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**MEMORIALS**  
OF  
**THE INDEPENDENT CHURCHES**  
IN  
**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE;**  
WITH  
**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES OF THEIR PASTORS,**  
AND SOME ACCOUNT OF  
**THE PURITAN MINISTERS WHO LABOURED IN THE COUNTY.**  
BY  
**THOMAS COLEMAN.**

**LONDON:**  
**JOHN SNOW, 35, PATERNOSTER ROW.**

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1853.

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## INTRODUCTION.

In presenting some historical Memorials of the Independent Churches in the County of Northampton, it may be proper to take a glance at "the rise and progress" of Nonconformity from the early days of the Reformation.

When the Pope's supremacy was denied and some change in the Church was sanctioned by Henry the Eighth, there were a number of Protestants in England who desired the reformation from Popery to be carried further than was agreeable to the reigning monarch and those that had the ascendancy in his counsels. The reformers acknowledged "that corruptions had been a thousand years introducing, which could not be all discovered and thrown out at once"; and yet the ruling powers sought by "Acts of Uniformity" to put a stop to all further improvement.

In the days of Queen Elizabeth, when the Protestant exiles returned who had been driven to the Continent by the persecutions in the reign of Mary, there was a considerable increase in the number of ministers who were dissatisfied with the reformation of the Anglican Church. When the Act had passed, in the year 1559, entitled "An Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Service in the Church, and Administration of the Sacraments," there were many ministers connected with the Church who could never submit to its requirements. They were men who pleaded for a *purser* mode of worship and discipline than the authorities would allow; and hence they were called *Puritans*. They refused to wear the vestments, to read the whole of the liturgical service, and to comply with many of the ceremonial observances required; they regarded them as relics of Popery, contrary to the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ, and opposed to the purity of his Church. [iv]

They suffered much during the reigns of Elizabeth and the first two English Sovereigns of the Stuart line. "The Star Chamber" and "the High Commission Court" were established, before which they were summoned, and where they were required to answer questions proposed, that would have made them their own accusers. If they refused to answer, they were punished for contumacy; if they complied, they were punished for Nonconformity.

To promote the reformation in the Church which they desired, the Puritan ministers formed associations, instituted classes, held meetings, and appointed lectures, which they preached alternately at their different Churches.

The County of Northampton was distinguished as one of the strongholds of Puritanism. There were a considerable number of Puritan divines in the Churches in this County: here, the meetings of their associations were frequently held; and here, in several of the towns, their lectures were delivered; and though they had to suffer much, yet they had some noble friends in the County, who endeavoured to hold over them the shield of their protection. These were the men who, by their principles, their preaching, and their writings, were the means of promoting evangelical truth and piety in the country; and they were the men who preserved the liberties of Englishmen, when they were in danger of being trampled in the dust. While Hume, the historian, treats their principles as frivolous and their conduct as ridiculous, he bestows upon them this high eulogium: "So absolute was the authority of the Crown, that the precious spark of liberty had been kindled and was preserved by the Puritans alone; and it was to this sect that the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution." [v]

At the commencement of the reign of James I., when Bancroft was Archbishop of Canterbury, the clergy were commanded to renew their subscription to the requirements of the Church. More than seven hundred of them refused; and in that number there were fifty-seven non-subscribing ministers in Northamptonshire.

At a meeting of their Association, held in Northampton, the ministers signed the following confession: "That they believed the word of God contained in the Old and New Testaments to be the perfect rule of faith and manners; and that it ought to be read and known by all people; and that the authority of it exceeds all authority, not of the Pope only, but of the Church also, and of councils, fathers, men, and angels." [vi]

The liberty enjoyed in the days of the Commonwealth many of them improved to the noblest purposes—prizing the advantages they possessed, even where they did not approve of the ruling powers.

At the restoration of the second Charles they hoped, from the fair promises made by the King, that some changes would have been made in their favour, so that they might have ministered in the Church without being required to violate the dictates of conscience; but the enemies of further reformation gained the ascendancy, and strove to drive from the Church the Puritan divines: they succeeded in passing "the Act of Uniformity" of 1662, which made the terms of conformity so strait that more than two thousand ministers were ejected by it, choosing rather to resign their livings and all their worldly prospects, and to cast themselves on the care of Providence, than submit to what was required; for this Act demanded their "unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer." It came into operation August 24th, 1662, on Bartholomew-day—the day when the massacre of the Protestants in France took place ninety years before, hence called by some "Black Bartholomew." It is stated, that this day was chosen for this Act to take effect because the Nonconforming ministers would then be deprived of their year's income, which would be due shortly after.

The great Mr. Locke styles the ministers who refused to conform, "learned, pious, orthodox

divines."

It has been, we think, justly observed, "that ecclesiastical history furnishes no such instance as this of a noble army of confessors at one time—it is an honour peculiar to the English Dissenters. Never has the world seen such a sacrifice to principle."

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From this time the name of *Puritan* was exchanged for that of *Nonconformist*.

These were the men that laid the foundation of a large number of the Dissenting Churches which remain to this day. In the County of Northampton there were sixty ministers who were ejected by this Act. Fourteen of this number afterwards conformed; but of one of them it is remarked, "that he never went up the pulpit stairs with comfort after he had conformed—that he was at last but half a Conformist, for which he was frequently cited into the Spiritual Court: he freely suffered his children to go and hear the ejected ministers, and always maintained a brotherly affection towards them."

They were exposed to great trials, and suffered much persecution, after their ejection. To prevent them from preaching, "The Conventicle Act" was passed, forbidding more than five adult persons to meet together for worship different from the forms of the Church of England, on pain of very severe penalties. After this came "The Five Mile Act," which forbade them to reside within five miles of any corporate town where they had formerly preached, or from keeping school, or taking boarders, under a penalty of forty pounds. Thus many were driven from their families and their homes; and many were heavily fined and repeatedly imprisoned. It was in the midst of sufferings of this nature that several of the Churches were formed, the Memorials of which are here presented.

