for the correction, who, in an account of Tunley Chapel (see "*Presbyterian Messenger*" for June, 1891), gives the following extract from the Trust Deed, dated 1703: "It is hereby agreed and allowed that the election and nomination of a minister to officiate at the said chappell shall be from time to time and at all times with the consent, approbation, and allowance of her, the said Elizabeth Wilson, and not otherwise, during the term of her natural life, with the concurrent approbation of whom, and the trustee, Edward Rothwell, of Wrightington, shall continue to officiate, as for some years past he both officiated there as minister of the gospel, having the qualifications aforesaid, and paying therefore to her, the said Elizabeth Wilson and her heirs, yearly, the rent of one peppercorn at the Feast of the Nativity of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when and so often only as we believe demand shall be made thereof."



ROSTHERNE MERE AND CHURCH WHERE ADAM MARTINDALE WAS EJECTED.

his own Chapel in Holcome Feb. 10."<sup>1</sup> During his ministry at Holcombe the old Dissenting interest at Bury was founded, and worked conjointly with Holcombe, Mr. Rothwell having as assistant the Rev. Thomas Braddock. The next minister at Tunley of whom I have information is the Rev. Dr. Winder. He was born at Hutton John, in the parish of Graystock, Cumberland, on the 15th of May, 1693. His grandfather was a member of Dr. Richard Gilpin's congregation, "but he was led away to join the Quakers, and was appointed treasurer for their collections in the north. In 1665 he changed his opinions, returned to Dr. Gilpin and published in 1697 *The Spirit of Quakerism, and the Dangers of their Revelation Laid Open*, which led to much excitement and keen controversy. Thomas Camm's reply, *An Old Apostate justly Exposed, his Treachery to the Holy God, His Truth, and People Manifested. &c.*, being one of the vilest and most virulent, as it is now one of the rarest, of pamphlets. The worthy farmer survived the persecution to which he was exposed, and lived active and vigorous to above 100 years of age. His son, Henry, was also a farmer and died in 1733.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Winder was educated at Whitehaven by the Rev. Thomas Dixon, M.D., subsequently of Bolton, and settled at Tunley about 1714, being ordained to the ministry at St. Helens. In 1718 he removed to what is now Renshaw Street, Liverpool, where he laboured until his death in August, 1752. He was interred in St. Peter's Churchyard in that city. Dr. Halley says:—"He was a remarkable man, or at least he published a remarkable book, entitled '*A Critical and Chronological History of the Rise, Progress, Declension, and Revival of Knowledge in two Periods: The Period of Tradition from Adam to Moses, and the Period of Letters from Moses to Christ.*' Two volumes, quarto."<sup>3</sup> The Rev. Samuel Bourn followed Dr. Winder at Tunley. He was the eldest surviving son of the Rev. Samuel Bourn, of Bolton; and was born at Calne, Wiltshire, in 1689. His education he received from the Rev. James Coningham, of Manchester, and his first settlement was at Crook, near Kendal, in 1711. Here he married Miss Harrison,

<sup>1</sup> P. 308.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. T. B. Johnstone in "Presbyterian Messenger" for June, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> "Lancashire Puritanism and Nonconformity," vol. ii., p. 323 and note.



of Kendal. He left for Tunley about 1720, leaving this place for Chorley in 1727. In 1732 he removed from Chorley to Coseley, near Birmingham, where he laboured until his death, which took place on the 22nd of March, 1754. He was the author of several works, principally of a theological character. His eldest son, Joseph Bourn, has already been mentioned as minister at Hindley, and another son, Samuel Bourn, laboured several years at Rivington, near Chorley. The Rev. Thomas Benson was probably Mr. Bourn's immediate successor at Tunley. He was the Nonconformist minister of Hoghton Tower from about 1716 to 1728. He preached at the ordination of the Rev. Robert Moss, of Elswick, in the Fylde, on July 10th, 1717, and signed the ordination certificate of the Rev. Robert Hesketh, of Carnforth, on October 27th, 1725. He remained at Tunley until his death on the 14th of December, 1757, at the age of seventy-four.<sup>1</sup>

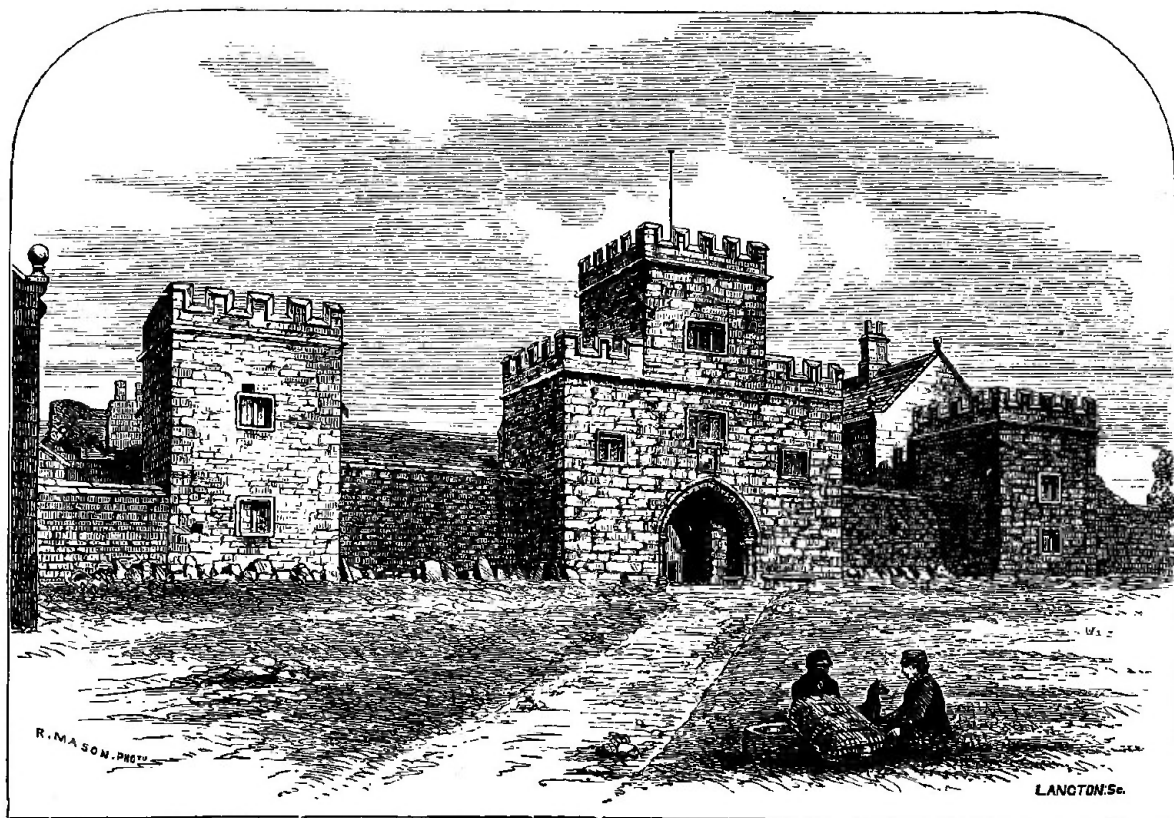
The next known minister is the Rev. Joseph Aspinall, concerning whom I have no information beyond the fact that he died in 1772, and lies buried in the chapel yard.<sup>2</sup> I copy from his tombstone as follows :—

Here lie the Remains  
of the Revd. JOSEPH ASPINALL,  
He was a faithful minister  
of the Gospel,  
and finished the course  
of his Labours  
Feb. 25th, 1772.  
Aged 59.

The Rev. William Gaskell comes next. He was educated at the Kendal Academy by Dr. Rotheram, and had laboured for several years at Rivington. He removed to Tunley about 1776. He also died here, and from his tombstone in the chapel yard the following is taken :—

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Benson was interred in the graveyard of Tunley Chapel, where his tombstone can still be seen. The inscription is given in vol. i. of this work, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> In an account of the ordination of Mr. Leslie at Tunley in the "United Secession Magazine" for 1837, it is stated that the only other ordination service held at Tunley was that of Mr. Joseph Aspinall, in 1758.



HOGHTON TOWER.

# DOCTOR WINSTANLEY.

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Here lies interred the Body  
of the Revd. WILLIAM GASKELL,  
who departed this Life the  
22nd of March, 1777,  
aged 49 years.

The Rev. William Davenport followed about 1778. The reader is referred to the account of Hindley Chapel for information respecting Mr. Davenport.<sup>1</sup> It is there stated how differences led to his resignation of the charge at Hindley, and how he removed to Wigan, where a chapel had been recently erected, an account of which will be given afterwards. Along with Wigan he appears to have worked Tunley up to the time of his death. The Rev. William Winstanley, M.D., succeeded Mr. Davenport. He was the son of William and Alice Winstanley, and was born at Cuerden, near Preston, on the 6th of December, 1772. His early school days were spent under the care of Mr. Orr, at the Grammar School, Walton-le-Dale, afterwards he was with the Rev. William Tattersall, minister of the Dissenting Chapel at Preston, and then with the Rev. Thomas Wilson, B.D., of the Clitheroe Grammar School. In the spring of 1790 he entered the Dissenting Academy at Northampton (formerly the Daventry Academy), under the presidency of the Rev. John Horsey, where he remained only a short time. On the 10th of September, 1793, he became a student in the Manchester College, and left that institution in June, 1795. His first charge was Tunley, to which place he was accustomed to ride from Woodcock Hall, at that time his residence. His stay here was brief, and in 1798 he took charge of the Unitarian Congregation at Derby, which he retained until October 2, 1803. In the following year he entered the University of Edinburgh to study for the medical profession, and so withdrew from the ministry. In 1806 he took his M.D. degree. He practised first at Manchester, and was one of the physicians to the Royal Infirmary, removing afterwards to Woolton Lodge, near Liverpool. About 1846 he came to reside in Preston, where he remained until his death. On May 15th, 1852, in the eightieth year of his age, he died in London, whither he had gone to undergo an operation, and was

<sup>1</sup> Vide p. 9.

interred in the Brompton Cemetery by the Rev. Thomas Madge. In the Unitarian Chapel, at Preston, where his parents formerly attended, and in which he greatly interested himself during his residence in the town, is a handsome tablet erected to his memory.<sup>1</sup> The Winstanleys, of Chaigley, near Preston, belong to the same family as Dr. Winstanley. The Rev. Wm. Dinwiddie, a Scotchman, followed Mr. Winstanley at Tunley, about 1797. During the long period of thirty-eight years he had charge of Wigan and Tunley. It was during his ministry that the two churches became connected with the Church of Scotland, though the precise date I am unable to give.<sup>2</sup> Mr. James, in his "Presbyterian Chapels and Charities in England and Ireland," writes of Tunley: "Given up by trustees to Kirkmen, under the advice of the parson of the parish."<sup>3</sup> In the list of recipients from Lady Hewley's Charity, dated May, 1830, Mr. Dinwiddie appears with £6 against his name; and it is noteworthy that he is the only one in Lancashire with the initials "P. K." (Presbyterian Kirk) joined to his name. At that time, therefore, and how long before I cannot say, Tunley and Wigan belonged to the Scotch Presbyterian Church. Mr. Dinwiddie's remains lie in the chapel yard at Tunley, where do so many of his predecessors. His tombstone, which is the one that records the death of the Rev. Thos. Benson, is thus inscribed:—

The Rev. WM. DINWIDDIE,  
38 years minister of  
*Tunley and Wigan*  
Presbyterian Chapels,  
died Nov. 18th, 1834,  
Aged 73 years.

The Rev. William Jameson, for many years an eminent missionary in Jamaica and Africa, came as a supply to Tunley about 1834. From "The Gospel to the Africans," being a narrative of his life and labours by his son-in-law, the Rev. Alex. Robb, A.M., I extract the following interesting passage respecting his life at Tunley:—

<sup>1</sup> "Christian Reformer" for 1852, p. 636.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Johnstone says it was near the close of Mr. Dinwiddie's ministry.

<sup>3</sup> P. 665.

*"STARVED FOR WANT O' KAIL."*

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I am working at Tunley with this encouragement, at least, that it is the work of God, and that his word does not return unto him void. The population are extremely ignorant, careless, and depraved. . . . A religious Scotchman who comes to such a part of the country as this, sacrifices much, whatever he may gain in a temporal point of view. . . . I love the classes ; a number of the pupils are making considerable progress. I preach twice at the chapel on Sabbath, and have commenced a preaching station in a small village on my way home on the Sabbath evening. . . . My lodgings are very comfortable. I have a snug parlour and bedroom, with a most excellent feather bed. To my breakfast I have toast and coffee; to my dinner roast or boil ; but I am starved for want o' kail. My landlady makes a kind of soup she calls broth, but they are no kail. If I don't live well, it is my own fault.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Jameson was here only a few months, and was followed by the Rev. Alexander Leslie, who remained about twenty-nine years. After Mr. Leslie the chapel was closed for a short time, and then came the Rev. Alexander Bruce, from whose tombstone in the chapel yard the following inscription is copied :—

In memory of  
ALEXANDER BRUCE,  
minister  
of this chapel,  
who fell asleep,  
in Jesus on the  
16th of March, 1873,  
aged 59 years.

The Rev. Gilbert Lang followed in 1873, and after him came the present minister, the Rev. John Goggins, in 1877. Baines is utterly wrong in his account of Tunley Chapel. He says it was built for the minister ejected in 1662, and "re-edified at the beginning of last century." It was not built until 1691, and it will be shown later that it stands to-day much the same as it did originally. He further says that it is "now occupied by the Independents." At the time of writing it certainly was not occupied by them, but by the Scotch Presbyterians. In 1843 the Lancashire Presbytery consisted of five congregations, viz.: Manchester, Lloyd Street, Dr. McKerrow ; Blackburn, Dr. Skinner ; Hallfold, Mr. Thorburn ;

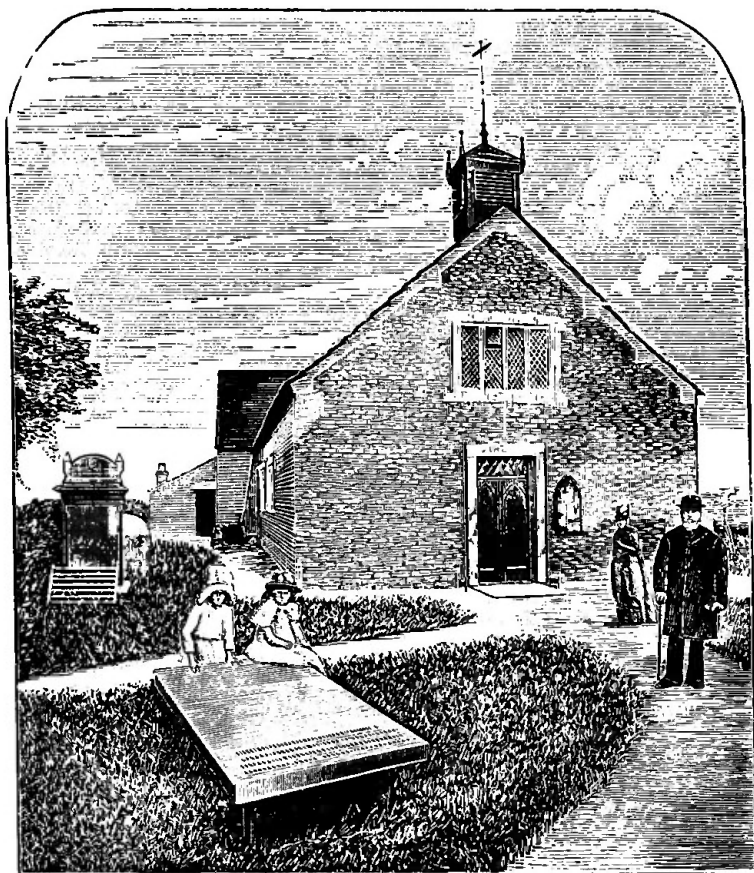
<sup>1</sup> P. 9.

Kendal, vacant; and Tunley, Mr. Leslie. Previous to 1875 Tunley was connected with the Liverpool Presbytery, but in that year it was taken over by the Presbytery of Manchester.

The chapel, whose history has been given, lies about 150 yards to the right of the main road leading from Wigan to Preston, its principal entrance facing the road. It is a low, quaint-looking structure, and impresses the visitor at once with the fact that it belongs to another generation. It is entered by a strong door, studded with nails, which opens into a vestibule that divides into two aisles. These lead up to the pulpit. The pews are small, but to the left of the pulpit are two large square ones, in each of which is a brass plate inscribed "Wilson." These pews belonged to the farm where lived the Wilsons, who built and endowed the chapel, and whose descendants are to be found to-day in the Wilsons, solicitors, of Preston. Below the pulpit, which is quite miniature, is the small communion pew. In the centre of the chapel is a stove; from the ceiling hang lamps by which the place is lighted when required. Over the doorway is the gallery, which is low; and as the front and the ceiling almost come into contact, no large view of what goes on below is offered. It remains in its original condition, and is seldom used now. Upon one of the pews in the gallery is the following inscription:—

R. N. R. R. 1691.

The pews in the body of the chapel have been cut down, being originally very high, one of which is also thus inscribed—"R.H. 91." Formerly the roof was open, but it has recently been ceiled, thus giving to the interior a more comfortable appearance. The entrance was originally in the long side, and the pulpit opposite, but as already pointed out, the entrance now faces the road, and the pulpit has been removed also. The chapel is well-lighted with the old-fashioned, diamond-shaped mullioned windows. Over the entrance is the bell, which does duty at least twice every Sabbath Day. There was formerly at the back of the chapel a small building which served as a vestry, in which the date 1691 was found cut in the mortar. In 1880 this was taken down, and a new schoolroom erected which will hold about 200 people.



TUNLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL.

This is much higher than the old building, and its date stone over the entrance is thus inscribed :—

Erected in A.D. 1691 ; rebuilt in A.D. 1880.

This stone was laid by the  
Rev. James Muir, of Egremont,  
June 5th, 1880.

The chapel stands in a small graveyard, which contains many interesting memorials of the dead. The inscriptions upon the tombstones of the different ministers who have laboured here have already been given, and another which is a quaint specimen of graveyard rhyming will not be unacceptable to the reader. It is as follows :—

Here rests the body of William  
Higginson, who departed this life  
December 21st, 1796. Aged 75 years.

From my sad cradle to my sable chest,  
I found few years of joy or months of rest ;  
My years, tho' 75, yet ended soon,  
For suddenly my sun set ere 'twas noon.

I groaned for rest and went to sleep at even,  
But when I wak'd, behold, I was in Heaven.  
Weep not, dear wife or children, weep no more,  
Because I am not lost, but gone before.

Also Rachel, wife of the  
above-named William Higginson,  
Who departed this life August 31st,  
1806. Aged 79 years.

Tunley Chapel had once a glory which it does not possess to-day. In Dr. Evans's list of Presbyterian Chapels, drawn up between 1717 and 1729, Tunley Chapel is given with a congregation of 268, of whom twenty-nine were county voters. Some of the older people also tell about persons coming five, six, and even seven miles to worship, and on certain Sundays from the chapel to the roadside conveyances of various kinds might be seen standing. The old families, however, have died out or removed, and, as there are no works of any kind in the neighbourhood, and the



farms are too small to maintain many hands, young people are obliged to go to the towns for employment. But whatever may be its future, it has borne honourable witness to the truth for many generations, and so deserves to be enshrined in the memory and affections of all Lancashire Nonconformists.

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#### VI.—ORRELL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

THE date of the formation of this church is given in the "Lancashire Congregational Calendar" as 1805, and that of the erection of the chapel as 1824. The second date is correct as applied to the present building, but there was one previous to this; and 1805 is, I imagine, too early by several years for the time of the church's formation. It is to be regretted that no documents belonging to the church of any considerable age exist, consequently any sketch of its history will necessarily be imperfect. How the Gospel was first introduced into this district I have no means of knowing. Some hold the opinion that the church owes its existence to the evangelistic efforts of the Congregational churches of St. Helens and Rainford. It is, however, not unlikely that the people here enjoyed the occasional ministrations of the Rev. George Greatbatch. To his missionary zeal West Lancashire is as greatly indebted as South Lancashire is to that of the Rev. W. Alexander, for many years the honoured minister of Prescott and Leigh. The first of the Lancashire Congregational Union Reports, dated January, 1808, states that Mr. Greatbatch had been engaged as an itinerant for Southport, Ormskirk, Bretherton, &c., where for four or five years previously he had "occasionally dispensed the Word of Life with pleasing effects." Newburgh, which is only seven miles from Orrell, was his centre, and there he resided. It is therefore at least probable that the Uphollanders were amongst the people visited by this good man in his preaching expeditions. We have, however, more definite information, when we come to the Report for January, 1810, where we read—"At Upholland, Mr. Capper is engaged, and labours very acceptably and successfully. We have every reason to hope that

our adorable Redeemer will here establish a permanent interest." In the following year Upholland, along with other places, is said to have received the "kindly assistance of the Union." In 1810 or 1811 a chapel was erected at Orrell, by Mr. Woodward, of Orrell, and Mr. Cross, of St. Helens, at their own private expense. The first Trust Deed bears date December 31st, 1811, and in it Mr. Richard Woodward conveys the chapel and land to George Gaskell and others, "in consideration of the sum of five shillings lawful English money." The Union Report for January, 1812, referring to this, says that Mr. Woodward and Mr. Cross "have gratuitously vested it [the chapel] in the hands of trustees, for the use of the church and congregation assembled therein." That same Report states that Mr. Capper, besides conducting services at Orrell, preached at "Brockstage, Lammerhead Green, and Newborough." Also that he visited Holland Moor, Standish, Billinge, and Haddock. The people amongst whom Mr. Capper laboured are described as "principally poor nailers, weavers, and colliers, extremely ignorant." In a letter, dated January 8th, 1812, he says:—"I have had the painful task of visiting among them, for four hours together, from house to house, and could not meet with a single mistress of a family who could *read* the plain tracts which I was distributing among them." In the following year Mr. Capper writes about a promising Sunday School, at Orrell, with 130 children, about preaching once a fortnight at Lammerhead Green, where a kind friend "has set apart a large room in his house for the worship of God, at a considerable expense." A place for preaching had also been obtained at Standish. "It is in the centre of the town," says he, "and will hold from 80 to 100 persons. The friends at Wigan have fitted it up with a pulpit and forms, and several of them have regularly attended to carry on the singing and countenance the cause. Mr. Steill, of St. Paul's, Wigan, and I preach to them alternately once a week; the attendance is good, and the attention remarkable." Towards the end of 1813 Mr. Capper was removed by the County Union to Kirkham, where he remained until 1816. He was afterwards for a few years at Tosside, near Settle, in Yorkshire, but it is said that he was not properly invited to this place, and, remaining against the wish of the people, many disorderly scenes

took place. The removal of Mr. Capper told injuriously both upon Orrell and Standish, though not immediately. Respecting the former place, Mr. Gaskell, of Orrell, writes on the 30th of January, 1815 :—"The chapel has been regularly kept open with very acceptable supplies, and the increase of hearers is progressive."<sup>1</sup> With respect to Standish the Report for January, 1815, says :—

He [the Rev. J. T. Parsons, of Chorley] visits Standish once a fortnight. In this place things have long been discouraging. When the place was first opened, it was supplied for nearly two years, weekly, by the alternate services of Mr. Steill, of Wigan, and Mr. Capper, then of Orrell. Since Mr. Capper has removed to the Filde, the preaching on the Tuesday evening has been continued by Messrs. Steill and Parsons, assisted occasionally by the valuable labours of Mr. Toothill, of Rainford, and other ministers. Of late, another room has been taken for conducting the religious services, far more commodious, and more eligibly situated than the old place, which was remarkably damp and uncomfortable. In this new place there is a much better attendance than formerly ; and of late Mr. Nightingale<sup>2</sup> has preached sometimes on the Sabbath evening, when the congregation has been large and attentive.

Mr. Gaskell reported in March of the year following that the average attendance at Orrell was not one-half of what it was twelve months ago, but on the other hand that the room at Standish was "tolerably filled." For another year there is a pleasing account of Standish, and a remarkable change is said to have been wrought in "this once dark and bigoted village." The Report for 1818 says that there was service here only once a fortnight on Sabbath evening. It is not without regret that one sees this promising little cause after that date become suddenly extinct ; and I am not aware that the Congregationalists have made any further attempt to get a footing in this really interesting and historic little town.<sup>3</sup> An

<sup>1</sup> Lancashire County Union Report, ending January, 1815.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Nightingale was a native of Tockholes, and minister successively of Newton-in-Bowland, Wymondhouses, and Ramsbottom.

<sup>3</sup> Standish Hall, in this neighbourhood—the seat of the Standish family—is memorable as the place where the Lancashire Plot of 1694 is supposed to have been concocted, its object being to re-establish the Stuarts upon the throne of England, together with the Roman Catholic religion. A branch of this family settled at Duxbury, from whom sprang Miles Standish, the Puritan captain of New England fame.

almost similar fate awaited the interest at Orrell. The Report for 1818 says that the chapel at Orrell, for want of encouragement, had for some time been shut up, but that "neighbouring ministers, even to the distance of Liverpool, resolved to preach in rotation every Thursday evening." This, however, continued only a short time, and the place seems to have been closed until the advent of the Rev. John Holgate about 1820. He was born at Martin Top, near Clitheroe, and was educated for the ministry by the Rev. William Vint, at the Idle Academy, settling at Orrell on the completion of his college course. His ordination took place on November 25th, 1823, Dr. Raffles, amongst others, taking part. In the Union Report for 1822 it is said that his "constant preaching in the chapel had been well attended;" that the Sunday School had 160 scholars, whom their teachers found at first like "wild asses' colts;" and that there was a Sunday School for adults, which had "hitherto succeeded better with women than with men." Kit Green and Marsh Green are also named as places where Mr. Holgate occasionally conducted religious services. The following passage from the same Report will give some idea of the benighted condition of the neighbourhood at the time:—

Three hundred families in Orrell without a Bible! In another village, consisting of 51 families, he found 19 of them without a Bible or person that could read; and in the 32 there was scarcely found one in seven that could read.

In 1822 a church, consisting of twelve members, was formed at Orrell. We have no proof of any church formation previous to this, although religious services had been held some twelve years or more. The Report for 1824 tells of preaching by Mr. Holgate at Orrell Post, also that a "subscription of not less than two hundred pence a week has been raised towards a larger and more commodious chapel" at Orrell. This was opened in January, 1825, and almost free from debt. For nearly thirty years Mr. Holgate continued his ministry here, a ministry singularly rich in results, and presenting many features of interest. In connection with his Sunday School, for instance, one of the early Union Reports states "that sixteen orphans from its funds were enabled to obtain education at a day school." A later Report says: "Owing

*THE REV. JOHN HOLGATE.*

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to recent explosions in two coal pits the number of orphans now in the school is augmented to 55." He itinerated very considerably, having sometimes as many as ten or a dozen stations at which he had occasional services. The condition of the people in his day was sad in the extreme. Most of them were nail makers, and had to work for low wages. They were paid in kind, too, and often the provisions were of the worst character. Besides educating his orphan scholars he taught them to work half the day on a few acres of land which he owned, and for their support he travelled over Lancashire and surrounding counties yearly. "Once," says his biographer, "he walked sixty miles, having only three halfpence to support him; he bought a pennyworth of bread and a half-pennyworth of butter milk."<sup>1</sup> He had also an academy for the education of gentlemen's sons, and several still living and occupying good social positions were his pupils. In the Report for April, 1839, it is said that Mr. Holgate and his friends had resolved to declare themselves "independent of pecuniary aid from the Union, but a small grant was cheerfully made in aid of the preaching of the Gospel by Mr. Holgate at Holland Moor, Hall Green, and Roby Mill." These places were continued only some three or four years. Mr. Holgate died on the 25th of November, 1850, and was interred in the graveyard of the chapel at Orrell. His wife, Caroline Holgate, who died Sept. 8th, 1865, aged 67 years, lies by his side. In the chapel is a marble tablet thus inscribed:—

Sacred  
To the memory of  
The Rev. JOHN HOLGATE,  
Thirty years the Minister of this Church,  
Who died November 25th, 1850,  
Aged 63 Years.  
He was a good man and pious Christian,  
And in him his flock lost  
A good and faithful Shepherd.

His pastorate is still remembered in the district, and his name is a household word. The chapel, the school, the house in which he lived, and the lane in which his house and school are situated are yet called by his name.

<sup>1</sup> "Congregational Year Book" for 1850, p. 241.

"Supplies" took the place of Mr. Holgate until 1864, when the Rev. R. Christison, whose ministerial training was obtained at Glasgow, accepted the charge. In the Report for 1865, Orrell is classed amongst the "Evangelistic Stations" belonging to the Union, and in the year 1867-8, it is said that "circumstances of a very unpleasant character have greatly hindered the work at Orrell." For the next seven or eight years the place stood aloof from the Union. In 1873 Mr. Christison resigned, joined the Established Church, and eventually went to America. A new beginning became a necessity, and so the church was re-formed in 1874, with eleven members. In the Report for that year we have the following respecting this station, which again came on the Union Funds:—

The reproach of this place has been wiped away. The scattered congregation has been re-collected, the dilapidated chapel has been thoroughly repaired and re-fitted. A committee, presided over by the Rev. H. J. Senior, manages the place, as the Church is not re-constituted. At the request of the people, the Rev. A. Heal, formerly of Silverwell Chapel, Wigan, is for the time located at Orrell, and by his zeal in visiting, and his earnestness in preaching, is doing much good.

The Rev. Abiathar Heal entered the Congregational ministry in 1837, having as his first charge North Tawton, in Devonshire. In 1845 he removed to Hartland, where he continued for about sixteen years, subsequently labouring at Silverwell, whence he removed to Orrell. Year by year the reports continue to be encouraging during Mr. Heal's pastorate until his retirement in 1881. The following from the 1882 Report deserves to be inserted:—

The Church has just lost the valuable and self-denying services of its pastor, the Rev. A. Heal. Having reached the age of seventy-five years, Mr. Heal has found it necessary to relinquish work and retire to Devonshire, whither he will be followed by the respect and affection of his people. During his pastorate the chapel has been renovated, and a house for the minister, with some adjoining cottages, has been purchased. These buildings, after paying interest on money borrowed for their purchase, produce an income of some £15; and the Manse Building Committee in London have promised a grant when half the purchase money has been paid.

It should be stated that in this work of renovation most valuable help was rendered by the Wigan Churches, and especially by the late Mr. T. C. Ryley. Besides contributing liberally to the other improvements, he bore the sole cost of the pulpit. He was also for many years a liberal supporter of the Day School, and collected and banked money sufficient to purchase the ground rent. At the same time a heating apparatus and an organ were added at a cost of £70. Respecting the purchase of the property referred to in the quotation from the Union Report, we have this further information. The property, of which the chapel site was originally part, was purchased in 1881 for £500. This had become a necessity, as the rights of the chapel were undefined. By the sale of a cottage at Upholland belonging to the chapel, and a bazaar, the sum of £200 was raised, and a mortgage for £300 was effected.

Mr. Heal died in Devonshire on March 13th, 1888, aged eighty-one years. He was succeeded at Orrell by the present minister—Rev. Joseph Whitton—in April, 1883. Mr. Whitton studied at the Edinburgh Theological Hall, and has held pastorates at North Shields, Runcorn, Leicester, Summit and Littleborough, removing from the latter station to Orrell. The Report for 1886 states that the people have paid off £115 of their debt, and altogether raised by their own efforts upwards of £230. Shortly afterwards the debt was quite extinguished. There is connected with the Sunday School a Band of Hope, of which nearly all associated with church and school are members; and through the zeal of some of the Sunday School teachers a Juvenile Rechabite Tent has been formed, named the “Rev. John Holgate.” The chapel is a square, stone building, and lies near the site of the original one. It is partly hidden by a block of buildings, the door only being visible, over which is the date stone—

Salem,  
1824.

It has recently been renovated and beautified at a cost of about £105, and has accommodation for some 400 persons. Connected with it is a good-sized burial ground, but the tombstones are not

of much age. The following is a curious epitaph, copied from a tombstone in memory of Sarah Houghton, who died on July 4th, 1845, aged forty-one years, and is worth preserving :—

A mother here who is at rest,  
One of her sons by her was blest ;  
Her husband, too, she called him dear,  
Two hours before she was brought here ;  
Her sister, too, she bid to hush,  
That day she was laid in the dust.

The school stands about 200 yards from the chapel. It is a low building, and without date, though it bears Mr. Holgate's name. It consists of two rooms, and is used both on Sunday and week-days. It is not very convenient, and the friends are feeling their way towards the erection of a new one.<sup>1</sup> The date of the School Trust Deed is 1829, and is said to be doctrinal and Calvinistic in the highest degree, whilst that for the chapel only stipulates that it is to be used for religious worship by "Protestant Dissenters called Independents." It only remains to be said that for many years this little Congregational Church was the only Nonconformist place of worship here, to whose influence the changed and improved condition of the district is very largely indebted.

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#### VII.—THE OLD PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL AT PARK LANE.

PARK LANE is a small hamlet some three miles south of Wigan, the nearest station being Bryn, from which it is distant only a few minutes' walk. It forms part of the township of Ashton-in-Makerfield, and in sketching the history of the old Presbyterian Chapel there it will be necessary to look at the Ashton Parish Church : it was here that Nonconformity first appeared.

<sup>1</sup> Since the above was written I have been informed that Mrs. Eleanor Ryley, of Birkdale, has generously erected, this year, a new Day and Sunday School, at a cost of £500.



"The old Episcopal Chapel in the township of Ashton," says Baines, "dedicated to St. Thomas, existed in 1577. It was from this church that the Rev. James Woods, the grandfather of General Woods, minister at Chowbent, was ejected in 1662."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Wood<sup>2</sup> signed *The Harmonious Consent* in 1648, and *The Agreement of the People* in 1649, as the Ashton minister, and in 1650 the Parliamentary Commissioners thus report concerning him:—

Wee doe present that there is a Chappell scituated in Ashton, flower myles 132 poles and 2 yardes from the Parish Church of Winwicke, and two myles from Newton Chappell, and Mr. James Woodes is Minister there, a very godly preacher, a man of very good life and conversacon, but did not keepe the last ffast day appoynted by Acte of Pliamt., for hee had noe Orders, And hath for his Sallury the Tyth of Asheton, by order from the Comittee of plundred Ministers, And came in by ffree Ellecon of the whole Towne, wch said Tyth is worth One hundred and twenty pounds p. ann., wch is pte. of the said sume of fflower hundred fforty-ffyyve pounds and two shillings, And there is alsoe a donataie of Nine shillings and sixpence p. ann. paid by John Homfryson to the said Mr. Woodes.<sup>3</sup>

It has already been stated that Mr. Wood was ejected from this place in 1662, and in the diary of Roger Lowe, a native of Ashton-in-Makerfield, is a touching reference to the event, which, with other information respecting Mr. Wood, will be found later.<sup>4</sup> His son, James Wood, was the Nonconformist minister of Chowbent. How the little band of Nonconformists in Ashton who sympathised with the ejected minister fared after that time has not been ascertained. Probably they shared in the privations and

<sup>1</sup> "History of Lancashire" (Croston's Edition), vol. iv., p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> Hitherto I have adopted the spelling of this name most in use, but Mr. T. H. Hope, of Atherton, to whom I am indebted for many courtesies, contends, with good reason, that the proper form is "Wood," and not "Woods." Whilst it is true that two centuries ago there was much less uniformity in the spelling of names than now—the same name sometimes being written in two or three ways in one passage—yet I am convinced that Mr. Hope is correct. The evidence goes to show that the members of the family signed themselves "Wood," though contemporary writers often gave them the benefit of an additional letter "s."

<sup>3</sup> "Commonwealth Church Survey" (Record Society Series, vol. 1.), p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Vide p. 100, and note.

hardships which fell so heavily upon their brethren in other parts of Lancashire, and indeed of England and Scotland, during those years. From a letter signed "Servetus," which appeared in the *Wigan Observer*, in 1871, the following passage respecting the Nonconformists of this district after the ejection of Mr. Wood is extracted :—

His partisans, principally residents in North Ashton, held their first meeting for worship in a farm-house in Edleston Lane, the farmer himself of the name of Edleston being a staunch and zealous supporter of Nonconformity, or Puritanism, as it was often called. In 1664 there was a very fatal epidemic raging in Ashton, called the black fever, and one of Edleston's daughters (Ellen) caught the disease at Ashton, through having to take milk every morning to the village, and it terminated fatally. For some reason or other she was interred in a garden close to the house, having a body stone and a head stone with the initials E. E., 1664, rudely engraved. The garden was preserved with religious care for more than 160 years, with the body and head stone nicely trimmed about, and was called "My Lady's Garden." After the funeral of the poor girl the family removed from Edleston farm-house, and erected a tent in a field near the present residence of Mr. David Shaw, where they resided until driven back by the inclemency of the weather. The garden has within these few years been destroyed, and there is nothing now to mark the spot where the remains of the poor girl wait the general resurrection.

The Revolution of 1688 brought relief to the Nonconformists, and chapels began to rise all over the country. Tunley, as previously shown<sup>1</sup>, was erected in 1691, and six years afterwards Park Lane Chapel was built. The first minister was the Rev. Thomas Blinston, who was a native of Landgate close by. He was educated by the Rev. Richard Frankland, whose Academy at Rathmell he entered April 9th, 1691. He settled at Park Lane in 1697, and was married August 10th, 1704. In the "Northowram Register," under the head of marriages, is the following :—

"Mr. Tho. Blinston, Minr. at Town of Ashton, — Rosbottom & one of his hearers' drs. Aug. 10, 1704."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Blinston continued to labour at Park Lane until his death, which took place in 1721. He was buried somewhere in the

<sup>1</sup> Vide ante, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> P. 197.

chapel-yard : the place is not known, but upon the tombstone of the Rev. Hezekiah Kirkpatrick is the following :—

In memory of the first minister of this congregation, the Rev. Thos. Blinston, who died 1721, aged 48 years, having been minister 24 years.

It is interesting to know that descendants of Mr. Blinston are still to be found in the congregation attending Park Lane Chapel. The late minister, Rev. G. Fox, has in his possession a quaint looking basin which formerly belonged to Mr. Blinston. The Rev. Timothy Gardner followed in 1721. He was educated by the Rev. Dr. Dixon, of Whitehaven, afterwards of Bolton, and remained at Park Lane until 1724. His next charge seems to have been Tower of Hawkshead, in North Lancashire, and afterwards he was at Prescott for a little while. He died at Low Row, in Yorkshire, in 1765, aged seventy-three years. The Rev. Samuel Parks followed in 1724, and remained until 1727. I imagine he is the same as Mr. Park or Parks who was minister at Prescott for several years, and was buried in the aisle of the chapel there. In 1727 the Rev. John Brownlow began his ministry at Park Lane, continuing here for nearly sixty years. He retired from the ministry probably a few years before his death, which took place in 1788, and was interred in the chapel. A brass plate thus inscribed marks the place :—

Here lie the remains of the  
Rev. JNO. BROWNLOW,  
Who was minister of this congregation for  
Nearly sixty years,  
And died April 19th, 1788,  
Aged 85 years.

In the chapel graveyard is a tombstone which, besides recording his own death, states that his three children, Hannah, Fanny, and James, "died in the early period of life," also that his wife, Mary Brownlow, "departed this life in 1753, aged 50." "Parson Brownlow" is still much talked about in the neighbourhood, and some of the stories related about him are very humorous. Mr. Fox has a relic of this good old man in the shape of a stout bamboo, some five feet six inches long, with which he was accus-

tomed to tramp the village. In the chapel vestry, too, is a large painting of Mr. Brownlow, from which one would imagine that he was a good, fat, lively ecclesiastic, fond of his wig and gown, as most eighteenth century divines were. He was on intimate terms with Lord Willoughby, who at his death left him his wardrobe, and the good people used to say that he looked better in his robes than did Lord Willoughby himself. In the account of Hindley Chapel<sup>1</sup> the Rev. James Brownlow is named as minister there about 1729, but whether he was related to Mr. Brownlow, of Park Lane, I cannot say. The Rev. Hezekiah Kirkpatrick succeeded Mr. Brownlow in 1786. He had previously been associated<sup>1</sup> with the Rev. Mr. White, of Derby, and the Rev. Dr. Clayton at the Octagon Chapel, Liverpool, and whilst at the latter place published in 1785, a volume of "Sermons on various Subjects, with an Account of the Principles of Protestant Dissenters, their Mode of Worship, and Forms of Public Prayer, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper." During his residence at Park Lane he interested himself in potato growing, and published a curious little pamphlet in 1796 on "Culture of Potatoes in Lancashire and Cheshire." Mr. Sutton in his list of "Lancashire Authors," puts the author of this pamphlet after the reverend gentleman of that name, and describes him as a "Gardener, near Wigan." It is true he was a gardener, but he was also the minister and author of the volume of sermons previously named. He remained at Park Lane until his death, and was buried in the chapel yard. His tombstone reads thus:—

To the memory of the  
REV. HEZEKIAH KIRKPATRICK,  
Thirteen years minister of this congregation.  
As a friend he was amiable, social, and generous.  
In his private character he was a strenuous advocate and able supporter  
of truth, not being biassed by the ear of man, but following  
the dictates of his conscience, and also seeking  
for the approbation of his God.  
He died September 19, 1799, aged 61 years.  
"Tho' dead, he yet speaketh,"

A daughter of his was for some time governess in the family of Archbishop Magee.

<sup>1</sup> Vide ante, p. 8.

*THE REV. FRANCIS KNOWLES.*

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The Rev. Thomas Broadbent was the next minister from 1800 to 1811, in which year he died. He also rests in the chapel yard, and from his tombstone the following is copied :—

Sacred  
To the memory of the  
Rev. THOMAS BROADBENT,  
Who departed this Life November 29th,  
1811, Aged 35.  
He was minister of this Congregation Eleven Years.

In the same grave are also buried several of his children.

The Rev. Thomas Smith, from Stand, followed Mr. Broadbent about 1811. He continued to labour at Park Lane until 1822, when he retired from the ministry. He died on January 18th, 1836, at Egg, near Chester, at the age of seventy-six. His successor was the Rev. Francis Knowles. He was born at Sheffield on the 10th of August, 1785, his parents being of the Church of England persuasion. His training for the ministry he received from the Rev. Robert Aspland, of Durham House, and he began his ministerial career at Nantwich in 1816. Towards the end of 1823 he removed to Park Lane, where he remained until his death, which took place on the 17th of October, 1857. A tablet over the pulpit in the chapel is thus inscribed :—

In memory of  
The REVD. FRANCIS KNOWLES,  
for upwards of 34 years  
Minister of this Chapel.  
He died 17th October 1857,  
in the 73rd year of his age.  
Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.  
This tablet is erected by his  
Congregation and friends,  
As a tribute of respect.

Mr. Knowles published several small books of a theological character. His last production was written during his sickness, the issue of which he was not permitted to behold, for he died whilst it was passing through the press. It is entitled "The Final and Certain Prevalence of Truth, a Letter addressed to the Rev.

Harold B. Sherlock, M.A., Rector of Ashton-le-Willows, in reference to his letter to his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, on 'The Complete Emancipation of the Jews.' The Rev. James Bayley succeeded Mr. Knowles in 1858, and remained until 1864. He was for a short time minister at Chorley, and Diss, in Norfolk. He died in 1872.

The next minister was the Rev. G. Fox, educated at the Home Missionary Board, Manchester, and who began ministerial duty in 1859. In 1864 he removed from Mossley to succeed Mr. Bayley at Park Lane. "He has done more," says a writer, previously quoted, "for the improvement of the chapel and schools than all the ministers together since the days of Mr. Brownlow." Mr. Fox withdrew from the pastorate in 1891, and is now resident without charge at Longsight, Manchester. The Rev. James E. Stead, late of Heywood, is the present minister. Park Lane Chapel, as previously stated, was erected in 1697, and, according to Dr. Evans's list, between the years 1717 and 1729 had a congregation of 341, of whom twenty-four were county voters. A writer in the *Christian Reformer* for 1857 also says:—

Till a recent date it was what might be called an aristocratic congregation, there having been, almost in the remembrance of persons still living, no less than forty wigs in the chapel, indicating the attendance of an unusual proportion of the respectable families of the neighbourhood.<sup>1</sup>

In those days the district was much more rural than now, and the chapel, according to a picture which Mrs. Nathan Gaskell, of Ox House, Upholland, had painted about thirty-five years ago, looked quite picturesque. The chapel stands a little back from the main road leading to Wigan, having in front of it a good-sized graveyard. It is still very ancient-looking, the walls being substantially those of 1697. It is a somewhat low, oblong structure, having its long side at right angles to the road. A little porch, added some twenty years ago, to the left affords an entrance to the building, which internally will be found to have undergone very considerable alterations. These were effected in 1871. The old gallery, supported by wooden beams, which are said to have been put in when Dr. Barnes, of Manchester, came to preach many years ago,

<sup>1</sup> P. 776.

## THE MINISTER'S HAT PEG.

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gave place to the present one which is over the entrance. The old pews were removed, the present ones, which are all open, substituted for them; and the chapel was thoroughly renovated and beautified. One aisle runs the length of the building. The pulpit, which formerly stood on the long side, is now at the end opposite the entrance. It is the original pulpit, and near the door of it is the hat peg of the first minister, Thomas Blinston. The initials "T. B." are cut into it, and to the congregation the minister's hat must have been a very conspicuous object. Beneath it is the small communion pew, in which is a font thus inscribed :—

Presented to  
Park Lane Chapel  
by  
William Taylor,  
October, 1873.

Close by is a beautiful stained window erected by Mrs. Fox, the minister's wife, "in memory of her beloved parents," Hugh Gaskell, who died October 28th, 1842, aged fifty-eight years, and Beatrice Gaskell, who died December 25th, 1866, aged seventy-four. Many other interesting memorials adorn the interior of the chapel. A handsome tablet records the death of David Shaw on June 1st, 1875, aged seventy-five, who was "for 53 years closely connected with the chapel" and a most generous supporter of it. Another tablet is thus inscribed :—

This Chapel  
was Built in the year 1697.  
Repaired in 1826.  
Renovated in 1871.  
George Fox, minister,  
Chapel Wardens, { William Baker,  
                          { Josiah Gaskell.

A very useful tablet, erected by subscription A.D. 1872, gives the list of ministers from the commencement. There are also two beautiful scrolls, the gift of Miss Shaw, who has left a handsome legacy for new schools. The old pew doors have been preserved and are used as wainscoting round the chapel. The initials of the original owners, together with the date of the erection of the chapel, are upon them. They are copied as under :—

H. E. E. T 1697

16 R. P. 97

T A. S A. 1697

A. S. 1697

E E 1697

I H. E H

R. H. 1697

P. G.

D. R.

R. R. I C 1697

T. W. I L

W. B. 1697

97 I B

R I 1697

R.
S. M

I H 1697

E H

Several cracks in the walls of the building are manifest, and witness to the extensive mining operations of the district. That part of the roof which is over the gallery is open to the top. The windows (which were formerly of the diamond-shaped kind, provided with strong stanchions) are quite modern, and though only to be found on one side supply the building pretty well with light. Formerly there were two doorways in its long or southern side. Behind the chapel is a large piece of land, recently purchased and now used as a play-ground, upon which the new schools are to be erected. The present school has been built during Mr. Fox's ministry. It superseded an older one, which joins up to the chapel. During Mr. Fox's ministry of twenty-seven years there were spent in improvements over £1,200, but amidst all the alterations he exercised a worthy care in the preservation of every interesting relic of bygone times.