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When the glorious revolution by William the Third was effected, a very pleasing change in their circumstances took place. "The Act of Toleration" that then passed was viewed by them as a great blessing. Advancing knowledge on the principles of religious liberty may have led us to see that such an Act falls far short of that complete state of freedom to which we should aspire; yet there was abundant reason for our forefathers highly to value the liberty it gave them, and they blessed the memory of him by whom it was obtained. After the passing of this Act, the term *Nonconformist* was exchanged for that of *Dissenter*, as applied to those who availed themselves of the advantages it gave. This is the name they now bear, and which they will probably continue to bear until the time when our civil rulers shall cease to raise one denomination of Christians above another, or to legislate for the Church of Christ.

A hundred and twenty years ago, Doddridge entered upon his work as pastor and tutor at Northampton. These offices he filled during twenty years; and he evidently obtained, by his spirit, his preaching, his writings, and his labours as a tutor, great influence in the Churches in the County, which continued to be felt many years after his death. A minister who was ordained over one of these Churches forty years ago observes, "It always appeared to me a pleasing fact, as indicating the hold that Doddridge had obtained on the hearts of the Northamptonshire Nonconformists, that his hymns were almost everywhere in use in conjunction with Watts, and in all the old books used in my day the two were bound up together."

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The following character of the Independent Churches in this County is given by Job Orton, from the knowledge he obtained of them while resident at Northampton, first as student, afterwards as assistant, with Doddridge, leaving him in the year 1742. Writing to a young minister, he observes—"I am sorry you have met with such poor encouragement, and especially with any ill treatment, from the people in Northamptonshire. I know them well: some of them are narrow and bigoted, but in general they are serious exemplary Christians, and the bulk of them are not disposed to use a minister ill who is not imprudent, and doth not directly oppose their favourite notions, which is the only way to make people hold them the faster. They are not disposed to censure a person who preaches in a serious and experimental manner, and in an evangelical strain, though he does not use many of their favourite phrases, but will bear almost anything from the pulpit where the main thing is not wanting."

The idea of the present Work originated in a conversation with the author of the Centenary Memorial of Doddridge, at the Autumnal Meetings of the Congregational Union, held at Northampton, 1851. If the Writer could have prevailed on highly esteemed brethren in the County to have undertaken the work, he would gladly have done so; but the impression which he had of its desirableness and adaptation for usefulness produced a conviction that the attempt should be made. He has done what he could. The loss of early records in some cases, and the entire neglect to form them in others, has rendered the accounts of some of the Churches very defective; but in some cases the origin and history of the Churches can be correctly traced.

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Materials have been collected from all the sources that supplied any, to which the Writer could have access. His hope is, that the work will tend to serve the cause of evangelical truth and piety, that it will illustrate the nature and importance of Christian Churches formed and sustained on the voluntary principle, and that it may aid in some degree to extend their influence and increase their efficiency. He commends it to the candid attention of the reader, and to the blessing of the Great Head of the Church.

Ashley, December 14th, 1852.

N. B. The Memorials commence with the Churches in Northampton, and the other Churches in the County are placed in chronological order, according to the date of their formation, so far as that could be ascertained.

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# CHAPTER I.

## MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCHES IN NORTHAMPTON.

### SECTION 1.—INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

Northampton has been distinguished in the history of this country by the struggles there maintained for the liberties of Englishmen; nor has it been unknown in the efforts that have been made to secure the liberty of Christian worship and the purity of divine institutions.

Soon after that "morning star of the Reformation," John Wickliffe, appeared, about the year 1369, his doctrines were introduced into Northampton, and met with much favour in the town. Notwithstanding the earnest opposition of the clergy, they were cherished by several persons of rank, the Mayor himself being tainted with the heresy. A formal complaint was made to the King in council by one Richard Stannisworth, a woolstapler, that the chief magistrate, John Fox, harboured in his house James Collyn, a fierce maintainer of Lollardy (as the sentiments of Wickliffe were called), in Northampton, and that they encouraged the preaching of the Lollards, contrary to the prohibition of the Bishop of Lincoln. Thus it appears that there were numbers at that time in Northampton ready to welcome the days of reformation from the corruptions of Popery. [2]

When the Reformation was introduced, and sanctioned by the rulers of England, amongst those who sought a greater degree of purity in the worship of God than the sovereign would allow, and who could not conform to the relics of Romanism that were retained, were several devoted men who laboured and suffered in Northampton.

Francis Merbury was a minister at Northampton during this period, when the Puritans struggled to obtain a change in the existing state of things. He was brought into many troubles for Nonconformity, being several times cast into prison. On Nov. 5th, 1578, he was convened before the High Commission, where he underwent a severe examination, and was sent a prisoner to the Marshalsea.

Edward Snape, after being educated in the University of Cambridge, became minister of Saint Peter's Church, Northampton. He was a decided Nonconformist, a laborious preacher, and a zealous advocate for a pure reformation of the Church. It is stated that when the parishioners of St. Peter's understood that he did not account himself a full minister until he should be chosen by some particular congregation, they immediately chose him to be their minister. In 1590 he was brought into trouble on account of the Associations held in Northamptonshire and Warwickshire. He was a zealous and active member of these assemblies, for which he was summoned before the High Commission. He moved the Mayor of Northampton to unite with other towns in presenting a supplication to the Queen, humbly beseeching her Majesty to hear their cries, and grant them a more pure ecclesiastical discipline. [3]

The following anecdote is related of this persecuted servant of God: "He was cast into prison by the bishops for his Nonconformity; and all his money being expended by his long confinement, he met with much unkind usage from the gaoler. The good man being one day on his knees in fervent prayer to God, and the window of his chamber being open, he observed something thrown into the room; but he resolved to finish his prayer before he examined what it was. When he rose from his knees, he found to his great surprise that it was a purse full of gold. By this unexpected supply he was more comfortable in his situation, and enabled to make his keeper more humane ever after. "The Lord heareth the young ravens that cry; how much more," it is observed, in connexion with this, "will he hear his afflicted people?"

Humphrey Fenn was several years minister at Northampton—a most learned and venerable divine, whose ministry was rendered very successful: yet he underwent many troubles for Nonconformity. While at Northampton he experienced the cruel oppression of the times—was apprehended and committed to close prison, where he remained a long time. During his confinement the inhabitants of Northampton presented a supplication to Queen Elizabeth, humbly and earnestly desiring her Majesty to grant his release, and his restoration to his beloved ministry. In this supplication they affirmed, upon their dutiful allegiance, that during his abode in that place he had lived a honest and a peaceable life; and they gave a high character of his diligence in preaching, his obedience to God, and to those in authority. It does not appear whether this application was at all successful. Mr. Fenn, with some others, presented a long letter to the Queen in vindication of their own innocence; but we have not discovered how long they remained in prison after that period. [4]

John Penry, a very distinguished Puritan, after leaving the University, was settled for some time at Northampton. He was brought before the High Commissioners for Nonconformity, and after examination, cast into prison. After a month's confinement, he was discharged; but when he had obtained his release, they sent their pursuivants to apprehend him, and again commit him to prison. Walton, one of them, went immediately to Northampton, and upon entering Mr. Penry's house ransacked his study, and took away all the books and papers which he thought proper; but Mr. Penry was not to be found. Upon the publication of 'Martin Mar-Prelate,' he was again

apprehended.

He became at length a member of a Church of Brownists, meeting about London, sometimes in the fields and woods, in the dead of the night, to avoid the fury of the prelates. During his imprisonment he wrote a most pious, affectionate, and encouraging letter to Mr. F. Johnson, the pastor, and the rest of the brethren. It is addressed "to the distressed and faithful congregation of Christ in London, and all the members thereof, whether in bonds or at liberty;" and he concludes by subscribing himself, "their loving brother in the patience and sufferings of the Gospel, John Penry, a witness of Christ in this life, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." He at length lost his life for the cause to which he was devoted, for he was executed May 29th, 1593.

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Arthur Wake was another of these worthies, who had some connexion with Northampton. He was a son of John Wake, Esq., descended from an ancient and honourable family. He became a most popular and useful preacher. In 1565 he was presented to the living of Great Billing, in Northamptonshire. He was very much persecuted for his Nonconformity, and at length deprived of his living. In the year 1593 he was residing at Northampton, and engaged as minister of Saint John's Hospital in this town. It is stated that "he was a divine of good learning, great piety, and a zealous, laborious, and useful preacher."

By the rigorous proceedings of the ruling prelates the Church was deprived of many of its brightest ornaments, and nearly all its faithful pastors were ejected, especially in Northamptonshire. In the vicinity of Northampton there was William Fleshurne, or Fletcher, B.D., rector of Abington, in 1588. Of him it is recorded, that in 1590 he was one of the Puritan ministers who associated in general synods and particular classes at Northampton, Fawsley, and other places, to promote the new discipline in opposition to the Established Church. He obtained the vicarage of Moulton in 1607, and held it till his death; but appears to have resided at Abington, where he was buried the 3rd of May, 1627.

Dr. John Preston was born at Heyford, in Northamptonshire, in the parish of Bugbrook, 1578. He became a very popular preacher, but met with considerable opposition on account of his Puritan principles. He had a strong constitution, which he wore out in the study and in the pulpit. Being desirous of dying in his native county and among his old friends, he retired into Northamptonshire, where he departed this life in a most pious and devout manner in the 41st year of his age, and was buried in Fawsley Church, old Mr. Dod, minister of the place, preaching his funeral sermon to a numerous auditory. His practical works and sermons were printed by his own order after his decease.

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William Prandlove was a respectable Puritan minister, who about the year 1562 became vicar of Fawsley, in Northamptonshire, and in 1577 he became rector of Lamport, in the same county. He united with his brethren in their private associations, and took an active part in promoting the desired ecclesiastical discipline, for which, in the year 1590, he was apprehended and cast into prison, where he remained a long time. He was after carried before the High Commission and the Star Chamber, where he underwent the severe scrutiny of his ecclesiastical inquisitors.

In connexion with these statements relating to Puritan ministers who maintained and suffered for their principles in the county town of Northamptonshire and its immediate vicinity, it may not be considered unsuitable to state that a Sir Richard Knightley, at Fawsley in this county, who received the honour of knighthood from the Earl of Leicester, at Fotheringay, in the 8th of Elizabeth, 1566, was one of the earliest and most zealous patrons of the Puritans, or opposers of the new Act for the Uniformity of Worship, who assumed the importance of an organized party in 1568. Their publications, principally from the pen of John Ap-Henry, better known by the assumed name of Martin Mar-Prelate, were industriously though secretly disseminated by means of a travelling printing press, conducted by one Walgrave. To elude detection, the scene of its operations was frequently changed. It was first set up at Mousley, in Surrey, from whence it was removed to Fawsley, and worked in a private upper room, approached only by a winding staircase. Its next stage was to Norton, another of Sir Richard's seats. It was subsequently conveyed to Coventry, Woolston, in Warwickshire, and finally to Manchester, where it was seized by the Earl of Derby. For these clandestine proceedings Sir Richard and his associates were summoned before the Court of Star Chamber, and heavily fined; but Archbishop Whitgift, though one of the most prominent objects of their attack, with a truly Christian spirit obtained by his intercession a remission of their sentence. In the succeeding reign, Sir Richard ventured, with Sir Edward Montague, Sir Francis Hastings, and 60 or 80 other gentlemen, to petition the King on behalf of the Puritan clergy of this county; but they were severely rebuked in the Star Chamber and at the Council Table for their presumption, and Sir Richard was dismissed both from the lieutenantancy and the commission of the peace.

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There is another name that is connected with Fawsley and the county of Northampton, to which we should like to devote a single page—the name of John Dod, A.M., generally styled "the Decalogist," from his celebrated exposition of the Ten Commandments. He resided several years at Fawsley, under the patronage of the Knightley family. This learned Puritan divine was the youngest son of John Dod, Esq., of Shacklath, in Cheshire, where he was born in 1555. He was educated at Jesus College, Cambridge. He was successively minister of Hanwell, in Oxfordshire, Fenny Drayton, in Leicestershire, Canons Ashby and Fawsley in this county. In a work published in 1635, entitled 'A Plain and Familiar Exposition of the Lord's Prayer,' there is a dedication to his much honoured, loving friend, Mr. Richard Knightley; where he states, "I dedicate this book unto you, that as the Lord is my witness that I pray daily for you by name (and so, by his assistance, I

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purpose to do while I live), so I must leave some testimony behind me to men after my death (which I continually wait for) of my unfeigned and hearty thankfulness for all your favours and goodness to me and mine." He survived ten years after this, and died at the very advanced age of 90 years—was buried at Fawsley, 19th of August, 1645. He published a number of different works; but his sayings acquired great provincial celebrity, and have been printed in various forms. Fuller characterizes him as "by nature a witty, by industry a learned, by grace a godly, divine." His life was written by Samuel Clarke.