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#### VIII.—ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

EXACTLY how Congregationalism came to be planted at Ashton-in-Makerfield it is not easy to say. Usually in districts where there is an old Presbyterian Chapel, the rise of Congregationalism is



simultaneous with the appearance of Arianism or Unitarianism in the older interest, but how far that holds of Ashton is not clear. The Rev. Wm. Alexander, resident at Prescott from 1802 to 1811, itinerated in the districts around, and amongst the places named in his life as visited by him is Ashton, where it is said he was the means of doing much good. In the Ashton Church Book are brief historical notes, from which the following is taken :—

The gospel has been preached in this neighbourhood occasionally for many years (but how long we are not certain) by several ministers of Christ. The Rev. Wm. Alexander began to preach here May 1st, 1802, and has since that time frequently visited this immoral village.

There must be some error in the date just given, as Mr. Alexander only removed with his family from Lancaster in May of 1802. The extract, however, serves to prove that soon after his settlement at Prescott his itinerant labours began. Nothing, however, seems to have been done in the way of establishing a permanent residence here for over twenty years. The first mention of Ashton in the Reports of the Lancashire Congregational Union is in October, 1822, when the sum of £5 was voted unto it, a similar sum being voted in April of the following year. In the year 1823-4 the Report reads :—

Ashton in the Willows has received assistance from the Union, and there is good hope that the Word of the Lord is preached here with success. A friend is going to build them a small place for preaching, with a School under it. A Church is about to be formed.

The church was formed on April 16th, 1824, by the Rev. J. Toothill, of Rainford, and the Rev. W. Alexander, then at Leigh. It is interesting to note that it was composed only of males, the following being the first seven members: Henry Jenkin, Thomas Leather, William Lythgoe, Henry Holland, Thomas Sutton, Samuel Pierpoint, and William Grundy. The Report for 1824-5 says that "the land is bought and paid for," and that there is "an increase of children in the Sunday School." A few years were, however, allowed to pass over before the chapel was erected, and the Church Book states that the "Church and congregation assembled together for public worship for some time in a small place which was rented

and also supplied on Lord's Day by preachers from different churches round about till 1827." On the 27th of July in that year the Rev. John Penkethman, after having preached a few Sabbaths as a candidate, accepted an invitation to the pastorate and began his labours. Mr. Penkethman had no collegiate training, and commenced ministerial duty at Wharton, near Bolton, about 1820. In 1824 he removed to Pendlebury, and thence in 1827 to Ashton-in-Makerfield. The Report for 1828 states that since Mr. Penkethman's settlement "the congregation has increased at least one-third; there have been some pleasing additions to the church; and the number of scholars in the Sunday school, which at the period alluded to amounted to 70, is now augmented to 110." The same Report also says that he preached twice a week at Golborne, that he conducted services also at "Brockstedge, Long Lane, Park Lane, Lodge Lane, Seneley Green, and Edge Green." On the 23rd of April, 1829, the Ashton people had the joy of seeing their new chapel opened for public worship, the Revs. Dr. Raffles, Maclean, and Turner assisting on the occasion. The Report for 1831 says:—

In consequence of the erection of a commodious place both for preaching and for the use of the Sunday School at Golborne the attendance at the chapel at Ashton has diminished; a result to which the friends at Ashton conceive the pressure of the times has also in some degree contributed; for they state that some are in want of decent apparel and the common necessities of life. There are from 90 to 100 scholars at present in the school, but the number always increases with the advance of spring. . . . The church has increased during the year, and now consists of 27 members.

For some reason or other Mr. Penkethman was not ordained until after twelve years of ministerial service. The service took place on March 15th, 1832, "in the presence of Messrs. Dr. Raffles, Kelly, Alexander, Maclean, Holgate, Widows, Vint, and Langridge, preachers of the Gospel of Christ." In October, 1837, Mr. Penkethman resigned his charge, but continued to reside in the neighbourhood for a short time, and gave such assistance to the church as was desired. In the following year he settled at Belthorn, near Darwen, where he remained barely two years; for on the 16th of April, 1840, he began his ministry at Tockholes, near

*AFFECTION FOR THE PIPE.*

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Blackburn. The following is extracted from my history of "Independency in Tockholes":—

Mr. Penkethman looked well after his people, for if any one happened to be away from chapel on the Sunday, the Monday or Tuesday following he was sure to receive a visit from his minister, to whom he had to account for his absence. Mr. Penkethman was known to be very sensitive and irritable. This he felt to be his great infirmity, and often prayed in the hearing of his people for the grace of patience. Though an untrained man, he was a great theologian. The Rev. S. T. Porter, of Darwen, a great authority in his time, used to say, when perplexed with any point in theology, he would sooner take a walk over the hills to Tockholes and consult Mr. Penkethman than any one else. He would take his pipe, sit down in his study chair, and, after a little while, be almost certain to point some way out of the difficulty. He was also singularly gifted in prayer. Another neighbouring minister tells a somewhat interesting story about him. One day he went to dine with Mr. Penkethman at Tockholes. The dinner things had been cleared away, and the good minister and his wife took their seats opposite each other, but for a time both appeared fidgety and restless about something. Suddenly Mr. Penkethman said, "Oh, never mind Mr. S——, my dear," and then the pipes were got down, and both smoked away with evident delight.<sup>1</sup>

He continued his labours at Tockholes until his death, which took place May 1st, 1848. The Rev. Alexander Fraser, M.A., of Blackburn, preached his funeral sermon to a large congregation. A plain tombstone in the graveyard of Tockholes Chapel marks his last resting-place, and states that he was fifty-nine years of age. Mrs. Penkethman removed from Tockholes to Hindley, near Wigan, her native place. After Mr. Penkethman's removal from Ashton the church was, "in the Providence of Almighty God, permitted to pass through many trials and painful vicissitudes for nearly two years, being supplied by neighbouring ministers for some time, and afterwards by various supplies from different places until June, 1839, when G. S. Spencer, having been invited by the church to preach for a few Sabbaths, commenced his labours among them Lord's Day, June 9th, and after preaching eight Sabbaths received a call to become their pastor, which he accepted on August 29th, and entered on the duties of his office Lord's Day, September 1st, 1839." Mr. Spencer is stated in the earlier "Con-

<sup>1</sup> P. 136.

gregational Year Books" to have been educated in the Moravian College, and to have entered the Congregational ministry in 1839, Ashton being his first charge as such. From the foregoing passage it is evident that the good people of Ashton tried him well before they made up their minds to call him to the pastorate. On the 28th of May, 1840, Mr. Spencer was ordained, the following ministers being present and assisting : Revs. James Hill, of Salford ; James Griffin, Rusholme Road, Manchester ; Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool ; John Kelly, of Liverpool ; Thomas Rogers, of Prescott ; W. Owen, of Warrington ; W. Roaf, of Wigan ; J. Jones, of Hindley ; William Turner, of Hindley ; Joshua Tunstall, of Kirkdale ; and Charles Whitworth, late of Shelley, Yorkshire. 'The Union Reports year by year give the most glowing accounts of the prosperity which marked the early years of Mr. Spencer's ministry. He preached at as many as ten or a dozen stations besides Ashton, and it is recorded that he was "instant in season and out of season, notwithstanding occasional interruptions from the failure of his health." An enlargement of the chapel became necessary in 1841, of which the following notice appears in the Church Book, under date September 26th :—

It was resolved (1), to solicit subscriptions towards the expense of new galleries in the chapel on three sides ; (2), to remove the centre pews, and thus enlarge the centre accommodation for the use of the schools, the estimated expense (with the liquidation of our old debt) being £150.

The Union Report for 1842 states that the work "is nearly completed." Another interesting passage from the church minutes respecting the formation of the Congregational Church at Newton-le-Willows deserves to be given :—

Application having been made by William and Ann Stephenson, Robert and Anne Dalle, Anne Riley, Anne Naylor, Margaret Berry, Betty Harrison, Anne Groombridge, and Herman Williams for letters of dismission from our communion for the purpose of forming a church of our order and discipline at Newton-in-the-Willows, it was resolved with unanimous consent to grant their request which we now hereby do. Dec. 12 (1842). The church at Newton was this day formed, Revs. J. Edmonds and G. S. Spencer assisting, December 29.

Considerable alterations were again effected in the chapel in

1845. The Church Book states that a committee appointed to superintend the affairs having met several times resolved "to repair the centre of the chapel, to take down the ceiling and re-erect it, to put in gas fittings and paint it, which was accordingly done." The place was re-opened for public worship on Friday, July 25th, 1845, by a sermon from the Rev. Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool; and on the following Sabbath the preacher was the Rev. William Marshall, of Wigan. At a meeting of the Church, held July 28th of that year, it was resolved that the Sunday School should be "accommodated in the gallery, and those who brought their dinners to dine at R. Turton's, for which he should receive 13s. per annum, by which means the chapel could be closed in the dinner recess." Troubles were about this time beginning to arise which eventually led to Mr. Spencer's removal. The holding of a Day School in the chapel created friction between the County Union and the Church. It ended in the Church declaring itself free from County Union assistance in 1846, and Mr. Spencer's resigning in May of that year. For a short time he was without charge at Hindley, and a member of the Bridgecroft Congregational Church. He has since laboured successively at Bolsterstone (near Doncaster), Ware, Dronfield, Wotton-under-Edge, and is now resident without charge at Banbury. The County Union Report for 1848 states that the cause at Ashton has again been taken on the Funds of the Union "after having been left to its own resources for the previous twelve months." The state of matters is said to be "very low."

The Rev. Frederick Clarke Dowthwaite entered upon his ministry, as successor to Mr. Spencer, on the first Sunday in February, 1850. He was born on the 20th of July, 1820, at Easingwold, Yorkshire, but a considerable part of his early life he spent at Orrell with his stepfather, the Rev. John Holgate. From the church at Orrell he went to Airedale College, and on the completion of his college course, settled at Stalybridge, in February, 1845, whence he moved to Ashton. In 1853 a new school was erected, being opened by the Rev. Joseph Fox, on March 28th, of that year. After five years' labour the cause remaining low, Mr. Dowthwaite removed to the English Congregational Church at Welshpool, resigning his charge there, through ill health, on the

4th of February, 1866. He died on the 21st of March, 1869. After Mr. Dowthwaite's removal, no minister was appointed at Ashton for several years, and the interest languished. It has already been stated that for many years the church received generous assistance from the funds of the County Union. During the troubles which arose towards the end of Mr. Spencer's ministry it ceased to be "aided"; but again came on the funds whilst Mr. Dowthwaite was pastor. The termination of this ministry was again the termination of pecuniary assistance from that source, and it has not further sought help, and we may now safely predict that it is not likely to need it again. A change for the better took place about the year 1866, and the way in which it was brought about is stated in the subjoined passage by the Rev. H. Wilson :—

By the providence of God a new direction was now soon given to the chequered history of this struggling church. Special week-night services were held, which were alternately conducted by the Rev. Robert Kay (Congregationalist) and the Rev. W. Inglis (Lady Huntingdon's Church), and both from Warrington. To one of these services the late Mr. Richard Evans, of Haydock, came accompanied by his daughter, Miss Evans, and his son, Mr. Joseph Evans. The night was cold and wet, and the interior of the chapel, which at no time looked very attractive, presented a most dreary and comfortless aspect. At the close of the service a conversation took place between Mr. Richard Evans and Mr. Boon, who was a member of the church at that time, and in reply to Mr. Evans, who expressed sympathy with the people in having to carry on their services under great disadvantages, Mr. Boon said, "It is quite true, but what can the people do more than they are doing; they want such a friend as you." From that night, so I am informed, a sympathy deepened and strengthened by what was afterwards known of the character and work of Mr. Charles Latham, eventually found tangible expression in the handsome edifice in which we now meet for the public worship of God, an edifice which is an honour to the Christian munificence of Messrs. Richard Evans and Co., an ornament to this township and to the denomination it represents.<sup>1</sup>

The chapel referred to in this extract was opened on the 19th of April, 1867, by Dr. Mellor.

The Rev. W. B. Macwilliam was appointed minister in 1867. He was educated at Glasgow, and ten years before his settlement

<sup>1</sup> Funeral sermon, by the Rev. H. Wilson, in memory of Mr. Charles Latham, for fifty years superintendent of the Ashton-in-Makerfield Congregational Sunday School, who died January 29th, 1886.

## THE EVANS FAMILY.

59

at Ashton began ministerial duty at Middlewich in Cheshire. Thence he removed to Altrincham, in the same county, and afterwards to Ashton. He remained here only until 1869, when he removed to Ancoats, Manchester. In 1873 he went to Albion Chapel, Nottingham, and is now resident at Hornsey without pastoral charge. The present minister, the Rev. H. Wilson, who was educated at Airedale College, began his labours here in July, 1871. It is his first and only charge, and it is some testimony to his worth that he has been able to retain the affection and sympathy of his people during his twenty-one years' pastorate.

The church stands in Gerard Street, and has a commanding position. It is a really noble structure, both externally and internally. A conspicuous object is the tower with memorial clock, erected to the memory of the late Mr. Charles Latham, the gift of the Church and Sunday Schools, of which he was the superintendent for half a century. In the presence of a large assembly the clock was declared a memorial by Miss Evans, of the Hurst House, Prescott, on May 31st, 1887. In the communion are five handsome chairs, the gift of Miss Evans, thus inscribed:—

Presented  
by  
Miss R. EVANS,  
October 16th,  
1882.

Above the minister's vestry door, and in a conspicuous position in the church, is a tablet in memory of the late Mr. Richard Evans, the founder of the extensive collieries so widely known as the firm of Richard Evans and Co. The inscription reads thus:—

This tablet is placed  
here by the congregation as  
a tribute of respect to the  
memory of  
RICHARD EVANS, Esq.,  
of Haydock Grange,  
in grateful remembrance of  
his deep and long continued  
interest in the prosperity  
of this church.

He was chiefly instrumental  
in the erection of this  
House of Prayer.  
"The memory of the  
just is blessed."

Prov., 10 ch., 7 v.

There is also erected in the chancel a beautiful window to the memory of the late Mr. Josiah Evans, who, in addition to his benefactions to the church during his lifetime, made a provision in his will for the purchase of "The Manse," in which the pastor now resides. The subject of the window is "The Good Samaritan," and the inscription is copied as under :—

To the memory of the late  
JOSIAH EVANS, Esq.,  
erected by the congregation,  
in grateful remembrance  
of his personal interest  
in this House of Prayer.

A third object of special interest is a stained window, presented by Dr. Latham and his two sisters in memory of their mother, upon which is the following inscription :—

Erected in loving memory of  
ELLEN LATHAM,  
by her children.

Altogether there is an air of gentility about the place which would somewhat surprise those who amidst great difficulty tried to keep Congregationalism going in the old building. The old chapel still stands, and it is some eighty or a hundred yards from its modern rival, remaining, externally at least, much the same as when first erected. The front part, which stands a little higher than the other, is an addition to the original structure. The bell is on the top, though its voice is now silent. Something like a graveyard may be seen, but no tombstones. The windows with small squares, such as are usually found in buildings of this date, are still here. The pulpit was opposite the entrance, but, of course, it has gone, and so have the galleries. Indeed considerable internal alterations have been necessitated to fit it up as a Day School, which purpose it now serves.



## IX.—GOLBORNE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

GOLBORNE was one of several preaching places for the Rev. W. Alexander during his residence at Leigh, from 1811 to 1825. In his "Memoirs" it is said that "as he walked to Newton, he sometimes preached at Golbourn, in the open air; and now and then he preached in some other place on the way."<sup>1</sup> The Rev. R. Slate, in his history of the County Union, says, respecting Golborne, "The first time there was preaching in this place, by the agents of the County Union, was by Mr. Alexander, June 17th, 1821, who preached out of doors."<sup>2</sup> The Union Reports, however, do not mention Golborne until 1828, when it is associated with Ashton-in-Makerfield. The Report for that year says that Mr. Penkethman, the Ashton minister, "preaches once and sometimes twice a week at Golborne, where the place in which they assemble is frequently crowded, and always well filled. Four of the members who have recently joined the church at Ashton are from this place; the average attendance is from 60 to 70." The year following it is said that "a Sunday School has been recently set on foot, with very encouraging appearances." The preaching place to which reference is made in the foregoing extract still exists in the shape of an upper room called a "garner," attached to the farm buildings of Mrs. Jane Pierpoint, who, with her two daughters and son Joseph, are said to have "loved the truth." It is at the extreme end of the village, about 300 yards from the present chapel, and on the way leading to Newton. A block of buildings close by gets the name of Pierpoint Street, and in their front is a stone tablet thus inscribed:—

P.  
E. H.  
1740.

In a short time this room became too small, and Mr. Joseph Pierpoint in 1830 generously erected the first building for the

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of the Rev. Wm. Alexander," by the Rev. John Alexander, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> P. 51, note.

Golborne Congregationalists. The matter is thus recorded in the County Union Report for that year :—

Such being the state of things at Golborne [the overcrowded condition of the building] a benevolent friend in the neighbourhood, whose name ought to be recorded with honour, Mr. Pierpoint, has already begun to build a suitable place, both for the preaching and the Sunday School, in which it is his wish, as well as the wish of others, that there may be preaching twice on the Sabbath day.

The erection of this place, as previously stated, drew somewhat from the cause at Ashton, along with which Golborne at this time was worked. In 1831 it was separated from the Ashton Church, and became a distinct station of the County Union, having preaching on Sunday afternoon and evening, the morning being devoted to the Sunday School. In 1833 an attempt was made to re-unite Golborne with Ashton, but it was found to be "impracticable to combine the two, so as to maintain an efficient ministration at both." The Union Report for 1835 says: "Once a month, on a Friday evening, the people have been favoured with a sermon by the Rev. Thomas Atkin and the Rev. James Widows, alternately, when as many as 240 persons have attended." It would not be easy to get such a congregation now a days on any week night, especially on a Friday. Trouble set in soon after this, and the Report for 1838 says that the congregation had been "reduced to one half its former number, being not now more than 30 or 40 adults." A like state of things is declared to exist at Ashton. Mr. Penkethman, the minister, resigned, and the Union again proposed to work the two as one station. The Golborne people lament in the Report of next year that their connection with Ashton leads to their having only one service on the Sabbath Day, and the year following it was decided to connect Golborne with the new interest at Newton-le-Willows. The Report for 1843 shows Golborne to have been separated from Newton, with Sabbath service in the afternoon and evening; Mr. Massie, however, the Newton minister, in the following year is said to preach there occasionally on Sunday afternoon, and regularly every other Thursday evening. From this time until 1864 Golborne drops out of the Union Reports. It is not even given in the lists of chapels

and preaching places, and the "Congregational Year Books" for that period are also silent about it. The omission points to gross neglect on the part of somebody: less perhaps on the part of the people unto whom Year Books and Calendars were not well known than on the part of the Union officials of the district. During this period, however, though its name is not given in the official organs of the denomination, services were held as usual, conducted principally by laymen and neighbouring ministers. Nay, more, it was this period which saw the formation of the church, and the erection of the chapel. The Ashton Church Book has the following minute under date January 31st, 1847 :—

Church meeting. Read a letter from Golborne requesting the dismissal of six members to form a church at Golborne, namely, Jane Pierpoint, Sarah Travers, Margaret Nuttall, John Dunn, William Travers, and James Twiss. Gave their dismissal with an earnest desire that the Lord will bless and prosper them.

The Ashton minister at this time was the Rev. G. S. Spencer, and from the minute just given it is clear that, whatever its connection with Newton at times, the Golborne Congregational Church is the offspring of Ashton-in-Makerfield. These six members first met, it is said, for the ordinance of the Lord's Supper at Golborne, in April, 1847, in presence of Mr. H. Wallington, of Warrington.

The cause prospered, and in 1859 the old building was bought for £100. A movement was set on foot to reconstruct it, but it was ultimately decided to purchase land and build a new chapel, setting apart the old building for school purposes. The subject was freely discussed amongst the members of the congregation and the friends of the place, and although they met with many difficulties it soon became apparent that their expectation would be realised.<sup>1</sup>

Land was purchased by the late Mr. William Travers, and a chapel erected at a cost of about £1,200. It was opened for worship in 1860 by the Rev. Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool, who is said to have taken a deep interest in the cause from the very beginning, and "not long after, by the timely help of Messrs. Evans, of

<sup>1</sup> "Liverpool Congregational Magazine," for 1876.

Haydock, the debt of about £300 was entirely cleared off." The Union Report for 1864 says :—" This station appears again upon the books of the Union, with the prospect of life and usefulness. A congregation of 130 on the Sabbath evening, with more than 100 scholars in attendance at the Sabbath school, afford reasonable grounds for hope that a good work may here be done for Christ and souls." The connection with the Union as an aided church again continued only some two or three years. Thus far the place had been simply supplied by various preachers, but in 1866 the Rev. William Moore became the first resident minister. He began ministerial work in 1841 at Moulton, in Cheshire, was at Great Harwood, near Blackburn, from 1853 to 1855, removing at the beginning of that year to Leigh, where he remained until 1864, when he resigned, settling subsequently at Golborne. Mr. Moore continued to be minister here until 1872, when he retired. The church remained vacant until August, 1874, when the Rev. H. E. Martin received an invitation, which he accepted. He had been educated for the ministry at the Nottingham Congregational Institute, and for about two years had had charge of a church in that town. The Report for 1874 says :—

The name of this place will not be unfamiliar to many friends of the Union, it having in years past being one of the stations. For some time no grant has been asked, but the pulpit being vacant and the need of the services of an efficient minister being felt, the people are constrained to ask assistance, in the hope that their request may not have to be often repeated."

It further states that there is a sightly chapel capable of seating 300 persons.

The Report for 1877-8 tells of the completion of new school premises at a cost of nearly £1,000, of which the sum of £140 remained unpaid ; also of the removal of the minister (October, 1876) to Garston. Mr. Martin is now resident without charge at Liscard, Cheshire. No successor was appointed until November, 1879, when the Rev. David Young, B.A., formerly of Heywood, took charge of the church. His ministry here closed June 20th, 1881, and he is now at Morpeth. The Report for 1883 says :—

*THE VALUE OF INSURANCE.*

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The most startling event of the year was a fire in the chapel, which took place on Sunday morning in connection with the heating apparatus, and before it was discovered it had done damage to the extent of £50, which was happily provided against by insurance.

The next year the Church had come to the conclusion that it was able to dispense with any further help from the Union Funds. The present minister, Rev. J. T. Camm, entered upon his labours here on February 1st, 1885. He is a native of Bury, and for many years was an active member of the Bethel Congregational Church in that town. It was under the influence and guidance of the Rev. W. R. Thorburn, M.A., pastor of that church, that he was led to engage in mission work, and eventually to seek admission into the Congregational ministry. Previous to the commencement of his labours at Golborne, he was an Evangelist at the Congregational Church, Wellington Road, Stockport, during which time he published a little work entitled "Sacred Ethics." The chapel stands to the right of the highway leading from Wigan to Warrington. It is a neat brick structure, in the Gothic style; has in front a considerable piece of ground, up the centre of which runs a broad, clean, flagged way; and is surrounded by shrubs which in the spring time add considerably to its appearance. The date-stone thus inscribed is in front :—

CONGREGATIONAL  
CHAPEL,  
1860.

The door opens with a vestibule, from which branch two aisles, which lead up to the pulpit at the opposite end. Behind this is the organ, the erection of which necessitated several structural changes which were effected in 1888. The organ, towards which William Mitchell, Esq., J.P., of Brook Villa, Golborne, generously gave £100, was opened on July 15th, of that year, the Rev. R. H. Cotton, M.A., B.Sc., Swinton, preaching morning and evening, and the Rev. R. J. Ward, of St. Helens, in the afternoon. There is no gallery, and the roof is open to the top. On each side are four long windows, with small panes, and in the front are two other windows with a larger one in the centre. To the right of the pulpit is the vestry, and to the left is a mural tablet thus inscribed :

Sacred  
to the memory of  
WILLIAM TRAVERS,  
upwards of thirty years  
the superintendent of the  
Congregational Sunday School,  
Golborne,  
died December 19th, 1868,  
aged 60 years.

Also  
SARAH TRAVERS,  
his beloved sister,  
twenty years a teacher  
in the above-named school,  
died February 4th, 1867,  
aged 70 years.

Both were highly esteemed for  
their long and faithful services  
in the cause of Jesus Christ.  
They rest from their labours.

The pews are all open, the rostrum is nicely decorated, and the building being tall and light points to comfort and convenience for the worshippers. It offers accommodation for some 300 persons. On the other side of the road are the school buildings, the inscription upon which is as follows :—

Congregational School,  
1830 ; rebuilt 1875.

The building of 1830 already referred to as erected by Mr. Pierpoint, which at that time served both as school and chapel, still exists, at least in part. It is somewhat low, said to be less by one window than formerly, has in it the old-fashioned small square panes, and forms the central part of the block of school buildings. The front and principal part was erected in 1875, at a cost of about £1,000 ; the part behind, which serves as an infant school, is the gift of Wm. Mitchell, Esq., J.P., and was completed about nine years ago. Altogether the school premises are commodious and deservedly looked upon with pride by the Golborne people. They are used for both Day and Sunday School purposes, there being about 310 day scholars and 270 Sunday scholars. The history of

this place is somewhat curious reading. The church was formed in 1847, and the chapel erected in 1860, but, as already stated, during the whole of that period and more it had no place in any of the denominational organs. It has been in existence as a cause for over sixty years, but during forty of them it was merely "supplied." It has repeatedly been off and on the Union Funds, and one of the Reports speaks of it as an "ancient station." It has been worked, along with the Ashton Church, with the Newton Church, and as a separate Union station. It is now Independent, and doing a useful work. By a sale of work, opened on the 29th of March, 1889, by B. B. Glover, Esq., of Newton-le-Willows, the sum of £142 19s. 3d. was raised, which liquidated all debts upon the buildings, and provided a balance of £20 towards a fund for decorating the chapel.

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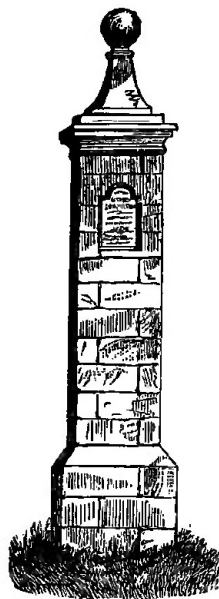
#### X.—WIGAN: TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

WIGAN is one of those Lancashire towns which was prominent in the great struggle between King and Parliament during the seventeenth century. In and around the town are materials for a history as interesting and exciting as any other Lancashire town can show. The names of its principal streets take us back to the ancient times, and at least one monument<sup>1</sup>—that in Wigan Lane, erected to the memory of Sir Thomas Tyldesley—tells of a sanguinary conflict here two and a half centuries ago. It was in these days of unrest and deadly strife that Nonconformity first appeared in the town. The occupant of the parish pulpit in 1650 was the Rev. James Bradshaw, unjustly described by the historian of Wigan as a "ranting turncoat Presbyterian."<sup>2</sup> If it were necessary, evidence could be cited from Calamy and Adam Martindale<sup>3</sup> as to

<sup>1</sup> This monument, erected in 1679, in the early part of last century was taken down, but it was rebuilt on the spot where it now stands. It was restored and renovated in 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Vide ante p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Adam Martindale, bewailing the loss of ministerial friends by death, mentions several "learned men and profitable preachers," Mr. Bradshaw being amongst the three first who were "very eminent." Chetham Society Series, vol. iv., p. 236.



AN HIGH ACT OF GRATITUDE, WHICH CONVEYS THE MEMORY OF  
SIR THOMAS TYLDESLEY  
TO POSTERITY,  
WHO SERVED KING CHARLES THE FIRST AS LIEUTENANT-COLONEL AT EDGE-HILL BATTLE,  
AFTER RAISING REGIMENTS OF HORSE, FOOT, AND DRAGOONS,  
AND FOR  
THE DESPERATE STORMING OF BURTON-UPON-TRENT, OVER A BRIDGE OF 36 ARCHES,  
RECEIVED THE HONOUR OF KNIGHTHOOD.  
HE AFTERWARDS SERVED IN ALL THE WARS IN GREAT COMMAND,  
WAS GOVERNOR OF LICHFIELD,  
AND FOLLOWED THE FORTUNE OF THE CROWN THROUGH THE THREE KINGDOMS,  
AND NEVER COMPOUNDED WITH THE REBELS, THOUGH STRONGLY INVESTED;  
AND ON THE 25TH AUGUST, A.D. 1651, WAS HERE SLAIN,  
COMMANDING AS MAJOR-GENERAL UNDER THE EARL OF DERBY,  
TO WHOM THE GRATEFUL ERECTOR, ALEXANDER RIGBY, ESQ., WAS CORNET;  
AND WHEN HE WAS HIGH SHERIFF OF THIS COUNTY (A.D. 1679)  
PLACED THIS HIGH OBLIGATION ON THE WHOLE FAMILY OF THE TYLDESLEYS,  
TO FOLLOW THE NOBLE EXAMPLE OF THEIR LOYAL ANCESTOR.

MONUMENT IN WIGAN LANE WITH INSCRIPTION.



the excellent character of this man. He was born at Darcy Lever,<sup>1</sup> near Bolton, being the second of three sons, and was "a man of incomparable ready elocution, solid learning, a very good preacher, a ready disputant, and every way well accomplished for the ministry."<sup>2</sup> His appointment to Wigan was about 1645, and according to the report of the Parliamentary Commissioners in 1650, he was "a painefull, able preaching Minist<sup>r</sup>,"<sup>3</sup> but did not keep the fast.<sup>4</sup> He was superseded at Wigan by Mr. Charles Hotham, and went to Macclesfield, where he was silenced by the Act of Uniformity in 1662. As just stated, his successor at Wigan was Mr. Hotham, son of Sir John Hotham (patron of the parish), "some time Fellow of Peter-house in Cambridge, and Proctor of the University."<sup>5</sup> He was ejected in 1662, and went to the West Indies, but eventually returned to England. Calamy says that in his "younger years he had studied judicial astrology, but gave express orders in his will that all his books and papers relating to that art should be burnt." An exceedingly scarce work by him is entitled, "Corporations Defended." In most other Lancashire towns a Nonconformist interest can be traced back to the times of the ejection, but in the case of Wigan it is not so. After Mr. Hotham we hear of no other Nonconformist minister in the Parish Church, and there is no Nonconformist congregation in the town

<sup>1</sup> James Bradshaw was the son of John Bradshaw, of Darcy Lever, near Bolton. An engraving is given on the next page of the hall which was the residence of the Bradshaw family in the days of Queen Elizabeth. "After his ejection from Macclesfield," Mr. Croston says (Baines's "Lancashire," vol. iv., p. 275), "he returned to his family property at Darcy Lever, which had descended to him by the death of his father in the same year, and leave was given him to preach at Houghton Chapel, in Dean parish, and afterwards at Bradshaw Chapel, by connivance of Mr. Bradshaw, of Bradshaw Hall, where he used to read some of the prayers, though he never conformed." He died in 1684, aged seventy-three years.

<sup>2</sup> Calamy's "Nonconformist's Memorial" (1802), vol. i., p. 338.

<sup>3</sup> "Commonwealth Church Survey" (Record Society Series, vol. i.), p. 59.

<sup>4</sup> This is not like the action of a man whom the historian of Wigan calls a "ranting turn-coat." Mr. Sinclair's work is disfigured by his bitter animus against Nonconformity, and his treatment of Mr. Bradshaw is utterly unworthy and wrong.

<sup>5</sup> Calamy's "Nonconformist's Memorial" (1802), vol. ii., p. 181.



*PRESBYTERIANISM: OLD AND NEW.* 71

more than a century and a half old. That the town had its Nonconformists cannot be questioned. Bradshaw and Hotham could not have laboured and suffered in vain, and it may excite surprise that their sympathisers erected no meeting place in the town. It must, however, be remembered that the persecutions of those times sent Nonconformity from the towns into the rural districts, consequently that, in all probability, the old interests at Hindley, Tunley, and Park Lane are largely indebted for their existence to the Wigan Nonconformists. Certain it is that for many years these chapels did for both town and country. The distance is not very considerable, and in those days a five or six miles' walk to the place of worship was not considered a serious difficulty. A good many of the Wigan people worshipped in particular at Hindley Chapel, but eventually they erected a Meeting House in Chapel Lane. It is the history of this place which has now to be given. Exceedingly fragmentary it will be, because of the absence of documentary evidence.

According to the Year Book issued by the Manchester Presbytery, the chapel at Wigan was erected in 1777. That is, at least, doubtful. At any rate it will be shown later that there is good reason for supposing that the interest here is earlier than that. The minister of Hindley Chapel about this time was the Rev. Wm. Davenport. In a previous section<sup>1</sup> it was stated how Mr. Davenport sought to transfer the endowments from Hindley Chapel to Wigan; also, how he left Hindley for Wigan, becoming thus, probably, its first minister. Together with Wigan he had charge of Tunley until the time of his death in August, 1791. It is necessary to point out that at this time the chapel at Wigan was similar in character to the old Presbyterian Chapels throughout the county, and therefore not Presbyterian in the sense in which it now is. Whether or not it was what is termed orthodox is difficult to determine. In "The Manchester Socinian Controversy" it is said that both Wigan and Tunley were built by the "orthodox and are endowed."<sup>2</sup> That is undoubtedly true of Tunley, but it is not so certain about Wigan. I suspect that Mr. Davenport, its first minister, was deeply tinged with Unitarian-

<sup>1</sup> Vide p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> P. 160.

ism. At any rate the point which is clear is that it stands at the time of its erection and for years afterwards in the same category as the other old Dissenting Chapels, most of which are now Unitarian. In 1773 the Provincial Assembly of Presbyterian or Unitarian ministers met in Bolton and resolved that henceforth the annual gathering should take place on the third Wednesday in June at the following places in rotation :—Manchester, Warrington, Liverpool, Chowbent, Bury, Hale, Stockport, Wigan, Ormskirk, and Bolton. That sentence proves two things, viz., that there was in existence at Wigan a Dissenting interest of some importance in 1773, and secondly that it was of the old Presbyterian order. In “The Monthly Repository” for 1826 is an obituary notice of the Rev. John Holland, of Bolton, from which the following passage is extracted :—

In the year 1791 he [Mr. Holland] engaged with his neighbours, Mr. Kirkpatrick, of Park Lane, Mr. Toulmin, of Chowbent, and Mr. Lloyd, then of Dob Lane, near Manchester, in a course of evening lectures at Wigan, on the principal points of the Unitarian controversy ; which, drawing forth the animadversions of Mr. (now Dr.) Roby, the four friends united in the publication of a series of letters to the inhabitants of Wigan ; which, having been chiefly confined to the neighbouring district, are now too much forgotten, though they well deserve a more extensive circulation.<sup>1</sup>

This was about the time of Mr. Davenport’s death, and probably the church was vacant. Whether the interest had got low, and by those efforts the four friends just named were seeking to revive it, I do not know ; but whatever else it may have been it was evidently Unitarian at the time. I imagine it was about this time that Wigan became Presbyterian in the modern acceptation of the term, but how the transfer was effected I have not ascertained. The Rev. Wm. Dinwiddie came about 1797, having, besides Wigan, charge of Tunley, which seems for a few years after Mr. Davenport’s death to have been worked separately. On the 25th of August, 1799, the celebrated Dr. Thomas Chalmers preached his first sermon in public in the Wigan Presbyterian Church, which shows that at that time it was in connection with the Church of Scotland. He was then only a youth of nineteen, “a lad o’ pregnant pairs,” having been licensed on the 31st of July previous. The following Sabbath

<sup>1</sup> P. 496.

*THE OLDEST TOMBSTONE.*

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he preached at Liverpool. The reader is referred to the account of Tunley<sup>1</sup> for further information respecting Mr. Dinwiddie. His successor was the Rev. Mr. McKenzie, and next came the Rev. D. Lawson, who, in 1843, removed to Carlisle. The Rev. S. Cathcart (now Dr. Cathcart) preached his first sermon as settled minister at Wigan to a "very small audience" on May 26th, 1844, and his last on August 9th, 1846. During his brief ministry the audience grew, the church was renovated, and the Sunday School increased. He left for Harbottle Presbyterian Church, where he remained nearly twenty-five years, becoming, in 1870, an Association Secretary of the Religious Tract Society for Scotland, which post he still holds. His successor at Wigan was a Rev. Mr. Radcliffe, who remained but a short time, being followed by the Rev. J. Harvey. On removing to Maryport, in Cumberland, he was succeeded by the Rev. David Blythe. The Rev. S. Dicconson (now in Australia) was the next minister. It was during his time that the church was rebuilt. The Rev. W. A. Rodgers, who became a Congregationalist, was the immediate predecessor of the present minister, Rev. E. Franks, who was ordained at Manchester in June, 1859, inducted at Hebburn in May, 1878, and at Wigan in July, 1881.

The chapel stood in the lane or street to which it has given its name. According to a painting of it preserved in the vestry of the present church, it was a brick building almost square, and had five windows in front with diamond-shaped panes. It stood until 1877, when it was taken down, and upon the site the present church was erected. The main entrance fronts Chapel Lane, and over it is a small gallery. The pulpit is at the opposite end, and is a beautiful object. It is made of stone, let in with marble. The church, which has a handsome interior, was beautified by Mr. John Lea and Sons a few years ago, and will seat about 700 people.

Close by are the schools, built in 1851, enlarged in 1883, and a second time enlarged a couple of years ago. There is a tall, handsome tower to the church, which forms a conspicuous object. A small graveyard also adjoins the building, the oldest tombstone in which is to the memory of Robert, son of Robert and Hannah Cockran, who died January 7th, 1776. This, together with a fact

<sup>1</sup> Vide p. 32.

previously given, suggests an earlier date than 1777 for the foundation of the church. During the ministry of Mr. Franks, besides considerable improvements in the building, the sum of nearly £4,000 has been raised towards paying off a heavy debt that was upon it. The church property is worth over £7,000.

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#### XI. —WIGAN: ST. PAUL'S CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

SAINT PAUL'S, which is the older of the two Congregational Churches in Wigan, in point of age stands side by side with the Presbyterian Church, whose history has just been given. Exactly how and when it originated is not clear; we only know that considerably over a century has gone since the first preachers began their ministrations here. The Rev. William Roaf says:—

“Who first introduced our principles to Wigan we scarcely know. . . . There is a strong probability that our congregation is instrumentally indebted for its existence to the congregation assembling at Tunley Chapel, Mossy Lee, near Standish.”<sup>1</sup>

What this strong “probability” is I am ignorant of, and doubt if that may be regarded as a proper explanation of its origin. Dr. Halley's statement is even less satisfactory. “In Wigan,” he says, “as in Preston, Congregationalism originated in Calvinistic Methodism. In 1786 [should be 1785] a chapel was erected in Standishgate, and received from its supporters a name which the old Dissenters would have pronounced with horror or grief, ‘St. Paul's Chapel.’”<sup>2</sup> Dr. Halley does not go far enough. Before the advent of Mr. Johnson (whom Dr. Halley had in mind), in 1783, there was a congregation which needs to be accounted for. It is much more likely that here as in so many other places Congregationalism is a protest against Unitarianism. When the older interest in Wigan and those at Hindley, Park Lane, and Tunley left the faith the few who remained steadfast would set up worship for themselves. The names of some of the earliest preachers to this congregation have been preserved: Revs. L.

<sup>1</sup> “Ebenezer,” published in 1846, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> “Lancashire Puritanism and Nonconformity,” vol. ii., p. 469.

*PREACHING IN THE "CALENDER."* 75

Redmayne, of Horwich, I. Sharp, of St. Helens, and J. Toothill, of Rainford. These were all Congregational ministers, and the years covered by them would be about 1777-1783. "They frequently came here," says Mr. Roaf, "and preached in a large room at the Bear's Paw. After using it for a few years the congregation removed, and worshipped in a house on the spot where your present minister resides; thence it again removed to Church Street, to a building first called the 'Calender,' and afterwards 'Luz,' and which being remodelled is now St. George's Schoolroom. There it was that the congregation acquired a 'local habitation and a name.'"<sup>1</sup> The same authority tells us that the pulpit was supplied for some time by students from Rotherham, also that the Rev. Edward Parsons, for many years afterwards at Leeds, was one of the candidates for the pulpit. During his visits an incident occurred, which, Mr. Roaf says, "gave a new impetus to the rising congregation. A gentleman of great influence, though not the Mayor as many affirm, went on a Sunday morning to the place of meeting and created a disturbance. During the sermon he asked the preacher by what right he dared to preach. Mr. Parsons asked him by what right he dared to disturb the service, and threatened him with legal proceedings, the place and the preacher both having been prudently licensed. The professional gentleman was frightened, and asked forgiveness. He, however, determined, if possible, to suppress the conventicle altogether, and for this purpose went to London, in order to confer with 'the powers that be.' While there he died. This was said by many to have been a judgment. Great excitement was caused, and on each succeeding Sunday crowds went to the place."<sup>2</sup> In 1783 the Rev. John Johnson came to Wigan, being sent by the Countess of Huntingdon. He was born at Norwich, and educated at Trevecca. After itinerating in different parts of England he was stationed at Wigan, as already stated. His early ministrations were in the "Calender," where the congregation grew considerably. On July 17th, 1785, Lady Huntingdon's Chaplain—the Rev. Mr. Wills—whilst on a tour amongst the congregations belonging to the Connexion, visited Wigan. In the morning he preached in the "Calender," and in the

<sup>1</sup> "Ebenezer," p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

evening on a table in the Market Place, his subject being "The Good Samaritan." "The audience," says Mr. Roaf, "amounted to six thousand souls. One Arian minister was present, two clergymen, and many Catholics. The whole town was moved. On the following evening he preached the first sermon that ever was heard within our walls, from Hag. ii., 9. The roof was not on the building, nor was the floor laid. He commenced by giving out the fine hymn by Cowper—

"Jesus, where'er thy people meet."

The Mayor of the borough was present, and several of the gentry of the neighbourhood."<sup>1</sup> The chapel was opened by Mr. Johnson himself in the autumn of 1785. In agreement with Lady Huntingdon's wishes a liturgical service was used, as were also a surplice and gown. A reading desk stood before the pulpit, together with a stone altar. Mr. Johnson did not confine his labours to Wigan, but amongst other places he preached frequently at Chorley<sup>2</sup> and Bretherton, where he endured many hardships. After some five or six years' ministry at Wigan he removed to Tyldesley, "where he erected another chapel, the expense of which, though vested in trustees for the use of the congregation, had laid very considerably upon himself." He next crossed the Atlantic to take charge of an orphan-house which belonged to the Countess of Huntingdon, and on being deprived illegally of this property he returned to Tyldesley. Here he was thrown into prison, because he was unable to pay a certain sum of money which had been borrowed for the erection of the chapel. Mr. Johnson eventually removed from Tyldesley to St. George's Church, Manchester, where he continued to labour until his death, which took place on the 22nd of September, 1804. Some time before his removal from Wigan Mr. Johnson had associated with him in ministerial work the Rev. William Roby. He was born at Haigh, near Wigan, on March 23rd, 1766, and received his early training at the Wigan Grammar School. He was converted under the preaching of Mr. Johnson, and at an early age obtained the classical mastership of an endowed school at Bretherton. Whilst here he frequently preached unto the people

<sup>1</sup> "Ebenezer," p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Vide vol. ii. of this work, p. 12.



in the village and in the district around ; but, owing to the opposition of the clergyman, he resigned his position, and was admitted a student of Lady Huntingdon's College at Trevecca. He remained only six weeks. For some time he was resident at Worcester, but eventually was invited to become Mr. Johnson's assistant at Wigan, becoming sole pastor of the church when Mr. Johnson removed to Tyldesley. It was during the time of the co-pastorate that the chapel was enlarged by the erection of galleries. In 1795 Mr. Roby removed to Manchester, and became pastor of the Cannon Street Congregational Church there. In 1807 the spacious chapel in Grosvenor Street superseded the Cannon Street Chapel, and at this place Mr. Roby continued until his death on January 11th, 1830. He was interred in the burial ground of the chapel where he had so long laboured, upwards of 2,000 persons being present at the funeral service, which was conducted by the Rev. Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool. Few men have done more for Lancashire Congregationalism and for religion generally than Mr. Roby. Much might be written in praise of him. The Roby Day and Sunday Schools in connection with the Grosvenor Street Chapel, fifty years ago described as "one of the most elegant and complete educational edifices in the empire," are a memorial of him. Whilst at Manchester he trained some fifteen young men for the ministry, his chapel vestry being used as a lecture room, and the expense being borne by Robert Spear, Esq. This effort did something in the way of preparing for the present Lancashire Independent College. Mr. Roby was the author of several small works ; but the "frequency of his preaching, and other concerns immediately connected with his pastoral office, having left but a small portion of time for the employment of his pen, he hesitated to engage in any voluminous work."<sup>1</sup>

The chapel at Wigan continued to be supplied for some time after Mr. Roby's removal by ministers belonging to Lady Huntingdon's Connexion, and about midsummer, 1796, from that body came the Rev. Joseph Kerby to fill up the vacant pastorate. He had previously been about twelve months at Atherstone, and after labouring at Wigan for three years he removed to Heckmondwike Lower Congregational

<sup>1</sup> "Evangelical Magazine" for 1830, p. 140.

Chapel, thence to Flockton, and afterwards to Lewes. "Three children," it is said, "were born to him while he resided at Heckmondwike, and he had a large family when he came."<sup>1</sup> During his stay at Wigan he published a small volume of hymns selected from different authors for the use of his congregation, as a supplement to Watts'. It was about this time that the Wigan people, having "become tired of the change of ministers which formed a part of the plan of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion . . . resolved to abandon it, as also to introduce the purely Independent form of Church government."<sup>2</sup> For this purpose the Rev. Jehoiada Brewer, of Sheffield, came to preach for a Sabbath, taking as his subjects—"Precious faith" in the morning; "Precious blood of Christ" at the communion service in the afternoon; and "Precious promises" in the evening. "The congregation," writes Mr. Roaf, "was delighted with the free method of conducting the devotional exercises, the reading desk was soon removed, the robes were abandoned."<sup>3</sup> The next minister was the Rev. Daniel Fleming, who was trained at the Mile End Academy. He settled first at Nuneaton in 1792, and on the 6th of August in the year following was there ordained. He remained until 1800, when he resigned, but the date of his settlement at Wigan is not known. His preaching is said to have "attracted a great number of Scotchmen," but "domestic troubles induced him soon to remove." He was at Worcester for some time, and afterwards at Bradford, Wilts, where he closed his ministry with his death in 1830.<sup>4</sup> His successor at Wigan was the Rev. Jos. Parkin, born at Sheffield, January 6th, 1780, and educated at Rotherham College. He entered upon his ministerial duties at Wigan in August, 1803, being ordained on Wednesday, August 22nd, 1804. A very promising career was cut short by his death on the 8th of February, 1809. His last appearance in the pulpit was on the 18th of December, 1808, when he preached from Heb. iii., 1. "He had scarcely strength to ascend the pulpit," writes his biographer, "or, when there, to sustain himself. His thoughts were luminously arranged, and it

<sup>1</sup> "Nonconformity in Spen Valley," by Frank Peel, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> "Ebenezer," p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Sibree's "Independency in Warwickshire," p. 210.