Mr. Dod was several times silenced for his want of entire conformity to the established system; but he maintained his principles to the last, being distinguished by his fervent spirit of devotion, his entire reliance on God, his submission to the Divine will, his trust in the Redeemer, his heavenly-mindedness. "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

Though this Work chiefly relates to one denomination of Nonconformists in Northamptonshire, it appeared to us desirable to include a short notice of these early advocates of Nonconformity, especially in the town of Northampton, though they did not generally come out from the Church as by law established; for they laboured to obtain a further reformation, and would rather suffer than conform to all that was required. Their principles and their spirit gradually led on to all that has since been manifested in the support of genuine, evangelical, vital, voluntary Christianity, in the different communities that have separated from the Established Church. [9]

## SECTION 2.—THE CHURCH AT CASTLE HILL.

There are some places of worship which attain notoriety entirely from some celebrated individual that has been connected with them. The talents, the learning, the preaching, or the writings of one of the ministers, have identified the place with his name.

This is the case with the Meeting House at Castle Hill, Northampton. A plain structure, resembling many others that were built about the same period, it is regarded with the deepest interest, as the place where Doddridge spent the greater part of his life as a pastor. In that place Doddridge laboured; there stands the pulpit in which Doddridge preached; to that vestry Doddridge retired; there he often watched and prayed; at that table he oft presented the memorials of a Saviour's love, and poured forth from the fulness of an affectionate, fervent heart, the strains of an exalted faith and piety.

No certain record can be found of the first formation of the Church assembling in this place. Its origin is lost in obscurity. When the "Act of Uniformity" passed, Mr. Jeremiah Lewis, rector of Saint Giles's, Northampton, was ejected from his living; but such was his natural reserve, and such his retired habits, that it does not appear that he ever preached after his ejection. He did not long survive that event. "He was a man of great meekness; remarkable for his prudence; much beloved by the neighbouring ministers." [10]

Mr. Samuel Blower, who was ejected from Woodstock, in Oxfordshire, is recorded as the first pastor of this Church. Of his history but little is known. He was educated at Oxford, and was a Fellow of Magdalen College. Of his general character we are informed, "that he was of a meek temper, peaceable principles, and a godly life;" of his sentiments, that "he had very exalted thoughts of divine grace and redeeming love;" of the prevailing spirit of his ministry, "that he discovered a very tender regard to young persons, and would often address himself very affectionately to them, not only in his sermons, but in his visits; and that he rejoiced much when he saw anything hopeful in their characters:" of his method of preaching, that "he affected not a pompous way; nor did he dispense the truths of the Gospel with the wisdom of man's words, knowing that that was not so likely to be attended with a divine blessing—Scripture revelations, in Scripture language, were the main subjects of his discourses:" of his friendships we are told that "he was a most desirable friend, being free and communicative, candid in the last degree, of a very sympathizing spirit with those in affliction, and particularly mindful of them in his prayers; and he was so firm and constant where he professed friendship, that it must be some very ill thing indeed that was the occasion of his breaking it off." Of his devoted piety it is said, "that wherever he had an interest, he was for improving it for God to his utmost, and took every opportunity to do so."

He published a funeral sermon for Mrs. Elizabeth Tub, from Psalm xviii. 46: "The Lord liveth, and blessed be my rock," &c. Mr. Blower afterwards removed to Abingdon, in Berks, where he died in 1701. [11]

The records of this Church commence with the following statement:—

*Acts and Memoirs of the particular Church of Christ at Northampton, of which Mr. Samuel Blower was pastor.*

In the year 1695, this Church did, upon the departure of the Rev. Mr. Blower, their pastor, give their unanimous call to Thomas Shepherd to succeed him in the pastoral office, who thereupon accepting the call, did actually succeed him in the office aforesaid.

The form of the Church Covenant:—

We, this Church of Christ, whose names are underwritten, having given up, ourselves to the Lord and one to another according to the will of God, do promise and covenant, in

the presence of God, to walk together in all the laws and ordinances of Christ, according to the rules of his Gospel, through Jesus Christ so strengthening us. (This was subscribed by about 164 names.)

A memorandum on the next page states, "That Thomas Shepherd, accepting the call this Church gave him, did own and declare his willingness and consent to walk with them as a pastor with his people, so long as they could walk comfortably together in all the ways and ordinances of the Lord."

Under date of September 11th, 1696, we have the following statement, from which it appears that Mr. Shepherd's ministry at Northampton was of short duration:—

At a Church-meeting then holden, it was publicly owned by this Church that Thomas Shepherd, their present pastor, was not under obligation to a continuance with them, by virtue of any conditional consent or promise made upon sitting down. The conditions not being observed by this people, my engagements to them thereupon must needs cease.

About a year and a half from this time, *i.e.*, February 25th, 1698, Mr. John Hunt was chosen the pastor of this Church. His father was one of the ejected ministers, a Mr. William Hunt, ejected from the vicarage of Sutton, in Cambridgeshire. He was a man of eminent piety and great usefulness, and two of his sons became devoted ministers among the Dissenters. The pastor of this Church was first at Royston, and from thence came to Northampton, and afterwards he became minister of the Independent Church at Newport Pagnell. He appears to have inserted the following passage from Philip Henry's 'Life' among the Church records:—"Those ministers who will rule by love and meekness need no laws or canons to rule by, other than those of the holy Scriptures." [12]

He was a man of considerable talent, and wrote several valuable works. There appear to have been 100 members admitted to the Church during the ministry of Mr. Hunt; that ministry closed at Northampton in 1709. He died at Tunstead, in Norfolk, in 1730. On February 22nd, 1709, after divers repeated calls, and days and times of seeking God, Rev. Thomas Tingey gave his acceptance of the call of this people, together with the reason of it, and was solemnly ordained unto the pastoral office and charge of this Church of Christ—Mr. Dowley, of Lutterworth, Mr. King, of Wellingborough, Mr. Some, of Harborough, Mr. Norris, of Welford, Mr. Ironmonger, of Buckingham, Mr. Jackson, of Buckby, Mr. Mason, of Spaldwich, and Mr. Wills, about to be settled at Kettering, and Mr. Dale, of Creaton, being present.