*DEATH, EARLY AND SUDDEN.*

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was evident that he felt his subject, but his voice was feeble, and all present were persuaded that this was his last public effort. After the service, whilst the congregation were separating, he stood pensively, leaning on his desk, for a few minutes, as though he were taking his solemn farewell of the place where he had delighted to publish the salvation of Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> He died on Wednesday, February 8th, 1809, and was interred in the graveyard belonging to the chapel on the following Sabbath, the Rev. William Hacking, from Darwen, officiating. Upon his tombstone is the following inscription :—

In Memory  
of the  
Rev. JOSEPH PARKIN,  
Who died  
Feb. 8th, 1809.

Zeal in his Master's service, and love to perishing sinners, prompted him to such exertions as brought on a gradual decline, which finished his short but active career in the 29th year of his life, having been nearly six years a patient and faithful pastor of the Church of Christ in this place.

His wife, ELIZABETH PARKIN, died on December 3rd, 1817, aged 31 years.

The next minister was the Rev. Alexander Steill, who was born at Portsea, February 24th, 1768, and trained at Gosport by the Rev. Dr. Bogue. His first charge was at Winchester, where he was ordained September 10th, 1793. After five years' service at this place he removed to Kidderminster, and towards the end of 1809 settled at Wigan. For twenty-one years he continued his labours at St. Paul's, his pastorate terminating with his life. From his Memoir the following account of his end is taken :—

He did indeed feel himself unequal to the discharge of his official duties, and had formed the intention of immediately resigning his pastoral charge, and had proposed, on the following Sabbath, to preach his farewell discourse to his people. This sermon was prepared from that impressive passage, I. Peter i., 24, 25, “All flesh is grass,” &c. The morning had arrived on which it was to have been delivered; he was in his study preparing for the solemn, and to him most trying, service, when he was suddenly arrested by the hand of disease, the forerunner, after a lapse of ten months, of the stroke of death.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Ebenezer,” p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> “Evangelical Magazine” for 1833, p. 142.

He died on the 23rd of March, 1832, and was interred in the chapel graveyard. His tombstone is thus inscribed :—

Sacred to the memory of  
MARY,  
Late wife of the  
Rev. Alexander Steill,  
Minister of this chapel,  
Who departed this life,  
April 24th, 1829,  
Aged 60 years.

Also  
The Rev. ALEXANDER STEILL,  
Who departed this life,  
23rd March, 1832,  
Aged 64 years.  
He faithfully preached the Gospel in this chapel  
21 years.  
The memory of the just is blessed.

It is recorded that he left behind “one of the first private libraries in the kingdom.”

The Rev. Thomas Atkin followed Mr. Steill. He was born at Warrington, and was the son of the Rev. Daniel Atkin, for many years a Congregational minister in different parts of Lancashire. Thomas Atkin was trained partly at Rotherham and partly at the University of Glasgow. His first charge was at Wigan, where he was ordained on Wednesday, August 7th, 1833, the Revs. W. R. Dawes, of Ormskirk ; John Kelly, of Liverpool ; W. Alexander, of Churchtown ; Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool ; Wm. Jones, of Bolton ; and D. A. Jones, of Chorley, taking part in the service. After six years he removed to Glossop, where he laboured until his death on January 30th, 1876, aged sixty-nine years. The Rev. William Roaf succeeded Mr. Atkin in 1839. He was trained at Highbury College, and settled first at Ellesmere, in Shropshire. He was there ordained on November 11th, 1829, and amongst the ministers taking part in the service were his father, who offered the ordination prayer, and his brother, who gave to him “a most able and affectionate charge.” In the *Evangelical Magazine* for 1839<sup>1</sup> is an interesting account of his valedictory services on leaving this

<sup>1</sup> P. 444.

*THE REV. WM. ROAF.*

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place for Wigan. Amongst the many gifts he received in parting from his people was an elegant writing desk from the children of the Sunday School, thus inscribed :—

A  
MEMORIAL OF GRATITUDE  
to the  
Rev. W. ROAF,  
from the Children of the Sunday Schools  
at  
Ellesmere,  
whose temporal and eternal welfare  
he had so much at heart,  
June 30th, 1839.

The Church at Wigan from various causes having fallen into an unhealthy state, Mr. Roaf was anxious that it should be dissolved and a new beginning made. "This," says he, "was happily effected by its own resolution. The chapel also was closed for a few Sabbaths, and then re-opened with the commencement of my stated ministry. After a lapse of a few months, a new Church of about half-a-dozen members was formed." An interesting gathering took place at St. Paul's on New Year's Day, 1845, which deserves to be recorded here. Its object was the presentation of a communion service, "purchased by the cheerful subscriptions of every member of the church at St. Paul's Chapel," to the church at Philippolis, South Africa, of which the late Rev. P. Wright, formerly a member of St. Paul's, had been pastor. The service bore this inscription :—

Presented  
By the Independent Church at St. Paul's Chapel,  
Wigan, England  
(in Memory of the late Rev. P. Wright, who with his excellent  
widow were originally its members),  
To the Independent Church at Philippolis, South Africa,  
As a token of Christian love.  
Jan. 1st, 1845.

The following hymns, composed for the occasion, were sung :—  
"The Jubilee," "The Church's Address to Mrs. Wright," "The Separation." The account states that it was expected the congre-

gation would present Mrs. Wright before her departure with a "box of articles likely to be useful in advancing Christianity and civilisation in South Africa."<sup>1</sup> For over thirty years Mr. Roaf continued his ministry at St. Paul's. During part of that time he filled the office of Secretary to the Executive Committee of the Lancashire Congregational Union, and there was scarcely a station in the county which was not "visited and assisted by his kindly counsels."<sup>2</sup> Nor was he idle with his pen, as the numerous treatises which bear his name testify. He preached his last sermon on January 9th, 1870, and died on the 7th of March following. His remains also lie in the graveyard of the chapel, and upon his tombstone we read : —

In  
Remembrance  
of the  
Rev'd. WILLIAM ROAF,  
for 30 years the Beloved Minister of  
this Chapel,  
who died March 7th, 1870, aged 67 years.  
"And God shall wipe away all  
tears from their eyes."

The Rev. Francis George Collier, son of the Rev. James Collier, and educated at Lancashire College, was ordained in 1871 as minister at St. Paul's. In 1875 he removed to New Chapel, Horwich, but this charge failing health compelled him to resign on August 23rd, 1879. Disease carried him away on March 30th, 1881, at the early age of thirty-four years, and the denomination lost a promising minister. The Rev. R. D. Hutchison, from Levenshulme, held the pastorate a few weeks in 1874. His successor was the Rev. John Emmett Jones, who was born at Ormskirk, on January 31st, 1839. His training for the ministry was received at New College, and his first settlement was at Park Chapel, Cheetham Hill, Manchester. In 1871 he succeeded the Rev. Wm. Braden, at Hill House Congregational Church, Huddersfield. Impaired health led him to retire after a three years' ministry, and for a short time he resided at

<sup>1</sup> "Evangelical Magazine" for 1845, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> "Congregational Year Book" for 1871, p. 340.

Southport. In 1875 he became minister of St. Paul's, but died suddenly on Monday, January 31st, 1876, on his thirty-seventh birthday. He was interred at Wigan, like many of his predecessors, and his tombstone is thus inscribed :—

In  
Remembrance  
of the  
Rev. JOHN EMMETT JONES,  
Pastor of this Church, who, after a brief ministry, was  
suddenly called to his reward,  
January 31st, 1876,  
Aged 37 years.  
“He walked with God, and was not, for God took him.”

The Rev. Hugh Campbell, M.A., educated at New College, and who had previously laboured at Dumfries, followed Mr. Jones in 1878. He resigned in 1882, and, entering the scholastic profession, he is now known as Dr. Campbell, the esteemed Rector of the Falkirk Academy. In the following year he was succeeded by the present minister, Rev. T. Wilkinson, also from New College.

The chapel, whose history has thus been sketched, is in Standishgate, on slightly rising ground going up Wigan Lane. It is well protected by a wall and iron railings, and has in front a large graveyard well filled with memorials of the dead. The date-stone, 1785, is in its front, and the building is entered by a handsome portico. To the right and left of the vestibule are stairs leading into the gallery. The pulpit faces one on entering, and to its left is a small vestry whose walls are ornamented with portraits of Nonconformist worthies. Below the pulpit is the communion, behind it the organ. The chapel is galleried on three sides, and well lighted. It is a lofty, comfortable looking building, and has undergone no serious alterations since its erection over a century ago. It has recently been cleaned and painted, and so for a plain building looks quite inviting. Behind it and about its size is a brick building used as a Day and Sunday School. Its front is thus inscribed :—

St. Paul's Independent School,  
Erected 1849, enlarged 1865.

Behind the school building is the chapel-keeper's house and the commodious manse. There are not many churches of its age whose history is more pleasant reading than St. Paul's; and it is to be hoped that during the second century of its existence it will continue to exercise a beneficial influence upon the town in which it is situated.

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## XII.—WIGAN: HOPE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

PREFIXED to the Church Book belonging to this place is a somewhat lengthy and interesting account of the origin of the second Congregational Church in Wigan, by Mr. Edmund Alston, one of the first members of Hope Chapel, and a deacon and trustee. In the summer of 1810, when the Rev. Alexander Steill was minister at St. Paul's, he says :—

Uneasiness among the congregation broke out in various forms. . . . Many of the people left the place and assembled for worship in rooms, and some went to the Baptist Chapel, a place of worship that had been erected some years previously in consequence of a separation that had taken place from St. Paul's immediately after Mr. Roby left Wigan. The then minister of the Baptist interest was considered a very pious and sincere man, and had in other places been the instrument of doing more good in the cause of religion than some who possessed greater talents as preachers. It may be proper to remark here that the separatists from St. Paul's Chapel were characters of various degrees of religious sentiment, some of the Antinomian cast, others nearly allied to those views; yet there were many whose principles might be considered moderate and scriptural.

Beyond what is stated in the preceding paragraph the writer of these historical notes gives no information of the actual reason for the secession from St. Paul's. He says that the Baptist Chapel for some time was "the principal place of resort" for the seceding party, but, "considering the restless tempers of several," it could not be "expected they would be held long together there." In 1812 the Rev. John Ralph came to Wigan. He had been minister at Stone, in Staffordshire, from November, 1790, to December, 1795; and at Cleckheaton, in Yorkshire, for about five years, when



*THE REV. JOHN RALPH.*

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he removed to Bethesda Chapel, Liverpool. In 1808, "in consequence of charges made against the pastor," a division took place, and Mr. Ralph eventually withdrew. On his coming to Wigan, it is said, "he was made the rallying point by several who had left St. Paul's Chapel." Mr. Alston continues:—



*Rev.<sup>d</sup> John Ralph.*

Immediately after Mr. Ralph came to Wigan, and after he had preached a few times in a room used for a school, in the Mesnes Lane, a large room was taken adjoining the Bear's Paw Inn. In the course of a few months there were many hearers collected under Mr. Ralph's ministry. His labours certainly were attended with considerable usefulness, which served to remove in a great measure that dislike which existed at his first appearance in Wigan.

In the month of October, 1817, the trustees and managers of the Methodist interest in Wigan had thoughts of disposing of their chapel, and the Hope Chapel people endeavoured to purchase it. It was, however, eventually found that the building could not be sold to another denomination. At length the committee appointed for the purpose succeeded in leasing a plot of land, 500 square yards in extent, in Mesnes Lane, from Messrs. Bretherton and Tennant, joint proprietors. They issued an appeal to "the inhabitants of Wigan and its vicinity, who, with a liberality unbiassed by party or sectarian spirit, have ever manifested a disposition to promote any place or institution which may tend to the general benefit of society." The following passage is extracted from that appeal :—

About £160 have been subscribed, a part of which has been paid, and is now deposited in the Wigan bank. In the list of those who have benevolently pledged themselves to assist us we observe, with great pleasure, some of all the religious denominations in this town; this plainly shows what cannot be too strongly insisted on, that the true spirit of Christianity is not confined to any one sect. At first our views were to purchase a commodious chapel, which we were given to understand at that time was to be disposed of; but, being disappointed of this, we have ventured to agree for a piece of ground, in the Mesnes Lane, on a lease of nine hundred and ninety-nine years, and to contract for building a place of worship thereon, capable of seating about five hundred persons, which, we hope, will be finished in the course of the ensuing summer. This building, with the most economical management, will cost not less than £450, probably somewhat more. Towards this sum our own congregation will continue their exertions to do what they can; but, unconnected as they are with any particular denomination, and even with that among which they might naturally be expected to rank themselves, we again, on their behalf, solicit your generous assistance. In this appeal to you we think ourselves obliged freely to state what is the religious profession of the society for whose use and accommodation this building is intended, and what are their views. Their *doctrine* is in perfect *harmony* with that of the Established Church of England, as it is declared in her *ritual* and *homilies*.

This document contains no date, but it would be issued about 1817 or 1818. Donations were to be received by the Rev. John Ralph, Rodney Street, and Edmund Alston and John Glover, of Market Place. It was signed by the following persons :—

John Ralph,  
Edmund Alston,  
George Marsh,  
Thomas Roby,  
John Glover, Treasurer,

Robert Leech,  
Thomas Latimer,  
John Bancks,  
John Baron,  
John Prescott.

The chapel was finished and opened on August 30th, 1818, on which occasion the sum of about £30 was collected. It is described as being then five yards high and without gallery, and the expense of fitting up raised the first estimate very considerably. The seats were speedily all taken. In 1820 the chapel was raised and three galleries were put in, which nearly doubled the original cost. It was re-opened August 20th, 1820, when the Rev. Wm. Marshall, then at Macclesfield, was the preacher, and the collections amounted to nearly £40. Many difficulties appeared in the way of this new interest, and Mr. Ralph's health declining he resigned in 1822. "A subscription was set on foot," says the Church Book, "and in half an hour from the time of its first being mentioned to the congregation £68 was subscribed by the people in the chapel. This transaction took place on Sabbath, May 11th, 1822. The sum was afterwards augmented to nearly £100, which, in addition to £100 which he possessed previously, was intended by himself to be laid out in cottages towards his future support." Mr. Ralph did not, however, live to carry out this intention. He died in three hours time, on the 4th of August following, occasioned by the bursting of a blood vessel. At the desire of his family he was interred in front of Hope Chapel, the trustees being induced to permit this "from respect to his memory." The Rev. Wm. Marshall was chosen as Mr. Ralph's successor in 1822. The choice led to a secession of four members of the Committee of Management, and these took with them thirteen out of the fifty church members. For a time they had separate worship, but the numbers eventually dwindled almost entirely away. Mr. Marshall was born in Glasgow, December 31st, 1792, and educated in the University there. He entered upon ministerial work at Macclesfield in 1815, and whilst there frequently supplied at Wigan. This led to his being invited to succeed Mr. Ralph. He continued to have sole charge of the place until 1858, when failing health led him to suggest a co-pastor. The Rev. W. H.

New was appointed. Mr. Marshall still took one service and did a considerable share of pastoral work, but he relinquished all remuneration from the church. In 1860 Mr. New resigned, and the burden of the pastorate again fell upon Mr. Marshall. On the 22nd of August, 1861, he died, and was interred by his old friend, the Rev. Francis Skinner, Presbyterian minister, of Blackburn, in the Wigan Cemetery. His brother, the Rev. John Marshall, was for many years pastor of the Congregational Church at Over, in Cheshire. Mr. Marshall continued the historical account in the Church Book from the death of Mr. Ralph, the point at which it was left by Mr. Alston. Many items of interest are there preserved, a few of which may be inserted. In 1826 several friends of Hope Chapel resolved to commence a Sunday School in Scholes, which is said to contain "a population of from 5,000 to 7,000 human beings, who are endowed with an immortal soul, destined either to endless happiness or misery; and yet amid this dense mass of accountable creatures there is not an institution of any kind whatever, of a public nature, for their moral instruction." This school, for the education of poor children of all denominations, was opened on Sunday, October 15th, 1826, and on the 31st of January following there are said to be upon its books 450 children who "look up to it for instruction."<sup>1</sup> Soon after this, Mr. Marshall says, "the establishment of a regular sermon at a room fitted up for the purpose on Aspull Moor, a hamlet about three miles from Wigan, had its

<sup>1</sup> There is still a small schoolroom at this place which serves for mission purposes; and in the "Lancashire Congregational Calendar" for 1866-7 Scholes' Church appears with sitting accommodation for 200, having as minister the Rev. T. Griffith. He remained here several years, but during that period the church is "starred" as not connected with the Union. It will be convenient here also to say that there is, or at least was until about four years ago, another Congregational Chapel in Wigan, known as "Silverwell." The place originated in a secession from St. Paul's over twenty years ago. The Rev. H. Davies was settled here in 1873, and he remained some four or five years. Subsequently the Rev. A. Heal, afterwards of Orrell, laboured here a short time and then the Rev. Joseph Whitton had charge of the place along with Orrell. The building, which had accommodation for some 300 people, was sold to the M. S. & L. Railway Company about four years ago.

birth with Hope Chapel." It is, however, only proper to say that in April, 1827, it is stated that the Rev. Wm. Turner, of Hindley, "had formerly often preached" there, and in the summer of 1827 it is further stated that he took a farm at a low rent in this place, and preached in it on the week-day evenings; but as it was in a most dilapidated state he found it necessary to appeal to the friends or the Redeemer at a distance, and by their liberality he was enabled to put it in complete repair.<sup>1</sup> Services were given up at Aspull in 1832. A very interesting item appears in Mr. Marshall's review for 1831. "The chapel in Chapel Lane in this town," says he, "and that of Tunley, beyond Standish, have this year in the providence of God been cast under the care of this church and congregation, and new trust deeds made for them, so as to secure them for the use of gospel ministers."<sup>2</sup> In the record for 1845 Mr. Marshall says:—

"The scholars may be said to have increased nearly one half within the year. A considerable effort has been made by the friends of the cause to improve the chapel and enlarge the school. The latter object has been accomplished, and the school is now capable of accommodating nearly 300 children. The other object is only in abeyance, and it is hoped that 1846 will see it realised."

At this juncture it will be convenient to say that the "Lancashire Congregational Calendar" gives the date of the formation of the church at Hope Chapel as 1812; but this is not certain. That was the date when Mr. Ralph settled in Wigan, but the records are silent as to the year of the church's formation. The only certain thing is that it was some time (I imagine not long) before 1822. Year by year Mr. Marshall gives a list of those ministers

<sup>1</sup> Lancashire County Union Report, ending April, 1828.

<sup>2</sup> That is quite a new fact in the history of those two churches, and its precise significance is not clear. Mr. Dinwiddie was minister at the time. Mr. James, in his book on Presbyterian Chapels and Charities, classes Wigan and Tunley amongst those chapels which formerly belonged to the Independents, but were carried over to Presbyterianism by their ministers. I have already shown that they were originally of the same character as the other old Dissenting foundations in Lancashire, but when and how their transfer to modern Presbyterianism was effected there is no available documentary evidence to show.

who preached at Hope Chapel besides himself, and amongst them were many Scotchmen and Presbyterians, from which one would infer that he had some sort of liking for that denomination. Nor does Hope Chapel appear in the list of Congregational Churches until about the year 1846. Whether, indeed, any application was made for admission to the Lancashire Congregational Union I have not been able to ascertain. Up to this point it would seem that Hope Chapel, whilst Congregational in the fullest sense of the word, remained unattached. The Rev. W. C. Preston was chosen as Mr. Marshall's successor in 1862. He was educated at Lancashire College, and began ministerial work in 1858 at Kirkdale, Liverpool, whence he removed to Wigan. He resigned in 1865, and for some time remained in Wigan without charge. His next pastorate was at Hope Street, Hull; he is now labouring at Chiswick High Road, London. The Rev. J. E. Mountford followed Mr. Preston at Hope Chapel in 1866. He was educated at New College, and began his ministry at Uxbridge in 1862. He resigned in 1871, and went to reside in London without charge. The Rev. H. J. Senior, educated at Airedale College, and who began his ministry in 1867 at Ovenden, in Yorkshire, removed from this place to Wigan in 1872. He left in 1875, and after a few years settled at Goole, in Yorkshire. He resigned his charge at this place in 1889. The Rev. J. E. Mountford again took the oversight of the church at Wigan in 1876, and resigned in 1880, his successor being the Rev. P. W. Darnton, B.A. He was a fellow-student with Mr. Mountford at New College, and had previously laboured at Newport, in Monmouthshire, and Chester. He began his Wigan ministry in 1880, and ceased it in 1886, removing to Clifton Down, Bristol, where he still labours. The Rev. Joseph Jones, M.A., trained at Brecon College, and whose first charge was Airdrie, in Scotland (1885-1887) succeeded Mr. Darnton in 1887. For several years a new chapel had been felt to be desirable, and with the commencement of Mr. Jones's ministry the matter was taken vigorously in hand. The site of the old chapel was sold to the Corporation for £4,000, and services were held for the last time in the building on July 31st, 1887, when the pastor preached appropriate sermons to large congregations. The "Lancashire Congregational Calendar" for 1888 says:—

## THE WORK OF DEMOLITION.

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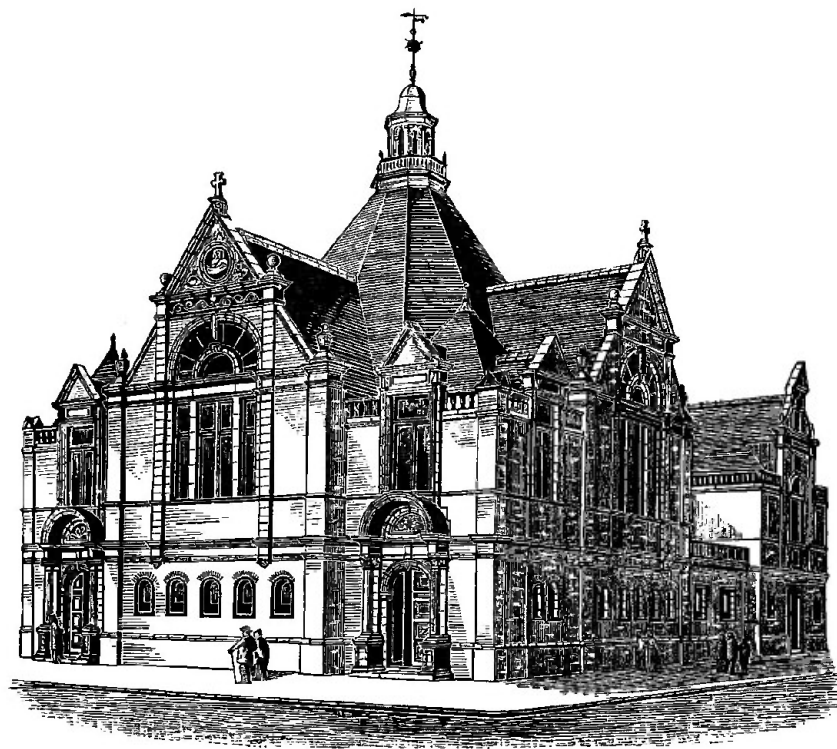
Early on the following morning (Monday, August 1st) the work of demolition commenced, and in a few weeks the venerable, though exceedingly inconvenient and ugly structure had entirely disappeared. The remains of the Rev. John Ralph (the first pastor of the Church), which had lain in a vault here under one of the vestibules, were exhumed and re-interred in the Borough Cemetery. The organ was sold to the friends at Orrell Congregational Church, and with the object of obtaining funds wherewith to purchase a new one, a bazaar was held in December last (1887), and realised the sum of £410 net.

A site for the new building was obtained about sixty or seventy yards from the old one, and the foundation stone laid August 16th, 1888. The chapel was completed and opened for worship on December 1st, 1889, when Mr. Jones preached in the morning, the Rev. W. G. Heritage conducted a Children's Service in the afternoon, and in the evening the preacher was the Rev. Dr. Falding, Principal of Rotherham College. The collections for the day amounted to £246 5s. 6d. In connection with the opening services a public meeting was held on December 5th, presided over by Mr. Henry Lee, J.P., of Manchester, the speakers being the Revs. Dr. Thomas, of Liverpool; Principal Scott, of Lancashire College; J. McDougall, of Manchester; and J. Chater, of Southport. On the following Sunday (December 8th) the Rev. Principal Simon, M.A., Ph.D., of Edinburgh, was the preacher, and the Rev. Dr. Bruce, of Huddersfield, on December 11th.

The following descriptive sentences of the new building are copied largely from a local paper: The style of the architecture is an adaptation of an Italian *renaissance*. The design is a combination of an octagon and Greek cross. Externally the building is faced with parpoints from Upholland quarries, and the dressings are all of Halifax freestones, while the roof is covered with Vellenihelli slates. On the front is to be found some excellent stone carving, the work of Mr. Davies, of London. Looking towards the cross which stands at the top of the main gable, the beholder will find the main pediment for the large semi-circular window filled in with a panel containing a carved bust of the poet Milton, which is supported in the spandrels by angels and a dove with palm leaves in the apex. Over the two entrances in Hope Street, which are the only public inlets to the church, may be found some interesting carving. The columns supporting the entrances are of blue Yorkshire stone with carved capitals, and

covered by a moulded stone hood. In the entrance to the right may be found beneath the hood a semi-circular panel filled in with chaste carving, in which the sacred monogram I.H.S. (Jesus the Saviour of Men) stands forth with due prominence. Over the other entrance underneath the hood in the semi-circular panel there is a representation of the Bible, beneath which is an angel's head surrounded by foliage. The apex of the roof is crowned by a lantern and surmounted by a wrought-iron finial, and inside the lantern is placed a powerful exhaust ventilator by means of which the foul air will be extracted from the interior. Inside the vestibules are two arches, one leading into the chapel, and underneath the other is the ample staircase up to the gallery. Light is admitted by four large and numerous small semi-circular headed windows, the treatment of which is strictly architectural. Each large window is framed in by two Ionic-fluted pilasters, and connected by means of a semi-circular moulded arch. The lights are of lead and the glass of cathedral tints, and the windows blend harmoniously with the rest of the colouring. The pews are all arranged in semi-circular form. They are of pitchpine, stained and varnished in a warm, rich colour, and the sittings are comfortable and spacious. The pulpit is a striking object, and its design harmonises with the rest of the fitting. It, too, is in the Italian *renaissance* style, with fluted pilasters and moulded cornices. The communion table and chairs immediately in front of the pulpit have been specially designed by the architect to harmonise with the rostrum and the rest of the fittings, and they (the Communion Table and Chairs) were the gift of Miss Leech and her Sunday School Class, while the Bible and Hymn Book, as well as the cushion for the pulpit, have been given by the Sunday School scholars. At the left of the pulpit, as one faces it, is a chamber specially designed by the architect for the large organ which is being constructed for the chapel by Messrs. Jardine, of Manchester, at a cost of some £700. The entire cost of erecting and furnishing the chapel was over £6,000. The whole was carried out from the designs of Mr. Frank W. Simon, Edinburgh, Architect for the International Exhibition, Edinburgh. The builders were Messrs. William Brown and Son, of Salford, and Mr. M. Hague, of Wigan, was the clerk of works.





HOPE STREET CHAPEL, WIGAN.

Two tablets have been transferred from the old building to the new one. The one to the left of the pulpit is inscribed thus:—

In Grateful Remembrance of  
Long continued affectionate labours,  
And as a tribute of high esteem and respect,  
This Monument is erected  
By a sorrowing congregation to the memory of  
Their much loved friend and guide  
The Rev. WILLIAM MARSHALL,  
Faithful minister of Christ during 46 years.

He was born at Glasgow, December 21st, 1792, and educated at the University of that city. In August, 1822, he became the minister of this chapel, and retained that office, fulfilling his duties with honour to himself and benefit to others, until his death, August 22, 1861. He was buried in the Wigan Cemetery. "Blessed are the dead," &c.

Mr. Marshall was about forty years minister of Hope Chapel, the figures upon the tablet being intended to cover the whole of his ministerial life. On the right of the pulpit is the other tablet, which reads thus:—

Sacred  
To the memory of  
Mr. EDMUND ALSTON,  
One of the founders of this Chapel,  
And for 28 years a deacon of the Church  
Meeting for Divine worship in this place.  
In his lifetime he was not only active in  
Promoting the best interests of religion here,  
But he gave before his death £500  
Towards the liquidation of the debt upon  
This Chapel.  
He died in Peru, 13th April, 1850,  
Aged 74 years.  
A just man and one that  
Feared God and of good report.

Acts, 10th c., 22nd v.

The name of this good man has already appeared in the foregoing sketch. He settled in Wigan about 1797, and the first Hope Chapel in Mesnes Lane is said to have been erected near the spot where he made a solemn vow that if God would grant him material prosperity he would build for Him a house of prayer. He did prosper, and he fulfilled his vow—the chapel was built largely through his exertions. The old chapel had sitting accommodation for 450 persons—the present one for 250 more.

## CHAPTER II.

### CHOWBENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD.

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#### I.—THE OLD PRESBYTERIAN CHAPEL AT CHOWBENT.<sup>1</sup>

CHOWBENT, according to Dorning Rasbotham,<sup>2</sup> is the bent, common, or sedgy field which belonged to some person of the name of Chew, or Chow. Dr. March<sup>3</sup> ridicules this explanation and thinks Chow means chough, or jackdaw.<sup>4</sup> Whichever is right, the first

<sup>1</sup> This account of Chowbent Chapel has been submitted to Mr. T. H. Hope, who for some time has been engaged writing its history. He has kindly supplied me with a number of interesting particulars, most of which appear in the form of notes.

<sup>2</sup> Baines's "History of Lancashire" (Ed. 1870), vol. ii., p. 202.

<sup>3</sup> "East Lancashire Nomenclature," p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Hope says: The Chough, however, according to Hanmer, quoted by Dr. Johnson, is a bird which frequents the rocks by the seaside like a jackdaw, but bigger.

From recent enquiries, moreover, it would appear that Dr. March's ridicule is somewhat misplaced, and that the first definition is not without some foundation; though a more probable derivation than "bent," a common, is suggested by the facts which those enquiries have disclosed. There are twenty entries of burials of "Chowe," of Atherton, in the Leigh Parish Register, between the years 1600 and 1624 inclusive. It appears also, from a deed in my possession dated the 17th day of October, in the 14th year of the reign of James the 1st (1617), that George Chowe was the occupier of a tenement which had been in the occupation of Arthur Chowe, his father; and in deeds dated a century later, the same tenement is described as late in the tenure of the same family, whose name was then spelt "Chew." Fifty years ago the post mark of Chowbent was *Chewbent*.

The name "Chowbent" was subsequently restored by the postal authorities, but a few years ago the name was again altered to Atherton. The change from *Chow* to *Chew* may be easily accounted for—the letters *o* and *e* in the MSS. of the 16th and 17th centuries being very much alike. "Chowe's" tenement was bounded on the north by the old road from

definition is at least above ridicule. A family of the name of Chew or Chowe was resident in Lancashire before the 13th century; and there was an Arthur Chowe, of Atherton, also a John Chowe, of Leigh, in the early part of the 17th century. Chowbent is a part of the Atherton Township, and of the old Leigh Parish, from which town it is distant less than three miles, and from Bolton five. Dorning Rasbotham says: "Every branch of the old fustian manufacture is carried on here. Here is also a very considerable manufactory of nails, and several families have acquired fortunes by making spinning-jennies and carding-engines, which they send into Scotland, Ireland, and different parts of this kingdom."<sup>1</sup> Its principal industries to-day are coal mining, cotton spinning, and bolt manufacturing. Solitary, thatched, odd-looking houses, and a curious market cross<sup>2</sup> yet linger about the village, and carry back the mind to a very interesting past. During the Civil Wars Chowbent gained great notoriety. Hereabouts two or three very serious encounters took place between the Royalists and Parliamentarians, resulting generally in victory for the latter. Thomas Jesland, writing from Atherton on Decem-

Warrington to Deane and Lostock, which was afterwards diverted and formed into the turnpike road to Bolton.

The road where it bounded Chowe's tenement formed a steep bent or declivity on each side of the "Chanters" Brook, and on the easterly bent or declivity, Chowe's house, which, tradition states, was a famous hostelrie, stood.

In winter, in bygone times, this *bent* was dangerous to travellers, especially after vehicles came into use, and it would naturally be well known, and bear a name in all probability derived from the special feature of the spot, and the name of the occupier of the adjoining tenement, which, in this instance, was a famous hostelrie. Numerous instances of this kind may be found in the neighbourhood. "Chequerbent," situate about two to three miles from Chowbent on the road from Manchester to Preston, is derived from "bent," a declivity which at that spot was a serious "cheque" or hindrance to the traffic. Tyldesley Banks—from Tyldesley, the family name of the then lord of the manor, and "Bank," the ridge of land on which the town of Tyldesley is built. Moreover, the old town of Chowbent was built principally on Chowe's tenement, on the sloping bents of the Chanters Brook. *Chowbent*, therefore, is equivalent to *Chowe's Hill* or *Chowe's Brow*.

<sup>1</sup> Baines's "History of Lancashire" (Ed. 1870), vol. ii., p. 202.

<sup>2</sup> The cross was taken down and rebuilt some years ago.

## BATTLE AT CHOWBENT.

97

ber 2nd, 1642, gives a quaint and interesting account of a skirmish with the Earl of Derby's troops, in which the Chowbenters played an important part. I supply the reader with the following passage :—

The last Sabbath, as wee were going towards the church, a post rode through the countrey, informing us that the Earle's troopes were comming towards the *Chowbent* : whereupon the countrey presently rose, and before one of the clocke on that day we were gathered together about 3,000 horse and foote, encountring them at *Chowbent* aforesaid, and beate them back to *Leigh*, killing some and wounding many. Where you might wonder to have seene the forwardnesse of the young youths, farmers' sons, who indeed were too forward, having had little experience of the like times before this. And so we Over-rode their Foote, being carried with a fervent desire to overtake them, and to doe some notable service upon them, so that we drove them to *Loaton* common, where they, knowing our Foote to be far behinde, turned faces about, and began to make head against us. Whereupon a sharpe, although a short, Incounter, but when they perceived our full and settled resolution, they made away as fast as their Horses could carry them, and we after them, killing, wounding, and taking prisoners about 200 of them, and we lost never a man; only we had three of our men wounded, but not mortally, so that I think they will trouble us no more out of that part of the Countrey; but if they doe, we shall be better provided for them than before, for we are all upon our Guard, and the Naylers of *Chowbent* instead of making Nayles, have busied themselves in making Bills and Battle Axes.<sup>1</sup>

No marvel that seventy years afterwards, when one of the Chowbent pastors called upon his congregation to march with him against the Scotch rebels at Preston, he found in them a very hearty response.

Thus early a brave, independent spirit animated these villagers. They were made of the stern stuff which despots fear, before which iniquitous rulers must ever go down, and upon which the glorious edifice of liberty has been erected. It was in the stirring times of the Commonwealth when the old Bent Chapel—the first place of worship in Chowbent<sup>2</sup>—was erected. The exact date cannot be given, but it was somewhere “about the year 1645,” says Mr. Franklin Baker, “that the families of the place,

<sup>1</sup> “Civil War Tracts of Lancashire” (Chetham Society Series, vol. ii.), p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> There was, bowever, a chantry here in 1360.

aided by the lord of the manor, resolved to supply a want which had long been felt in a place of worship nearer to their homes than the parish church at Leigh.”<sup>1</sup>

The body of the chapel, it is said, was erected by the people, and the chancel by John Atherton, the lord of the manor. Bishop Gastrell's account is very interesting, and so is given here in full :—

Chowbent, Atherton.—Certified anno 1705, £2 15s. od. per annum, *vide* Pap. Reg.; but certified anno 1717 by y<sup>e</sup> Vicar of Leigh y<sup>t</sup> nothing certain belongs to it that he knows of, but he hath heard y<sup>t</sup> abt £2 10s. per annum was given by Dame Mort formerly. It was built (as he hath been informed) about 1645, by y<sup>e</sup> then Lord of Buisy and his tenants, they building y<sup>e</sup> body of y<sup>e</sup> place, and he the chancell. He believes it was never consecrated, and y<sup>t</sup> it hath alwayes been possessed by Presbyterians, who, w<sup>n</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Vicar comes to officiate, quit y<sup>e</sup> place, Leaving him a large Bible and Common Prayer Book ready for Use. Mr. Atherton, the Lord of Buisy, hath now taken it from y<sup>e</sup> Dissenters, and hath proposed to y<sup>e</sup> Governors of y<sup>e</sup> Queen's Bounty to augment it. Mr. Atherton of Buisy gave £200 towards augmenting this chapel, anno 1722; and it was consecrated by the Bishop of Man, anno 1723.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Life and Times of the Rev. James Woods,” p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> “Notitia Cestriensis” (Chetham Society Series, vol. xxi.), p. 189. From the Vicar of Leigh's statement, as also from the date of erection, Mr. Franklin Baker, with good reason, concludes that this was a Presbyterian foundation from the beginning. Mr. T. H. Hope, in some recent criticisms (*Manchester City News*, for Oct., 1891) upon the inaccuracies in Croston's Edition of Baines's “History of Lancashire,” points out that the body of the chapel was built *by* the tenants and retainers of the Atherton estate, and not that the chapel was built *for* them by the Lord of the Manor, as Mr. Croston states; and so they had a large share in it. Mr. Hope has kindly furnished me with the following copy of the official record of 1717, which is a statement on oath, made by the vicar of Leigh, before Bishop Stratford, the predecessor of Bishop Gastrell :—

From the Records in the Bishop's Registry, Chester.

Wigan, May y<sup>e</sup> 24th, 1717.

The place called “Chowbent Chappell” was as we have been informed built about y<sup>e</sup> year 1645, by y<sup>e</sup> Lord of Atherton and his tenants. They building y<sup>e</sup> body of y<sup>e</sup> place, and the then Lord of Atherton, Esqr., built y<sup>e</sup> chancell. This place, we believe, was never consecrated by the Bishop, and hath ever since its foundation been in y<sup>e</sup> possession of y<sup>e</sup> Presbyterians; the Dissenting preacher's name at present is James Wood. We believe it is

The first known minister of this chapel was James Smith, who, in the report of the Parliamentary Commissioners for 1650, is described as "a very honest man, and of good lyffe and convsacion, but did not obserue the last fast day appoynted by Act of Parliament."<sup>1</sup> His salary is put down at "seaventy pounds" a year out of the Plundered Ministers' Fund. Mr. Smith had previously been at Walmsley for a short time. The Rev. James Livesey followed. He was minister at Turton Chapel in 1650,<sup>2</sup> being elected to the charge there by the "vnanimous consent of the congregacion," and is said to have been a "painfull, godly,

not certify'd according to Law. We have heard there has been £2 10s. 00d., or thereabouts, given to it by a gentlewoman called Dame Mort. It is about two miles distant from y<sup>e</sup> mother church. This is all y<sup>e</sup> acct we can give of this place. By direction from Bishop Stratford I have sometimes read Divine Service and preach'd there and I found in y<sup>e</sup> desk a Comon Prayer Book and large Bible ready to be used as oft as I came; George Ward, Vicar of Leigh.

May 24th, 1717. Mr. Ward, y<sup>e</sup> Vicar of Leigh,  
then made Oath of y<sup>e</sup> Truth  
of this Certificate before us.

THOS. WAINWRIGHT, WILL. STRATFORD.

"It will be seen," says Mr. Hope, "that the quotation by Bishop Gastrell is inaccurate in the two following particulars:—

- (a) The chancel was built by the then lord of Atherton, and not by the then lord of Buisy.

The then lord of Atherton was John Atherton, and the then lord of Buisy was Gilbert Ireland.

Buisy did not become vested in the Atherton family until the death of Margaret the widow of Sir Gilbert Ireland in 1675, she having devised it by her will to the son of John Atherton, who was her cousin.

- (b) The vicar of Leigh makes no mention of the Presbyterians quitting the place when the vicar came, and that statement in Bishop Gastrell's account appears to be an unwarrantable interpolation."

Chowbent Chapel is almost a parallel case to Hindley Chapel, and its history helps to strengthen the position which I have here assumed of its early Nonconformity.

<sup>1</sup> "Commonwealth Church Survey" (Record Society Series, vol. i.), p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> He presented a petition to the Second Classis at their meeting, February 14, 1649, for his appointment, and was ordained at Turton on the 23rd of October, 1650.

orthodox minister.”<sup>1</sup> On the 9th of February, 1651, he applied to the Second Classis for an admissory certificate into the Fourth, and became the minister of Chowbent Chapel in 1652. He removed to Great Budworth, in Cheshire, being named as vicar there in April, 1657, where he suffered ejection by the Act of Uniformity. He continued, however, to reside in the parish, and preached the funeral sermon of Adam Martindale's son in 1680. Mr. Livesey married a relative of Humphrey Chetham, the founder of Chetham's Hospital in Manchester. He was the author of several little works and two funeral sermons, one for the “Right Worshipful John Atherton, of Atherton, Esq., High Sheriff of the County Palatine of Lancaster,” printed in 1657; the other for Humphrey Chetham, who died at Turton Tower, February 13th, 1658-9. Mr. Livesey died between the 4th and 27th of February, 1681-2, his will being proved May 19th, 1682. The Rev. James Wood was the next minister. Mr. Franklin Baker makes him the first minister at Chowbent, but from the preceding it will be seen that this is not so. He was the son of the Rev. James Wood, minister of Aslton-in-Makerfield, who was ejected there in 1662. Mr. Wood, senior, appears to have been a frequent visitor at Chowbent. He was an excellent preacher, and drew after him large congregations whithersoever he went. It is said that on the Sunday after Mr. Wood had been ejected an old woman remarked concerning the new minister, as the people came out of the church, “If Mr. Wood had only gone into the pulpit and shook his grey beard over us, it would have done us more good.”<sup>2</sup> Calamy states that he died in 1688, but this is not correct. In Roger Lowe's Diary, who was a native of Ashton-in-Makerfield, are several interesting entries respecting Mr. Wood, senior. The following is decisive as to date of death:

<sup>1</sup> “Commonwealth Church Survey” (Record Society Series, vol. i.), p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Calamy's “Nonconformist's Memorial” (1802), vol. ii., p. 353. In the first edition he gives 1668, but in subsequent ones it is 1688. There is a touching account of the parting of Mr. Wood from his congregation at Ashton in Roger Lowe's Diary (p. 3):—“Thursday, March 23, 1662,” says the diarist, “Mr. Woods came to take leave of every inhabitant, and cald upon me. I went with him, and with great lamentation at his going, with advise to every family to live well.”



*THE REV. JAMES WOOD IMPRISONED.* 101

"10 February, 1666. Lord's day night dyed old Mr. James Woodes."<sup>1</sup> He was buried at Grappenhall Church, Cheshire, where was also his wife, Alice, afterwards, on January 13th, 1668. His son, James Wood, has already been named as the minister of Chowbent, whence he was ejected in 1662. Roger Lowe gives us the following items of information about Mr. James Wood, of Chowbent :—

June, 1663. 21 Lord's day. I went to Leigh and there Mr. James Woods came into church, was lately married Thursday before, and his wife was now with him.<sup>2</sup>

Jennery, 1664-5. 14 Saturday. Thomas Smith and I went to younge Mr. Woods, in Atherton, where he lived with his wife in Gyles Greenes house.<sup>3</sup>

Respecting the Sunday following there is this very interesting entry :—

"We all went to Houghton Chappell and heard Mr. Lever preach. Att noone John Hampson tooke me home with him to dinner, the next day we intended home but Mr. Woods would not suffer us, but all afternoon we shuffled at table in bent [Chowbent] there was Tho Moxon and I and Petr Twisse played with Mr. Woods and his partners we beat them."<sup>4</sup>

If over against these we put the following from "Adam Martindale's Life," bearing date 1670 :—"Mr. James Wood, of Chowbent, was caught and sent to prison,"<sup>5</sup> we shall see how many-sided the life of this early Nonconformist minister was. After the Act of Uniformity the old Bent Chapel was closed for several years, and Mr. Wood seems to have found a temporary asylum with the Mort family of Wharton Hall, an apartment in which "its worthy owner had courageously thrown open for religious services to the neighbouring villagers in spite of fines and threats often repeated."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Roger Lowe's Diary, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "Adam Martindale" (Chetham Society Series, vol. iv.), p. 193.

<sup>6</sup> "Life and Times of the Rev. James Woods" (Franklin Baker), p. 11.

Exactly when Mr. Wood resumed his ministry at the old chapel is not known, but it was probably before 1676. In the register of burials at the Leigh Parish Church appears the name of a daughter of "Mr. James Wood, minister of Atherton," under date February 19th, 1670. A deed also dated 1676 describes him as "of Atherton, clerke." These, however, do not settle the matter, and probably his ministrations at Chowbent, if permitted at all, about that time when persecution was raging through the land, would only be occasional. The Toleration Act of 1688 would, however, see him in peaceable possession, and he continued his labours at the old place until about 1695,<sup>1</sup> when he died at an advanced age.

His son, the Rev. James Wood, who had been associated with his father in the pastorate before his death, immediately succeeded him. He had been trained by the Rev. Richard Frankland, at Rathmel, whose academy he entered April 22nd, 1691. He was a most remarkable man, and his heroic action in conjunction with the Rev. John Walker, of Horwich, and the Rev. John Turner, of Preston, in the rebellion of 1715, by which he earned for himself the *sobriquet* of "General Woods," is still a common story.<sup>2</sup> Some very curious things are related about him. He was not an eloquent preacher, but he used to say "he could tell his hearers a story, and that did as well." Being on one occasion asked why he so seldom exchanged with any neighbouring minister, he replied: "Why, mon, if anybody were to come and prach better than me they'd not loik to hear me again, and if he prach'd wur it's a sheame for him to prach."<sup>3</sup> It was during his ministry that the congregation removed to the present building, which was erected

<sup>1</sup> The date given by Mr. Franklin Baker is 1699, but in the list of Lancashire and Cheshire wills preserved at Chester, and published by the Record Society, is that of "James Wood, of Atherton," whose will was proved in 1695. This was the minister above mentioned. His will was made May 11th, 1691.

<sup>2</sup> This incident is fully related in vol. i., p. 10, of this work. Mr. Wood was a young unmarried man at this time. His marriage, about two years later, is thus referred to in the "Northowram Register" (p. 211). Mr. James Wood, minr. at Chowbent, in Lanca. and—Judith Brooksbank, of Oxheys, mar. Mar. 14. [1717.]