Mr. Tingey had previously been minister at Newport Pagnell, so that Mr. Hunt's removal was an exchange of situations with him. Mr. Tingey was an evangelical and able minister, and very zealously exerted himself, even beyond his strength, to preach the Gospel in destitute towns and villages around. On leaving Northampton he became pastor of an Independent Church in Fetter Lane. Dr. Ridgley preached his funeral sermon, and published it, in which he gives him a high character as an able and successful minister. He died November 1st, 1729, a few weeks after his settlement in London. [13]

The ministry of Mr. Tingey appears to have continued about twenty years, until the first part of the year 1729, for on September 28th of that year we find the first invitation given to Doddridge, with a view to the pastoral office.

As we have a more full account of this pastorate than of any other over the Church at Castle Hill, and as it is invested with some peculiar interest from the labours of Doddridge, so we think it proper to present the particulars to some extent before the reader. The following is a copy of the invitation:—

*From the Dissenting Congregation at Castle Hill,  
Northampton.*

The Church of Christ in Northampton sendeth greeting.

REVEREND SIR,—The dispensations of God's providence towards us in suffering the removal of our late pastor is very awful, and we hope hath lain with weight upon our hearts. It hath urged us to make prayer and supplication that God, the Great Shepherd, would appear and direct us in this difficult and weighty matter, and send among us one whom he will eminently own and make a great blessing unto us.

Sir, we have had some taste of your ministerial ability in your occasional labours amongst us, which have given a general satisfaction to the congregation; but this matter being so important, we humbly apply ourselves to you, that you would come and preach among us as a candidate for a month. We leave our brethren, who will bring this, to use what further arguments they may think meet, and recommend you to the wisdom and conduct of the divine Spirit, and continue our prayers and supplications to the great God for our direction. We subscribe our names by the order and consent of the whole Church. (Signed by ten persons.) [14]

The prospect of this removal to Northampton became a matter of great concern to Doddridge and his friends. He had recently commenced his academy at Harborough; he was engaged as assistant to Mr. Some; the latter was very unwilling for him to entertain the idea of removing at



this time; and from his representations, and the regard Doddridge had for his friendship, with some other circumstances, he had almost arrived at a determined refusal. But in the Church at Northampton there was much concern about the matter, and they did all in their power to obtain a compliance; and it was as if God worked with them. They made such representations to the ministers who were likely to have influence with Doddridge, as to engage them on their side. Mr. Clarke, of St. Alban's, wrote, October 21st, 1729—

DEAR SIR,—Your resolution with respect to Northampton I could not but approve, according to the view I then had of the matter; but to-day Mr. Bliss, of that town, called upon me with a letter from the Church, in which they represent how unanimously and earnestly they desired your settlement among them, and how ready they should be in every particular to make the removal agreeable to you; and that as to the objection from your attendance upon your pupils, they would gladly accept of what time you could spare without any damage to them, as they are sensible that you have abilities to go through with both employments. They further urged, that should you refuse their invitation, it might expose them to the danger of division, and they could not join unanimously in any other call. Mr. Bliss also told me that they could have a house fit for your academy on easy terms, and that they would furnish some of the rooms for you at their own expense; and that if Mrs. Jennings did not think fit to remove her family, and is out of pocket by having provided for the reception of your pupils, they would make her a handsome present to reimburse her. In short, that the people were so set upon having you on any terms, that they would do anything for you in their power, and earnestly desired me to press you to consent.

[15]

I must own, their very great zeal in this matter weighs very much with me; and the more so, because it would give you the prospect of being of great service there, and by that means in all that county, where you might be an instrument of promoting a more catholic spirit, as well as of bringing in souls to Christ. I am ready to think that God has some special work for you to do there.

And Mr. Some, the most decided and earnest opponent of the change, goes to Northampton to converse with the people about the matter, intending to prevail on them to give it up; and he, in writing to Doddridge, says, "The hearts of the people are moved altogether as the trees of a wood when bent by the wind; and they are under such strong impressions about your coming to them, that it is impossible for a man to converse with them without feeling something for them. The mention of your name diffuses life and spirit through the whole body, and nothing can be heard of but Mr. Doddridge. I find myself in the utmost perplexity, and know not what to say or do. I think I am like *Saul among the prophets*; and that the same spirit which is in the people begins to seize me also."

Still, before his removal from Harborough, he undergoes a great struggle. He had almost decided, notwithstanding all this, to remain there; went to Northampton to "lay down his good friends there as gently as he could"; preached to them with this view from "When he could not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done." He thinks much of the weight of business that would lie upon him as tutor and pastor; of his own youth; the largeness of the congregation, and having no prospect of an assistant. But he is passing through a room of the house where he lodges, and hears a child reading a chapter in the Bible to its mother;—the only words he distinctly catches are, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." This deeply impressed him, yet he persisted in his refusal. Then a deacon of the Church, whose father was ill, presents an urgent request for him to improve his father's death when he is taken away. He dies that night. Doddridge is detained by his promise for the funeral. He is greatly assisted; many attend, and express the greatest satisfaction in his labours. While waiting for this funeral the young people come to him in a body, and entreat his continuance, promising to submit to every method of instruction he might propose. At length he is so overcome as to be convinced that it is his duty to accept the invitation, though still directly contrary to the advice and wishes of his friends; yet, seeing the hand of God in it, he breaks through all other restraints. After much earnest prayer, correspondence, and consultations, Doddridge sends his answer to the invitation to the pastoral office, of which the following is a copy:—

[16]

*To the Congregation at Northampton, on my acceptance of  
their Invitation to undertake the Pastoral Charge.*

*December 6th, 1729.*

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—After a serious and impartial consideration of your case, and repeated addresses to the Great Father of Light for his guidance and direction, I can at length assure you that I am determined by his permission to accept of your kind invitation, and undertake the pastoral care of you, with the most ardent feelings of sincere gratitude and affection.

[17]

You will easily apprehend that I could not form this resolution without a great deal of anguish, both with regard to those friends whom I am called upon to resign, and in reference to that great and difficult work that lies before me, in the care of your large congregation and my academy. But I hope that I have sincerely devoted my soul to God and my Redeemer; and therefore I would humbly yield myself up to what, in present circumstances, I apprehend to be his will. I take this important step with fear and trembling, yet with a humble confidence in him, and with the hope that in the midst of these great difficulties he will not leave me entirely destitute of that *presence* which I

desire to prefer to everything which life can bestow.

As for you, my brethren, let me entreat of you, that "if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercy, fulfil ye my joy." Let me beseech you to remember, that by accepting your call I have entrusted the happiness of my life into your hands. Prepare yourselves, therefore, to cover my many infirmities with the mantle of your love, and continue to treat me with the same kindness and gentleness as those dear and excellent friends have done whom I am now about to leave in compassion to your souls; for God knows that no temporal advantage you could have offered would have engaged me to relinquish them.

May my heavenly Father comfort my heart in what is now determined, by giving an abundant success to my ministrations among you, so that a multitude of souls may have reason to praise him on that account! and let me beg that you will bear me daily on your hearts before his throne in prayer, and seek for me that extraordinary assistance without which I must infallibly sink under the great work I have thus undertaken. [18]

I shall continue to recommend you, my dearly beloved, to the grace of Almighty God, the great Shepherd of his sheep, with that affection which now so peculiarly becomes your most devoted friend and servant, in the bonds of our common Lord,

PHILIP DODDRIDGE.

The account of the ordination we present, as inserted by Doddridge in the records of the Church:

—  
After repeated solicitations, long deliberation, and earnest prayer to God for direction, I came to the resolution to accept the invitation of my dear and most affectionate friends at Northampton on Saturday, December 6th, 1729, and certified the Church of that resolution by a letter that evening. I removed from Harborough and came to settle here on Wednesday, December 24th. On Thursday, March 19th, 1730, I was solemnly set apart to the pastoral office by prayer, and fasting, and imposition of hands. Mr. Goodrich began with prayer and reading Eph. iv.; Mr. Dawson prayed; then Mr. Watson preached from 1 Tim. iii. 1, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Mr. Norris then read the call of the Church, of which I declared my acceptance; he took my confessions of faith and ordination vows, and then proceeded to set me apart by prayer. Immediately afterwards, Mr. Clarke, of St. Alban's, gave the charge to me; and Mr. Saunders, of Kettering, the exhortation to the people; and Mr. Mattock concluded the whole solemnity by prayer.

It was a delightful, and I hope it will prove a very profitable, day. I write this memoranda of it under the remembrance of a painful and threatening illness, which detained me from my public work the two ensuing Sabbaths. The event is still dubious; but I leave my life and my dear flock in the hand of the great Shepherd, hoping what passed on my ordination-day will be an engagement to me to live more usefully, or an encouragement to die more cheerfully, than I should otherwise have done. Amen.

I administered the Lord's Supper, for the first time, on Lord's-day, April 12th, 1730. I hope we had much of the presence of God with us, and may regard it as a token for good. On the 4th of February it pleased God to add to us eight persons, in whose character and experience we find great reason to be fully satisfied. [19]

The number of names entered in the Church-book, as we consider by the hand of Doddridge, is 342.

After about ten years' labour as pastor, tutor, and author, finding the state of the Church not to his satisfaction, and feeling that he could not attend to it as it appeared to him to require, he endeavoured to engage the Church to choose some assistants to him in his work among the people, under the name of elders. They acceded to the request of their pastor, and unanimously made choice of the Rev. Job Orton, Rev. John Evans, as also of Mr. John Brown, to assist the pastor in his care of the society; and also desired Mr. Samuel Heyworth, by divine providence resident among them, though a member of the Church at Rowell, to assist, by his counsels and labours, in the same office. They were solemnly recommended to God by prayer at a Church-meeting, February 26, 1740, having then signified their acceptance of the call.

These elders appeared at once to enter with an earnest spirit on the duties of their office. After several meetings amongst themselves, with the concurrence of the pastor and deacons they drew up a letter, to be presented to the Church, expressive of what they considered to be the duties to which they were called, and of what they regarded as necessary to the good order and prosperity of the society. The letter was gratefully received by the Church. Special Church-meetings were appointed to consider the proposals it contained, and the unanimous sanction of the members present was given to what the elders desired. Regarding the letter as an interesting document, we shall here present it before the reader:— [20]

*The Elders and Deacons of the Church of Christ assembling on Castle Hill,  
Northampton, to their brethren of the Church, greeting.*

DEAR BRETHREN, BELOVED IN THE LORD,—As we are chosen, in common with our pastor, to watch over you, and serve among you in offices relating to the public honour,

edification, and comfort of the society, we think it our duty to address ourselves to you with one consent, on a subject which appears to us of great importance.

You cannot but know, dear brethren, that our Lord Jesus Christ, whose servants we are, has by his apostles commanded his Churches that they "withdraw themselves from every brother who walketh disorderly, and not according to the traditions received from them; that they mark those that cause scandals among them; and that if any obey not the word, that they note that man, and have no fellowship with him, that he may be ashamed; and that if any brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner" (and, upon the same principle, if he be a liar, or one that defrauds others), "they should not eat with such a one; but that" (though such as are without are to be referred to the judgment of God) "they judge those that are within, and put away from among themselves such wicked persons." These, brethren, are the precepts of Christ, according to which, by our entering into Church fellowship, we engaged to walk; and we apprehend that the neglect of these precepts, and the discipline in the Church of Christ which should be founded upon them, is a great evil, which often provokes God to withdraw from his people, and to hinder the success of other ordinances while this is neglected. We do therefore, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, beseech you that ye would attend to these precepts, and would consent to proper measures for the regular exercise of discipline among us. And as we have observed that several have withdrawn themselves from the table of the Lord, though their names stand as members among us, we desire that the Church would take it into consideration, and that if it shall be found (as they fear it will) that some have withdrawn on account of such irregularities in their behaviour as have given scandal and offence, we cannot think the matter ought to rest merely in their withdrawing from us, but that it is our duty as a Church solemnly to admonish them, and, where the offence has been great and public, to separate them from our communion, till God shall give them repentance to the acknowledgment of their sin; after which, it is our undoubted duty, on a suitable time of trial, with proper declarations of their repentance, to admit them again in the spirit of love and rejoicing in their recovery.