<sup>3</sup> "Lancashire Memorials" of 1715 (Chetham Society Series, vol. v.), p. 247, note.

in 1722. How this came about may be stated in Mr. Franklin Baker's words:—

Two candidates contested the representation of the county, one in the interest of the Stuarts, the other in that of the reigning family. The former had the support of the Athertons; and they exerted all the influence they possessed over their tenantry and dependants in his behalf. But it was of little avail. They were Presbyterians; they were staunch supporters of the reigning family; many of them had been with their pastor in the Preston fight; and, deaf to both threats and entreaties, were true to their principles, and unanimously<sup>1</sup> voted for the Hanoverian candidate. The loss of the chapel was the penalty they paid for their contumacy and independence.<sup>2</sup>

This was about the year 1721. The old Bent Chapel was afterwards consecrated by the Bishop of Man in 1723, and henceforth used for Episcopalian purposes. It was taken down in 1810 and a new church erected, which in 1877 gave place to the present Parish Church, which occupies the site of the old Dissenting Chapel.<sup>3</sup> The exiled congregation and pastor worshipped for about one year in a private house at Hagg Fold. Meanwhile a new and very commodious building was being erected by them about 200 yards from the former place. Mr. Wood generously devoted part of the pension money he received from Parliament for his bravery at Preston to this object. A portion of the timber used in the

Mr. Hope says: "This statement cannot be quite accurate. There was no general election between 1715 and 1722. The congregation were deprived of the chapel before 1722. I am inclined to think that the feeling of resentment occasioned by the conduct of Mr. Wood and the tenantry in 1715, which had slumbered since that date, was kindled afresh by the candidature of Sir Henry Houghton, who commenced his canvass in 1720, or thereabouts, and when Mr. Atherton attained his majority in 1721 he deprived the congregation of the chapel."

<sup>1</sup> "Life and Times of the Rev. James Woods," p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Halley's account of Chowbent Chapel is seriously inaccurate. There is no proof of any "long litigation" respecting possession of the building. He seems to have confused the Atherton Chapel in connection with Leigh Parish Church with the old Bent Chapel. Litigation there was about the former, but not about the latter, and Mr. Wood was in peaceable possession until the events referred to above.

erection of the building came from Hulton Park, close by, and was the gift of Squire Hulton. The General had asked the Squire for twenty oaks, but the Squire replied, "Nay, man! but I'll give you ten." "Thank you," said Wood: "just the number I want, for I knew you would only give me half of my demand."<sup>1</sup> This building, which is the one in which worship is now held, was opened in 1722. It was one of the largest in Lancashire at that time, according to Dr. Evans, seating 1,064 persons, and having connected with it fifty-three county voters. It is one of the few old Dissenting Meeting Houses which has not felt the touch of the hand of the moderniser. It is much the same as when "General Wood" ministered in it 160 years ago. The old pews, galleries, and semi-galleries, the three pulpits one above the other, and the diamond-shaped window panes are as they were when first the chapel was built. The entrance to the upper pulpit, which the minister occupies for the sermon, will be found rather trying to a man of decent corporeal dimensions, and once at least has this been proved to be the case. There is a good-sized hole in a panel against the wall into which a corner of the pulpit door runs on being opened, and this had to be made when the Rev. T. Belsham from Daventry came to preach on one occasion before he could enter. The interior of the chapel is full of interesting memorials. Close by the pulpit is the old oak communion table, which was brought secretly<sup>2</sup> from the former building, and must be at least 200 years old. There are several mural tablets, containing long but deeply interesting inscriptions. One to Dr. John Taylor, tutor, of Warrington Academy, states that he was buried near this

<sup>1</sup> "Lancashire Memorials" of 1715 (Chetham Society Series, vol. v.), p. 248, note. Mr. Hope, from MSS. in the chapel and others late in the possession of the Rev. B. R. Davis, varies this story thus: "Mr. Wood asked the Squire for a hundred oaks. The Squire replied with amazement, 'A hundred oak trees, James! I cannot give you such a number, but if you had asked for only twenty or thirty you might have had them with pleasure.' Mr. Hulton then with his accustomed generosity gave twenty-seven oak trees, which enabled the congregation to complete the roof."

<sup>2</sup> On the authority of Franklin Baker, but Mr. Hope says, "There is no corroboration of this statement. It was loose, and with the communion plate, the property of the congregation, with which Mr. Atherton had no right to interfere." But did right always rule?



UNITARIAN CHAPEL • CHOWBENT

"place," and "fell asleep in Jesus on the 5th of March, 1761, aged 68 years." Then there is one in memory of "John Mort, the last male representative of a highly respectable family," who died January 12th, 1788, aged eighty-six years. The principal one, however, is just over the pulpit, and is in honour of General Wood, whose character it warmly eulogises and life highly commends. The graveyard, too, is rich in time-honoured tombstones, from which it may be gathered that the principal families in the district have in one way or another been associated with the place. Mr. Wood lived to enjoy the worship of God in the new building for many years. According to his tablet he died on the 20th of February, 1759, having been a minister above sixty years, and having reached the ripe age of eighty-seven years. A tombstone marks the last resting place of his wife, Hannah, who died August 17th, 1726, also of his mother, Anne, who died May 19th, 1724, but nothing serves to indicate where either himself or his father lies interred. It is said he had a son, Rev. James Wood, trained by Dr. Rotheram at the Kendal Academy, and who was associated with his father in the ministry of Chowbent; but if so, it is believed he died before his father.<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Wm. Davenport, educated partly at Glasgow and partly by Dr. Rotheram, had been assistant to General Wood during the closing years of his life, and at his death became his successor. In 1765 he went to Hindley and afterwards to Wigan, where he died, in August, 1791, at the age of sixty. The Rev. Samuel Mercer followed. He was one of Dr. Doddridge's students, and settled first at Tockholes, near Blackburn, in 1754, but remained only a year. He afterwards ministered at Charlesworth and Gee Cross, whence he came to Chowbent. He was pastor of this place for twenty-one years, dying at Harrogate, whither he had gone for his health, on the 26th of

<sup>1</sup> In the "Monthly Repository" for 1810 is an account of Mr. John Holland, who received and accepted an invitation to Chowbent in 1751. He was born at Knutsford about 1720, and educated at Kendal by Dr. Rotheram, removing thence to Glasgow, "where he greatly distinguished himself." For some time he was assistant to Dr. Samuel Eaton at the High Pavement, Nottingham, being such when he was invited to Chowbent. He was not, however, permitted to labour here, for "just before his removal he was carried off by a violent fever, in the 31st year of his age."

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September, 1786, aged fifty-three years. The Rev. Harry Toulmin, son of Dr. Toulmin, succeeded him. His training for the ministry was received at Hoxton Academy, and he had for his first settlement, Monton, near Eccles. He remained only one year, coming to Chowbent in 1788. In 1793 he went to America, where he followed the study of the law, and eventually became Judge of the District Court in the Mississippi territory. His death took place on November 11th, 1833, in the fifty-seventh year of his age. The Rev. Benjamin Rigby Davis succeeded Mr. Toulmin in 1793. He was a Daventry student, and was trained by the Rev. T. Belsham, previously named. His tablet in the chapel states that he died on the 24th of June, 1833, aged sixty-three years, after ministering here upwards of forty-two years. His son George died on November 12th, 1885, aged seventy-seven years, and a daughter, Martha, about a year after, aged eighty-two. The Rev. Thomas Walker Horsfield, F.S.A., succeeded in 1835. He was born at Sheffield, November 6th, 1792, and educated at Hackney by the Rev. Robert Aspland. His first settlement was at Lewes, in Sussex, where he wrote several important antiquarian works. From this place he removed to Taunton and thence to Chowbent. He died suddenly on the 14th of August, 1837. His successor was Dr. John Harrison, who had been trained at Manchester New College. He was the grandson of the Rev. Ralph Harrison, one of the Cross Street ministers, Manchester. He settled at Chowbent towards the end of 1837 or beginning of 1838. He removed to Brixton in 1847, and afterwards to Ipswich, dying in 1866. The Rev. Archibald Macdonald, M.A., followed, but remained only a short time,<sup>1</sup> and similarly the Rev. E. Davies, the next minister, who left in 1852. In the same year he was succeeded by the Rev. Marmaduke C. Frankland. Mr. Frankland also was a student of Manchester New College, and had previously been settled at Malton and Whitby. He resigned his charge at Chowbent a few years ago through age and infirmity, but continued to reside in the neighbourhood. He died here on the 15th of June, 1888, at the age of seventy-two, and was interred in the Atherton cemetery. The Rev. J. Kirk Pike, who was trained at the Baptist College, Chilwell, near Nottingham, came to Chowbent in 1885 from Moreton, in Gloucestershire. He

<sup>1</sup> He resigned in the midsummer of 1849.

removed in September, 1890, to Belfast, where he still labours. The present minister is the Rev. J. J. Wright, whose training was received at the Manchester Home Missionary Board, and who had previously laboured at Leicester, Belfast, and Bolton. The congregation is Unitarian, and has been for a great number of years. At what precise period the change took place it is not easy to say. "General Wood" himself, according to some authorities, opened his pulpit to certain of the most noted anti-Trinitarians of the time;<sup>1</sup> but it is clear that from the days of Mercer onwards, Arian, if not Unitarian, sentiments began to prevail, for Mr. Mercer left Tockholes in 1755, because his opinions were not acceptable to the people. Several important and wealthy families attend the Chowbent Chapel, amongst them being that of Caleb Wright, Esq., the aged and highly respected Liberal member for the Leigh division of Lancashire, and the donor of the land now occupied by the newly erected schools connected with the chapel (named the Frankland Memorial Schools, in affectionate remembrance of the Rev. M. C. Frankland) and the recreation ground belonging thereto.

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## II.—WHARTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

IN the township of Little Hulton, which joins Farnworth at certain points, is the little hamlet of Wharton, with its quaint-looking Presbyterian Chapel. The building stands on a gentle slope, which looks down into Tyldesley, and is about 250 yards to the right of the old Roman road from Manchester to Wigan. Its appearance, though it has been greatly modernised, suggests that it has seen a few decades; a saunter through the graveyard, where several tombstones will be found dating from the early part of last

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hope says: Mr. John Mort, of Alder Fold, the son of the donor of the land on which the chapel is built, and himself the donor of the Parsonage House, was the principal means of introducing anti-Trinitarianism into the congregation, and evidence exists to show that anti-Trinitarians preached in the chapel at the personal invitation of Mr. Wood, prior to 1750.



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century, confirms this ; while the following inscription on a stone inserted in the south wall of the building is a history of itself :—

Originated, 1662.

Rebuilt, 1723.

Restored, 1866.

It may not be known to many people that so recently as forty years ago this church had a place in the "Congregational Year Book," and was known as a Congregational Church. Its origin, like most of these old Presbyterian or Congregational Churches, is not very clear, for the simple reason that almost all documentary evidence has disappeared. About a hundred yards lower down the slope, on which the present building stands, will be found Wharton Hall, where the Nonconformists formerly worshipped. Wharton Hall has even yet a very antique appearance. Some years ago the date 1629 was found upon an old beam, but it is thought that the Hall itself was erected much earlier by a member of the Wharton family. During the 17th century Wharton Hall was in the possession of the Morts, one of the principal families in the district at that time. From them it passed into the hands of the Gwillyms and Earles, whose relative, General Earle, was one of the Soudan heroes.<sup>1</sup> It is a good-sized farmhouse, and has been tenanted by a family of the name of Green for at least four generations. It is slightly shaded by a number of fine trees which the grandfather of the present occupants brought on his shoulders from a place near Leigh, and planted here. It is to the Mort family, as already stated, owners of and residents at the Hall for many years, that Nonconformity in this district is most largely indebted. Originally they belonged to the High Church party, and sympathised with the Royalist cause ; but Mr. Robert Mort, a member of the younger branch of this family, who lived at Wharton Hall, threw in his lot with the Nonconformists, and became their firm friend. About two miles west of Wharton is the old Chowbent Chapel, an account of which has already been given.

<sup>1</sup> One of Mr. John Mort's great-nieces married a Gwilym, and another married an Earle. They are both parties to a deed in relation to the title of Chowbent Chapel.

One of its early ministers was the Rev. James Wood, whom the Act of Uniformity caused to be ejected from Chowbent Chapel in 1662, leading also to the closing of the chapel. The expelled Nonconformists, however, found a refuge and place for worship in Mr. Mort's mansion at Wharton. Here Wood often preached to the people, and so he must be reckoned the first of the Wharton pastors. Matthew Henry, who was a frequent visitor to this part of Lancashire, counted Mr. Mort amongst his warmest friends. The communion chalices still used by the Chowbent congregation were his gift, and are inscribed with his initials, "R.M." Besides the occasional services of Matthew Henry and Henry Newcome, of Manchester, no doubt the scattered Nonconformists of this district had the opportunity of hearing other great preachers who sought shelter in these secluded parts. On the Revolution and passing of the Toleration Act in 1688, probably before, the Rev. James Wood went back to his chapel at Chowbent, and continued to labour there until his death. Worship was kept up at Wharton Hall, but whether separately or conjointly with Chowbent cannot be determined. In the MS. list of Dissenting Meeting Houses, drawn up by Dr. Evans during the years 1717-1729, occurs the following:—

"Wharton Hall; preachers, Cheyney [Cheney], Peter Valentine; number of hearers, 213; county votes, 6."

Respecting Mr. Cheney I have no certain information. Matthew Henry in his diary writes:—

"1705-6, April 16th. I read a manuscript of Mr. Cheney's against Bishops' Courts."<sup>1</sup>

This was Mr. John Cheney, of Warrington, mercer, who died January 22nd, 1709-10, one of Mr. Henry's intimate friends. It is not unlikely that he was connected with Mr. Cheney, of Wharton. The Rev. Peter Valentine came to Wharton from Tockholes, near Blackburn, where he had previously ministered some five or six years. The Valentines for many generations appear to have been connected with Chowbent and neighbourhood, and probably Peter

<sup>1</sup> "Memorials of the Rev. Matthew Henry," by Williams, p. 189.

## THE VALENTINE TOMBSTONE.

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was a native of these parts. He began his ministry at Wharton in 1721 or 1722, and remained here until his death, which took place on October 1st, 1754. I copy from his tombstone in the church-yard the following inscription :—

On each side and underneath lie y<sup>e</sup> bodies of the  
 REV<sup>d</sup>. M<sup>r</sup>. VALENTINE,  
 Minister of this place, who departed this life Oct<sup>r</sup> the 1st, 1754;  
 Aged 63.  
 CICELY,  
 Wife of y<sup>e</sup> Rev<sup>d</sup>. M<sup>r</sup>. Valentine,  
 buried Apr<sup>r</sup>. 2<sup>d</sup>. 1751;  
 Aged 57.

“ Why art thou cast down ? Oh, my soul, hope thou in God.”

Their children  
 RICHARD, Aug<sup>t</sup>. 1729; an infant;  
 ELISABETH, Mar. 7, 1747<sup>s</sup>; 13<sup>y</sup>. 11<sup>m</sup>.;  
 THOMAS, May 18, 1749; 25<sup>y</sup>. 6<sup>m</sup>.;  
 SARAH, July 12th, 1758; aged 33;

Also the Rev<sup>d</sup>. JOSEPH VALENTINE, died Jan<sup>y</sup>. 21<sup>st</sup>. 1783; aged 62 years.  
 Also in memory of JOSEPH FORSHAW, of Liverpool, grandson to the  
 Rev<sup>d</sup>. Joseph Valentine, who departed this life 7<sup>th</sup> day of Aug<sup>t</sup>. 1834;  
 aged 59 years. Also in memory of MARY VALENTINE, wife of the  
 above Rev<sup>d</sup>. Joseph Valentine, who died 1785; aged 68 years. Also  
 ELLEN, Dau<sup>r</sup>. of H. and E. Forshaw, died July 19<sup>th</sup>. 1779; aged 3 years.  
 ELIZABETH LANSDALE, cousin to (y<sup>e</sup> Rev<sup>d</sup>.) Mr. Valentine, Nov<sup>r</sup>. 18,  
 1739, 1<sup>y</sup> 8<sup>m</sup>.

Early in Mr. Valentine's ministry, in the year 1723, the present chapel was erected. There can be no doubt that the Wharton friends were very materially assisted in this undertaking by their brethren at Chowbent, where “ General Wood ” was then minister. Part of the pension, which Mr. Wood received from Parliament for his bravery at Preston, he expended upon the new meeting-house at Chowbent, which was opened in 1722, and it may have been that the chapel at Wharton was in part indebted to Mr. Wood's pension money for its existence. The bell bears date 1723, and is said to have been intended originally for the Chowbent Chapel. The old Communion Table used in the Hall was in existence a few years ago, and the pulpit, which is supposed to have been brought thence to the new building, is still in existence,

though not in use. Mr. Peter Valentine was succeeded by his son, Joseph Valentine. He had been trained by Dr. Rotheram at Kendal, whose academy he entered in 1740, and remained at Wharton until his death.<sup>1</sup>

In a recently-issued work on the Moravian Chapels and preaching-houses in Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire, by E. M. C., there is an interesting reference to Wharton :—

“In Wharton, near Shackerley,” says the writer, “there was a Presbyterian Chapel, built in 1723, and the trustees would gladly have given it over to the Brethren [Moravians] in 1755. They did not avail themselves of this offer, but tradition says they preached in it on Sunday afternoons for several years.”

The writer adds :—

“There is no authentic evidence to support this, however, as it was only about the year 1776 that they were able to supply *Sunday* services in Lancashire, and then not always with perfect regularity. The services held there by the Moravians will have been mainly on *week days*.”<sup>2</sup>

It is not certain that there was any break in the succession of ministers at Wharton to allow of its being in the hands of the Moravians, and probably we are to see nothing more in this than a little friendly help on the part of one denomination to another by lending them occasionally their chapel for worship. The Rev. Thomas Rawlins, son of the Rev. John Rawlins, minister of Hoghton Tower, settled at Wharton in 1782. He was trained partly at Daventry and partly at Warrington, and settled first at Rivington in 1778. He died at Wharton on the 15th of January, 1787, in the thirty-first year of his age, and was buried in the graveyard of the Chowbent Chapel. The Rev. John Parker succeeded Mr. Rawlins, but at what date I cannot determine. At this time it

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hope says, on the authority of Peter Valentine's Diary, that Joseph Valentine preached his first sermon at Wharton on the 6th of August, 1775. If that be correct, there is a long hiatus between himself and his father, about which little is known; nor do I know where Mr. Joseph Valentine had exercised his ministry previous to his settlement of Wharton.

<sup>2</sup> “Moravian Chapels and Preaching Houses,” p. 16.

## THE OXFORD CURATE.

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appears that Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, exercised some sort of jurisdiction over Wharton, for in 1799 Mr. Parker was deprived by the Cross Street authorities of his chapel on the ground of intemperance. He went to reside afterwards at Kersley, where for many years he kept a gentleman's school. He died about 1831, leaving one son, who also died without issue. The Rev. Thomas Jackson was the next minister. He entered Mr. Roby's Academy, Manchester, in 1803, and whilst there frequently supplied at Wharton. This will account for his name appearing in an old Baptismal Register so early as 1803, whereas his actual settlement was in 1805. Mr. Jackson laboured hard in his new sphere amidst many discouragements, his average stipend being £32 per annum, and part of this had to be supplied by the County Union. In addition to his own place he regularly preached at West-houghton, Tyldesley, Stirrup Brook, and Walkden. Concerning the latter place, now rapidly developing into an important town, and where Dissent is flourishing, he remarks :—

“The prospect is not flattering.”<sup>1</sup>

Many interesting stories are yet current concerning him, one of which may be given. A young curate from Oxford came to reside in this neighbourhood, and taking the poor Nonconformist minister to be an ignorant and illiterate man thought he would humiliate and insult him. He accordingly sent him a note, written in Latin, requesting the loan of Cicero's Orations, thinking Mr. Jackson did not possess such a work. Mr. Jackson had, however, a sufficient knowledge of Latin to enable him to read the letter, so he bade the servant wait a few minutes and the book should be sent. The humble pastor wrote a polite note in *Greek*, which he sent along with the book to the young academic, who was greatly surprised, and henceforth treated Mr. Jackson with the utmost respect. Mr. Jackson left Wharton for Bamford in 1819, where he laboured for eighteen years, dying there on the 16th of May, 1837, at the age of sixty-seven years. The following interesting letter respecting his call to Bamford will illustrate the character of the man, and is worth preserving :—

<sup>1</sup> Lancashire County Union Report for the year ending January, 1815.

Wharton, July, 1819.—Dear Friends,—After having besought the Lord, by earnest prayer, for Divine direction, I have concluded to address a line to the church and congregation assembling at Bamford. I have powerfully felt the affectionate regard you have manifested towards me. I am fully satisfied with your liberal and kind offer as to salary. But if I saw it my duty to leave my little flock, which I have not yet done, there are some other considerations, which I must mention, before I could accept your kind proposal. First, I must have the liberty to preach the whole Word of God, according to the best of my light and knowledge, both as to the doctrines and precepts of the Word of God, without concealing any doctrine, or softening any precept, for fear of giving offence, or being charged with personal reflection. And no dependence upon any individuals must cramp me in the faithful discharge of my ministerial duties. Secondly, as the Sunday school is a nursery for the Church of God, and the blessing of God alone can make that nursery fruitful, I consider it a matter of deep importance that nothing be allowed in conducting that school contrary to the purity of the Gospel; I therefore think the teaching of writing on the Sabbath day a breach of the holy day, because the art of writing is an accomplishment, a preparation for worldly business, and a means of acquiring worldly gain. To me it appears almost as inconsistent as learning a trade on the Sabbath; I could not, therefore, sanction the practice, nor pray for a blessing to rest upon it. Thirdly, I cannot approve of the manner in which some of the Sunday schools conduct their anniversaries. Though I have no objection to some instruments to aid the children in singing upon these occasions, yet I think the children's voices should be the principal music, and nothing should be sung but plain hymns, and not those pieces which render a place of worship more like a playhouse than a house of God. If we do evil that good may come, we know the awful sentence. However trifling these things appear to some persons, if we yield against the convictions of our consciences to things which we judge to be sinful, it would be likely to draw down upon us the displeasure of the Lord. If any accursed thing remain in the camp, Israel cannot stand before the enemy. It is necessary for a minister and his people to be united in their views, for the promotion of peace and prosperity. For it was only when the disciples were of one accord and of one mind that the Lord added to the church daily. If our opinions do not harmonize, our union will neither be happy nor permanent. But if you are willing that I should be your pastor, under the conviction that my sentiments are agreeable to the New Testament, you will inform me upon the subject; but if you think differently, let all thoughts of a union be given up, and let us part in peace and love.