[21]

We do therefore, in concurrence with our pastor, by whose approbation we write these things, exhort you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you enter into a serious disquisition of these things; and advise, that you appoint a day in which they may be solemnly discussed, at which the members of the Church shall be present, and such only; at which time we, the elders, are ready to exhibit a list of several persons absenting themselves from communion, of whose cases the Church will do well to judge, that such measures may be taken concerning them as the precepts of our common Lord direct; and we desire that the elders may now be commissioned, in the name of the Church, to give notice to such persons, if they think proper to attend at that meeting, that if they have anything to offer in favour of themselves and their own conduct, they may be heard, and all due regard be paid to their defence; they being also in the name of the Church informed, that if they do not so attend, their absenting themselves without sufficient reason assigned will be taken as a confession of their being incapable of offering any excuse, so that the Church will accordingly proceed against them.

To this, as our unanimous advice to the Church, we have here set our hands, that if any of us then should be absent, our approbation of these measures may be evidently declared; and we pray that God may guide you in all your deliberations and resolutions, to the glory of his name, and the honour and edification of this Society.

[22]

*April 2nd, 1741.*

After this follows a number of cases presented to the Church for suitable admonition and discipline. One entry we will quote, as deserving the attention of the Churches of Christ at the present day:—

It is the unanimous judgment of this Church, that the frequent acts of bankruptcy which have happened in Dissenting congregations, as well as elsewhere, have brought so great a dishonour on religion, and occasioned so much mischief and reproach, that we think ourselves obliged in duty to enter our public protest and caution on this head; and we do hereby declare, that if any persons in stated communion with us shall become a bankrupt, or, as it is commonly expressed, fail in the world, he must expect to be cut off from our body, unless he do within two months give to the Church, by the elders, either in word or writing, such an account of his affairs as shall convince us that his fall was owing not to his own sin and folly, but to the afflicting hand of God upon him; in which case, far from adding affliction to the afflicted, we hope that as God shall enable us we shall be ready to vindicate, comfort, and assist him, as his friends and brethren in Christ.

Signed, in the name and presence of the Church, this 1st day of May, 1741, by the pastor and deacons.

Shortly after this Doddridge is deprived of his valuable assistant in the academy and the Church, Job Orton; and he parts with him in a manner that indicates the high sense he entertained of his worth, and the affectionate attachment he felt to him. When it was decided for him to leave, we

find this record:—

Our dear and reverend brother, Mr. Job Orton, having declared his purpose of leaving us, on the invitation of the united Church at Shrewsbury, was solemnly recommended to God by the prayers of the Church, several hours being spent in that exercise, and then was dismissed to the said Church at Shrewsbury by the following letter, sent by the pastor, in the name of the Church:—

[23]

*"The Church of Christ assembling on Castle Hill, Northampton, to the Church of Christ in Salop assembling.*

"DEAR BRETHREN AND FRIENDS, BELOVED IN THE LORD,— As the providence of God hath seen fit to remove from us to you our reverend and dear brother, Mr. Job Orton, who has for many years resided amongst us, and has of late years, with great honour and acceptance, ministered unto us and assisted us under the office of an elder; though we cannot resign him without the most affectionate and tender concern and deep regret, yet, being obliged to acquiesce in the determination of the great Head of the Church, though to us a very painful one, we think it our duty by these letters to dismiss him from our stated communion to yours; which accordingly we hereby do, blessing God for all the advantages we have enjoyed by his ministry and presence, and earnestly praying that his labours may not only be highly acceptable and delightful to you, as we are persuaded they must be, but that they may be crowned with abundant success. We cannot doubt but your conduct to him will be so obliging and affectionate, as abundantly to demonstrate the sense you have of the singular favour of Providence to you in sending among you so able, so faithful, and so zealous a labourer; and we earnestly desire your prayers for us, that God may make up to us, by his immediate presence and blessing, the unspeakable and otherwise irreparable loss which we sustain by his removal from us.

"Signed, by the unanimous direction of the Church, at their Church-meeting, October 1st, 1741, in the name of the whole society,

"PHILIP DODDRIDGE."

Another memoranda by Doddridge we shall here insert:—

*May 2nd, 1748.*

I reviewed the list of the Church from the beginning, and found that from 1694, when Mr. Hunt was settled as their pastor (that is, within the compass of 54 years), 784 members have been admitted, inclusive of those then found—that is, one year with another, more than 14 members each year: of which 240 only continue alive and reside still among us; of which, 58 were admitted before my settlement with the Church;— and, as I have admitted 299, they show that 117, who have been admitted from that time, are either removed or dead, besides many others who were admitted before.

[24]

N.B.—Seventy-eight have been my pupils.

This would average, during the ministry of Doddridge, 16 admissions in a year.

The following letter of Doddridge, written about this period, containing some statements relating to his Church and his feelings as a pastor, we think never before published, may here be suitably introduced. It was addressed to "the Rev. Mr. Ryland, in Warwick," father of the late Dr. Ryland, of Bristol, and afterwards minister of College Street Chapel, Northampton.

*Northampton, May 17th, 1747.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—I am much obliged to you for your affectionate letter, and shall be very ready to give you a visit and a sermon, if Providence give me a convenient opportunity; but my motions are at present uncertain, depending partly on some visits I expect from my friends, and partly upon other circumstances. Be assured, Sir, that if I have an opportunity I shall be very glad to see you and serve you to the best of my little power, and think myself happy in an opportunity of doing anything to promote the kingdom of Christ amongst you or elsewhere. I beg your prayers for me. Through the Divine goodness I continue well. I have been much afflicted by the breach made in our Church by the Moravians, who have got from us a little congregation. The affliction has been increased by the death of some very promising and hopeful persons, especially of one who died last night, and whose age, circumstances, and character concurred to give us the greatest hopes of usefulness from him; so that it is one of the greatest blows of that kind that I have received since I came hither. My spirits are much grieved and oppressed; pray that I may be enabled to wait on the Lord with quiet submission and humble hope.

[25]

We congratulate you on your marriage, and heartily recommend you and Mrs. Ryland to the Divine blessing.

I am, Rev. and dear Sir,  
Your affectionate brother and obliged humble servant,  
P. DODDRIDGE.