I am, dear Friends, yours cordially,

THOMAS JACKSON.<sup>1</sup>

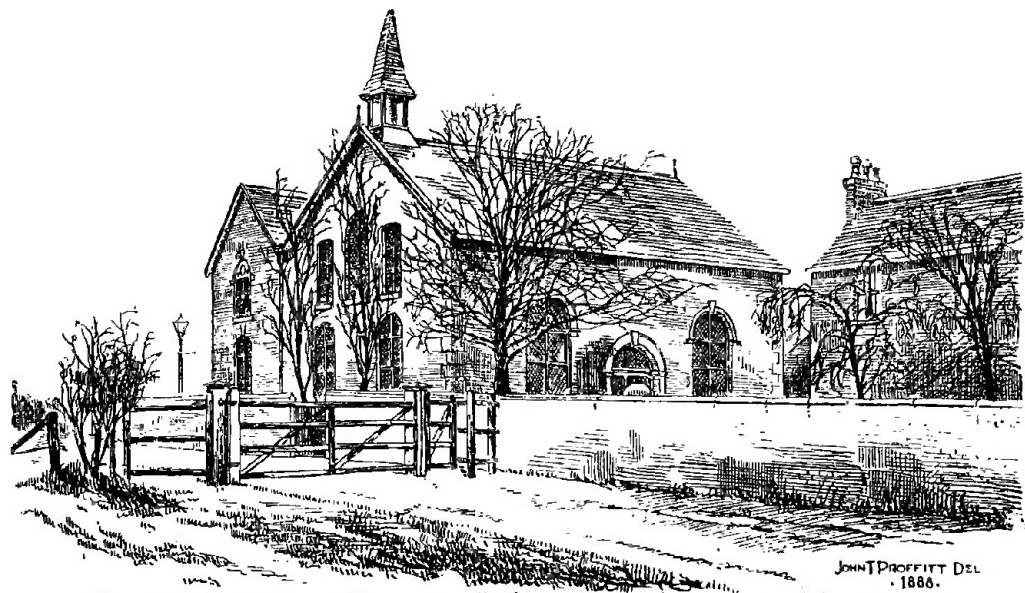
<sup>1</sup> "Congregational Magazine" for 1837, p. 680.

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The Rev. John Penkethman succeeded Mr. Jackson in 1819, and left in 1822. After labouring successively at Pendlebury, Ashton-in-Makerfield, and Belthorn, he settled at Tockholes, where he died May 1st, 1848, aged fifty-nine years. The Rev. James Helmsley settled at Wharton in 1822. He had been trained at Hoxton, and was ordained at Salem Chapel, Warrington, on October 1st, 1818. The following curious story respecting Mr. Helmsley whilst at Wharton is authentic. After hearing him preach one Sunday one of his congregation asked another what he thought about the sermon. He replied that it was "very good, only that he had begun at the wrong end of the subject." A short time after, this friend had occasion to go into Mr. Helmsley's house, where his attention was taken by a ham hanging shank end down. He asked the minister why he hung up his ham in that fashion, and received for reply that it was "like his sermon, wrong end up." Mr. Helmsley left Wharton in 1831, and was followed by the Rev. Francis Evans, in 1833, from the Blackburn Academy. He stayed only a short time, removing to Ulverston, where he was ordained August 2nd, 1837. There he spent the greater part of his life, and died suddenly on the 16th August, 1868. The Rev. C. Hodgkinson came in 1835 and removed in 1836; and in 1837 the Rev. James Stewart became pastor at Wharton. He laboured here until 1860, when increasing infirmities led him to resign his charge. He continued, however, to reside in the neighbourhood until his death, which took place on the 30th of January, 1864, at the advanced age of seventy-eight years. He was buried in the graveyard of the chapel where he had so long laboured, and his tombstone, in addition to his own, records the deaths of his wife Bridget, on December 4th, 1849, aged fifty years, an only daughter, Jane, January 5th, 1845, aged twenty-three years, and Thomas G. Stewart, on the 30th of October, 1847, at the age of thirteen years. In Mr. Stewart's days the chapel was very poorly attended, there being occasions when only two persons besides the minister were present. It was during the last year of his ministry, in 1860, that the deeds of the place passed into Presbyterian hands, and Wharton ceased to have a place in the "Congregational Year Book."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Croston ("History of Lancashire," vol. iii., p. 145) is seriously inaccurate in his account of Wharton. He says: "There is also a chapel,



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The Rev. John Gordon, M.A., was ordained here on Wednesday afternoon, September 18th, 1861. By his exertions the chapel was completely renovated in 1866. The re-opening services were begun on Sunday, April 14th, when the Rev. John Cleland, of Leeds, preached, and on the Sunday following the Rev. Robert Mitchell, M.A., of Bolton, was the preacher. At a tea meeting held the Saturday following the pastor was able to announce that not only was the building re-opened free from debt, but they had in hand some £20 or £30 towards a new school. Mr. Gordon concluded a long and useful ministry here in November, 1891, and is now living at Rothiemay, Banffshire, N.B., in retirement from active service. His successor, the Rev. E. H. H. Franks, B.A., from Mumbles, near Swansea, son of the Rev. E. Franks, of Wigan, was inducted into the pastorate here on the 19th of April of this year.

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### III.—CONGREGATIONALISM AT LEIGH AND TYLDESLEY.

THE Rev. Wm. Roby, who was born in the neighbourhood of Wigan, and for a short time laboured in that town, never lost his interest in this part of the county; and it is to him that the honour belongs of introducing Congregationalism into Leigh. Writing in 1880, Mr. W. D. Pink says:—"In the course of the year 1805<sup>1</sup> he frequently came over from Manchester, and commenced week evening service in a small cottage taken for the purpose, in what was known as "The Walk," King Street, near to the site occupied by the present Wesleyan Chapel."<sup>2</sup> There was, however, associated with him in these early efforts another good man of like spirit, whose labours in the cause of Congregationalism were "oft"—the Rev. Wm. Alexander, then stationed at Prescott. Mr. Pink says that in 1806 he began to take part in these week evening

formerly belonging to the Presbyterians, but used by the Congregational or Independent Dissenters, called Wharton Chapel, built in 1730." The date is wrong, and the names just need transposing.

<sup>1</sup> The County Union Report says that it was opened on November 5th.

<sup>2</sup> "Congregationalism in Leigh," p. 3.

services, which were held on a Wednesday. "His first sermon in Leigh," he continues, "was on May 7, 1806, and his congregation then, and several times afterwards, was collected by notice proclaimed by the bellman."<sup>1</sup> The first appearance of the cause here in the Reports of the County Union is in the one ending January, 1810, and is here subjoined :—

Leigh has been disappointed in the hopes of becoming the centre of an itinerant circuit. No place, however, bids fairer for success, if a suitable minister could be provided, than this. A considerable number of truly serious and active Christians are here collected together. The room occupied for public worship is far too small to accommodate the persons who wish to attend. Their Sunday School is in a very prosperous state, and their circumstances in general such as to deserve all the encouragement that the Union can give them.

Mr. Alexander was a frequent supply during these years, and at the earnest desire of Mr. Roby and the Leigh people he was induced to undertake the charge of the place. He began his ministry here on January 20th, 1811, preaching his first sermon from Eph. vi., 18-19. A church was formed shortly afterwards,<sup>2</sup> consisting of ten persons, and these at the end of 1811 had grown to twenty-three. As at Prescott, so at Leigh, Mr. Alexander at once threw himself into itinerant labours, and amongst his preaching places are mentioned Lowton,<sup>3</sup> Hindley,<sup>4</sup> Ashton,<sup>5</sup> Edgegreen,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Congregationalism in Leigh," p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Not in 1807, as the "Lancashire Congregational Calendar" states.

<sup>3</sup> This was for many years one of Mr. Alexander's most promising stations. During his residence at Prescott he was accustomed to visit this place, and as early as 1809 refers to "a very respectable gentleman in that neighbourhood," who, amongst other generous deeds, kindly obtained a room at his own expense, which he furnished with seats for religious worship. This was Mr. Travers, whose descendants have all along been worthy friends of Leigh Congregationalism.

<sup>4</sup> Vide ante p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Vide ante p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> In 1812 it is recorded that the people here had taken "a place capable of containing 100 persons, where they have also established a Sunday School consisting of 100 children." Twelve months afterwards Mr. Alexander says that three colliers from Edgegreen had joined the church at Leigh, than

Ashley Chapel, Westhoughton,<sup>1</sup> Chowbent,<sup>2</sup> and Haydock, experiencing often great personal risk and inconvenience.<sup>3</sup>

The place of worship at this time for Mr. Alexander and his people at Leigh had been formed out of two cottages, which "is said to have been so low and he so tall, that when he stood up his head touched the ceiling, and a hole had to be cut in it to save him from injury." On the 23rd of August, 1813, the foundation stone of Bethesda Chapel was laid by the Rev. P. S. Charrier, of Liverpool. Mr. Charrier had been Mr. Alexander's pastor at Lancaster previous to his entering the ministry, and the new chapel at Leigh was called "Bethesda," because that was the name of Mr. Charrier's at Liverpool. The building was completed and opened for worship, July 21st, 1814, the preachers being the Revs. Wm. Roby and P. S. Charrier. The estimated cost of the chapel, which had accommodation for about 350 people, is given as £1,150, towards which Mr. Alexander himself, in London and elsewhere, raised the sum of nearly £1,000. During fourteen years he continued his useful labours at Leigh, amidst many discouragements, removing to Churchtown, near Southport, in the early part of 1825. For twenty years longer he exercised his ministry there, when increasing years and infirmity brought about his retirement. He continued to reside in Southport until his death, which took place on January 23rd, 1855, at the patriarchal age of ninety-two years. His son was the Rev. John Alexander,

whom "it would be difficult to select three characters more ungodly," and that in the Sunday School were 200 scholars, "taught by two persons who go every Sabbath from Leigh." In September, 1813, he informed the Committee of the County Union that the people of Edgegreen "were about to build a house to serve as a school and a chapel, to which a collier had subscribed ten pounds, and a publican five. They hoped to beg the land. They were to make their own bricks, farmers in the neighbourhood were to cart the materials to the spot, give them straw, and thatch the building." The interest here flourished for several years.

<sup>1</sup> Vide p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Writing in October, 1814, Mr. Alexander says, "We have given up the room at Chowbent. I could not preach there on Sabbath evenings, and on other evenings few attended." A few years afterwards, however, services were re-commenced here, but they were again short-lived.

<sup>3</sup> Vide ante p. 15.

for many years Congregational minister at Norwich, author of "Memoirs of the Rev. William Alexander."

A successor was found in April, 1826, when the Rev. John Williams was called to the pastorate. He had previously laboured at Brampton, near Carlisle, and Calderbrook and Smallbridge, near Rochdale. He remained at Leigh until the early part of 1828, when he removed to Park Chapel, Ramsbottom.

There was an interregnum until January 22nd, 1832, when the Rev. William McDowall was appointed. "During his ministry," says Mr. Pink, "the gallery was added to the chapel for the purposes of the Sunday School, the total cost incurred in the erection being the alliterative sum of £88 8s. 8½d. Mr. McDowall closed his pastorate on the 12th of May, 1833. His sermons cost him a great amount of mental labour. After composing them he committed them to memory, extemporaneous discourses being deemed indispensable by all orthodox country Congregational churches fifty years ago."<sup>1</sup>

The Rev. Daniel Atkin was the next minister. He was born at Kendal, January 10th, 1770, but early in life removed to Warrington, where he became associated with the Stepney Congregational Church. "In the year 1820," writes his biographer, "he acceded to the very earnest entreaty of the church assembling in Lady Huntingdon's Chapel at Tyldesley, near Bolton, to become its pastor."<sup>2</sup> Afterwards he laboured at Hilton Lane, Worsley, and Tideswell, in Derbyshire, removing from this place to Leigh in February, 1834. His ordination took place on Wednesday, the 12th of December, 1838, when the following persons took part in the service: Revs. John Langridge, Tyldesley; Samuel Ellis Bolton; Wm. Alexander, Churchtown; Dr. Raffles, Liverpool; and Wm. Vint, St. Helens. He continued to labour here until 1849, when he retired, being then eighty years of age. His death took place on October 12th, 1858, having attained to within two years of the age of Mr. Alexander, who had gone to his reward three years before. The Rev. T. Atkin, of Wigan, was Mr. Daniel Atkin's son. Another interval of six years followed, during which

<sup>1</sup> "Congregationalism in Leigh," p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> "Congregational Year Book" for 1859, p. 191.

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the pulpit was supplied by neighbouring ministers and students from Lancashire College, some of whom occupy prominent positions in the denomination at the present moment, *e.g.*, Dr. Bruce, of Huddersfield, and Dr. Simon, of Edinburgh. It was during this period that an effort was made in the direction of building a new Sunday School in the adjoining burial ground. The circular appealing for help bears date August 21st, 1851, and states that "the urgency of the case is the more apparent from the exertions which are being made towards the spread of Puseyism and Popery in this populous district. These poisonous doctrines are daily instilled into the minds of the young, and unless means are used to counteract them, their baneful influence will become more widely spread, and the obnoxious seed take more deadly root." How the project fared Mr. Pink tells in the following passage:—

Plans were drawn up, subscriptions promised, and in March, 1852, the land was staked out on which the school was to be erected. On the 15th of that month a deputation from the County Union, consisting of the Rev. John Kelly, of Liverpool, and James Dilworth, Esq., of Manchester, visited Leigh, and such were the inducements held out, and promises made of support by the newly instituted Chapel Building Society, that the school project was abandoned, and the more important enterprise of erecting a new chapel entertained. On the 27th of the same month, the plot of ground in Union Street, on a portion of which the present Congregational Church is erected, was secured by the late Mr. William Hayes. The scheme, however, remained in abeyance for two years.<sup>1</sup>

This scheme was abandoned in 1859, and seventy-five per cent of the instalment of subscriptions was returned to the donors. In January, 1855, the Rev. Wm. Moore, from Great Harwood, near Blackburn, who had frequently served the church during the long vacancy, settled here as pastor. It was during his ministry that the schoolrooms adjoining the chapel were erected at a cost of £300. The opening services were held on September 29th, 1861, the preachers being Revs. G. D. Macgregor, M.A., of Farnworth, and James Cleland, Presbyterian minister of Bolton. Mr. Moore resigned in August, 1864, and subsequently settled in Golborne.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Congregationalism in Leigh," p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Vide ante p. 64.

The next minister was the Rev. Thomas Mills. He had been appointed pastor of a Union Church in Leigh in July, 1864, and on Mr. Moore's retirement he was invited to preach at Bethesda Chapel. This he did and the result was a union of the two churches, of which Mr. Mills was asked to assume the pastorate. He began his duties as pastor of the united churches on November 13th, 1864. Shortly afterwards a number of members holding Baptist views formed a separate church, and Mr. Mills grew more in favour of Pædo-baptism. During the first twenty years of its existence the church received substantial help from the Union Funds, but about the beginning of Mr. Mills's pastorate it not only received no pecuniary assistance from that source, but stood disassociated from the Union. In 1869 it was readmitted into the association, and Mr. Mills became a fully accredited Congregational minister. His labours were continued until May 31st, 1872, when most unexpectedly, at the early age of twenty-eight years, he was called away to his reward. His successor was the Rev. Alexander McPhee, from Lancashire College, who began his ministry on November 24th, 1872. The necessity for a new chapel began to be more pressing than ever, and on February 26th, 1873, a meeting of the church was held to consider the matter. It was agreed to take steps towards its erection, land for the purpose being obtained through the munificence of Thomas Travers Hayes, Esq., J.P. The last sermon in the old building was preached by the pastor on the 30th of September, 1877, and the new building was opened on October 4th following, the preachers being the Revs. J. A. Macfadyen, M.A., of Manchester, and Enoch Mellor, D.D., of Halifax. The chapel is more centrally situated than the one it has superseded, and has accommodation for 600 persons. Its cost was about £4,500.

Mr. McPhee closed his ministry at Leigh on the 30th of December, 1877, and joined the Established Church. The present pastor, Rev. Dr. Karfoot, educated at Lancashire Independent College, and who had laboured for five years at Church, near Accrington, entered upon duty here in June, 1879. It is an interesting fact, and deserves a permanent place in history, that the celebrated Henry Vincent preached his last sermons in the Leigh Congregational Church on November 17th,

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1878, when the sum of £36 was realised in aid of the reduction of the debt upon the building. His health was greatly shattered at the time, and he died on the 29th of December following.<sup>1</sup>

Congregationalism at Tyldesley is indebted for its origin to the Rev. W. H. Davison, of Bolton. In 1866, "aided by brethren in the neighbourhood," he began to conduct services in the Temperance Hall on Sunday afternoons. A branch church was shortly afterwards formed, and the Rev. E. Daniels appointed Evangelist. In 1868 he removed to Hollingworth, in Cheshire, and subsequently laboured at Derby Street, Bolton. The Rev. J. R. Webster followed in 1869, and in 1870 a school chapel, capable of seating 550 people, was erected at a cost, including land, of £2,300, towards which the Bicentenary committee voted £750. In 1871 Mr. Webster removed to Ormskirk, being succeeded the same year by the Rev. J. Cockram. He resigned in 1877, and after labouring a few years at Garstang accepted the charge of the church at Little Asby, in Westmorland, where he is still the minister. The Rev. Owen Davies, from Lancashire College, followed Mr. Cockram at Tyldesley in 1877. It was during his ministry in 1882 that a heavy debt, which had been so burdensome to the church from its commencement, was removed. In 1884 Mr. Davies resigned, and since then he has been resident at Wigan without charge. No one was appointed to fill up the vacancy until 1891, when the Rev. J. Fielden, from Middleton, became the minister. From its commencement the church received a generous grant year by year from the Union Funds, but in 1889 it resolved to ask for no further help.

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### IV.—WESTHOUGHTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

IN the year 1811 the Rev. William Alexander, who had just settled as Congregational minister at Leigh, began preaching, amongst other places, at Westhoughton, having his journeys made unpleasant

<sup>1</sup> I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness for many facts in the foregoing to the admirable little sketch of "Leigh Congregationalism," by Mr. W. D. Pink, several times previously mentioned.

by "dark nights and bad roads." He found worthy coadjutors in the Rev. Thomas Jackson, of Wharton, and afterwards in the Rev. Thomas Penkethman, from the same church, and a Mr. Ewer. In April, 1817, it is said that "the lease of the school expires in October next, and there is danger of the school and congregation being dispersed for want of a suitable place."<sup>1</sup> This was happily averted, for in the next year it is recorded that God had disposed a worthy friend to erect a room for their accommodation, which had been opened in the preceding October. About 200 children were taught there morning and afternoon, and in the evening, when public service was held, the place was crowded. In the Union Report for 1820, the number of children belonging to the school is given as 300. The interest after this appears to have declined somewhat, due probably in some measure to the fact that it was less under the supervision of Mr. Alexander than it had formerly been. In the early part of 1826, the Rev. William Turner, Congregational minister of Hindley, says that the foundation stone "of a large and commodious room intended for the accommodation of a Sunday School, and for the preaching of the Gospel,"<sup>2</sup> had been laid. This room, it is said, would be more centrally situated than the one at present occupied, and equally convenient for the people of Chew Moor, Westhoughton, and other populous villages. This building, capable of accommodating some 300 or 400 persons, was opened in the spring of 1826, and every Sunday evening there was preaching in it by the Rev. James Helmsley, of Wharton, and some others.

Mr. George Green, in a paper on "Westhoughton Congregationalism," read at the jubilee of the church in September, 1877, gives a slightly different account of its origin. He says that on Whit-Sunday, 1826, a few friends, "touched by the religious destitution of the district, and who had espoused the principles of Congregationalism," commenced a Sunday School. These persons, he states, had been accustomed to go a distance of eight miles every Sabbath to Tyldesley Chapel (Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion), of which the Rev. D. Atkin was minister. But

<sup>1</sup> Lancashire County Union Report for the year ending April, 1817.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, for year ending April, 1826.



this does not take into account the fifteen years of valuable work done by Mr. Alexander and others, to whom Congregationalism here is indebted for its origin. A church was formed on September 12th, 1827, consisting of the following eight members: Thomas Green, William Seddon, John Smith, John Whittle, James Critchley, John Platt, John Boardman, and Elizabeth Green; and in the following year it became a separate station of the Lancashire Congregational Union, receiving a grant of £30. The pulpit was supplied by students from the Blackburn Academy, together with neighbouring ministers and friends. In 1829 it is said that as many pews had been put up as would seat forty persons, and these were nearly all let.

In the early part of 1832 the Rev. Mr. Langridge, of Tyldesley Bank, is said to preach for the Westhoughton people once a month, but the first settled minister here was the Rev. S. T. Porter. He had been induced by the Rev. J. Anyon, then at Pendlebury, to devote himself to ministerial service, and commenced his stated labours at Westhoughton on September 2nd, 1832. Soon after his settlement "the little chapel was crowded to excess, including 200 adults and 250 children," and the friends began to turn their thoughts towards the erection of a larger building. The Report, however, for the year ending April, 1835, says that from "prudential motives" they had been compelled to abandon the idea of erecting a new chapel, but they were "about to be furnished with a building sufficient for their accommodation, raised for this purpose by one of their number, and to be occupied by them at a moderate rent."

Mr. Porter removed to Darwen in the year following, and in July, 1848, to Glasgow, to be co-pastor to the Rev. Dr. Wardlaw. He was afterwards resident in London for many years without charge, dying there in August, 1890, in the 82nd year of his age. His brother, the Rev. James Porter, who died in Canada, April 18th, 1874, was minister of the Old Independent Chapel at Tockholes, near Blackburn, from 1836 to 1838. A Mr. Baker assumed the pastorate as Mr. Porter's successor at Westhoughton, but remained only a short time, being followed in July, 1839, by the Rev. William Robinson. He was educated at Airedale, and settled at Runcorn in 1832, where he remained until he was called

to Westhoughton. His pastorate here terminated in September, 1845, and in November following he began his ministry at Cheadle, in Staffordshire. In the midst of his labours at this place he died June 27th, 1851, at the age of forty-eight years. In the beginning of June, 1852, the foundation stone of a new chapel was laid by Sir James Watts, of Manchester, and on the 30th of March in the year following the building was opened for public worship. The preachers were Drs. Raffles and Halley on the day of opening, and on the following Sunday Dr. Vaughan and the Rev. J. C. McMichael, of Farnworth. The new edifice cost £1,600, towards which a grant of £400 was obtained from the Lancashire and Cheshire Chapel Building Fund. A debt of £150 remained after the opening services, but it was entirely paid off in about two years.

No successor to Mr. Robinson was appointed until January, 1857, when the Rev. J. S. Carter, from Airedale College, entered upon duty. He died here on the 5th of February, 1860, at the early age of twenty-nine years, and was interred in the graveyard of the chapel. In 1862 the Rev. P. R. Harwood, from Mottram, in Cheshire, became pastor. The Union Report, dated April, 1863, says: "Having obtained the services of a pastor who is willing to accept such an income as the pew rents and freewill offerings of the people will supply, the church will not ask further aid from the Union." Mr. Harwood remained only until 1864, when he resigned, and eventually removed to Stratford-on-Avon.

The Rev. T. Sheldon, from Lancashire College, followed in October, 1866. A short time previously the church had again been taken upon the Union Funds. A site for a new school was given in 1869 by a member of the family to whose generosity the Westhoughton Congregationalists are indebted for the land upon which their chapel stands. Another family contributed £110 towards a fund for that purpose, and on the 15th of April, 1870, Mr. Alfred Barnes, J.P., laid the foundation stone of the new building. In the following October it was completed and opened. The cost was £1,400, and after the opening service a debt of only £300 remained. Mr. Sheldon closed his pastorate on the 24th of September, 1871, and for a short time was resident, without charge, in Manchester. He died shortly after. The Rev. B. Bond,

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who had previously laboured at Chinnor, in Oxfordshire, entered upon duty at Westhoughton, on Whit-Sunday, 1872. During his ministry a bazaar was held toward the liquidation of the debt, which realised £200, the other £100 being shortly afterwards paid, and the premises set free. In 1880 Mr. Bond removed to Skelmersdale, where he still ministers. Another vacancy of five years occurred, after which the Rev. H. W. Mote was chosen pastor. His previous pastorates were Mitcham, in Surrey, Brampton, in Cumberland, and Kendal. He began his ministry at Westhoughton, July 1st, 1885, and terminated it April 30th, 1888. The present minister, Rev. R. H. Lord, M.A., from Mansfield College, began his labours here on Sunday, October 4th, 1891. The chapel will seat some 750 people.