One more entry we have in the Church-book, relating to his success as a pastor:—

*Some Remarks which have occurred to me on the State of the Church since January 1st, 1747, which I note for the Instruction of any future Pastor.*

At the time above mentioned, I took a review of the number of Church members, which I found more decreased since Michaelmas, 1745, than I ever knew it to be in double that time; for I found that since that time we have received only 15 members, and have lost 17; 12 have died or removed the last year, and only 8 of the 15 have been admitted this year; so that our decrease since Michaelmas, 1745, is 2, and since this time twelve-months, on the whole, 4—a very discouraging circumstance, especially considering how much I have abounded in exhortations to the Lord's table during the last year.

N.B.—The *omission* of the names of three, since recollected, who were admitted in 1745, made the state of affairs appear more melancholy than I afterwards found it to be.

His last statement is—"In looking over the account for the year 1749, I find that 22 had been admitted, and 22 removed by death or otherwise; so that we were just as at the beginning of the year—in all, 239."

These statements rather surprise us; considering what the writer of them had devolving upon him in the care of his academy, in his extensive correspondence, in his numerous and valuable publications, that he should, amidst all this, pay so particular and minute attention to the state of the Church of which he was pastor. It shows strikingly the activity, ardour, and entire devotedness of his spirit. But, alas! it was too active and ardent for the material framework long to sustain the efforts to which it was impelled. Hence the very next entry we meet with is, "That the Rev. Philip Doddridge, Doctor of Divinity, after being twenty-one years pastor of this Church, died at Lisbon, to which place he had resorted for the recovery of his health, on the 26th of October, 1751, we may truly say, to the unspeakable loss of this Church."

[26]

How he lived and how he died is very extensively known, by the Memoir published by Orton—the "Centenary Memorial" of him recently sent forth by Stoughton; so that, though we would fain linger over his memory, yet anything further respecting him would seem to be out of place here.

We happen to have in our possession a copy of the poem sacred to the memory of Doddridge, as it was first published by its author, Mr. Henry Moore, who had been one of the Doctor's students, and was afterwards settled as a minister in Devonshire. It is the same poem in substance as is given by Orton at the close of his 'Memoirs of Doddridge'; but it is there considerably altered from this first copy. It is thus inscribed to Mrs. Doddridge:—

Permit me, Madam, to present to you the following poem, as a testimony of my high veneration for the memory of my deceased tutor, and my tender sympathy with his afflicted family.

I am, Madam, your most obliged humble servant,

H— M—.

*Northampton, February, 1st, 1752.*

We extract the following lines from pages 7-9:—

[27]

O, snatch'd for ever, ever from our view,  
Thou best, thou greatest of thy kind, adieu!  
Thou, in whose ample, comprehensive mind,  
All the ten thousand streams of science join'd;—  
All the fair train of social virtues smil'd,  
And bright religion beam'd divinely mild.  
Ah, love shall listen with delight no more,  
While from thy lips Truth pours her sacred store;—  
No more, while studious to instruct and please,  
You temper serious sense with graceful ease;—  
No more, with zeal for God and virtue fired,  
By reason govern'd, and by heaven inspired,  
Thy various eloquence our ears shall charm,  
Command our passions, and our bosoms warm;  
Bid in our breast seraphic raptures roll,  
And spread the generous flame from soul to soul;  
While sinners start, by conscious terror stung,  
And tremble at the thunder of thy tongue.

Once more, adieu! O friend, instructor, guide,  
With whom our hopes, our fairest prospects died.  
With what fond zeal we press'd the throne divine,  
To rescue from the grave a life like thine!  
If ardent prayers—if streaming sorrows, shed  
In all the bitterness of soul—could plead,  
Our prayers, O Doddridge! had revers'd thy doom,

And tens of thousands wept thee from the tomb.  
But cease, rash Muse—oh, tremble to repine!  
'Tis heaven demands him, and we must resign.  
All-perfect Goodness ever wills the best:  
Then bow submissive to the high behest,  
And silent drop the tributary tear  
That nature's forced to pay to friendship dear.  
Though heaven forbids us to indulge our grief,  
A tear it will allow—the soul's relief.  
Yet who would wish him still confin'd below,  
Struggling with dire disease, or loads of woe?

Then dry the tear, suppress the rising sigh,  
Weep not for him who could rejoice to die. [28]  
E'en when the quiv'ring pulse, the panting breath,  
And clay-cold sweat, presag'd th' approach of death,  
His steady soul, by conscious virtue arm'd,  
No inward stings or gathering clouds alarm'd.  
Calm as the silent surface of the sea,  
When ev'n the gentle breeze has ceased to play,  
Fair hope, strong faith, his sinking soul sustain'd,  
In smiling peace each rising care seren'd;  
Heav'n on the saint shed down her cheering ray,  
And open'd on his mind her dawning day.  
Then his warm breast with bliss ecstatic glow'd,  
Fir'd with th' approaching vision of his God.  
Impatient of his soul-confining chains,  
Eager he welcom'd the dissolving pains;  
Already seem'd on seraphs' wings to rise,  
Already spurn'd his dust, and tower'd into the skies.

Methought I saw him mount the starry way,  
His temples beaming with celestial day.  
Rapt in a flamy car, sublime he flew—  
The flamy car fire-breathing coursers drew;  
Swift as the lightning glimpse he flash'd along;  
While, waiting for his flight, a white-rob'd throng  
(Once wretched souls, enslaved by Satan's yoke,  
Whose painful bonds his arduous labours broke),  
Grateful and happy, smile to see him rise,  
And hail him welcome to th' applauding skies;  
Ten thousand harps, harmonious as the spheres,  
Proclaim their joy, and charm his ravish'd ears.

In proceeding with the Memorials of this Church, now bereft of its beloved and honoured Doddridge, we find that the Rev. Robert Gilbert was called to be the pastor, and entered upon the pastoral charge at Lady-day, 1753. This worthy man died December 28th, 1760. We are unable to ascertain what was the condition of the Church during the ministry of Mr. Gilbert; but have some reason to conclude that it was not in a united or prosperous state. Considerable difficulty might be expected to attend the choice of a successor to such a pastor as the one that had immediately preceded; and this more fully appeared after Mr. Gilbert's short course of labour had closed. [29]

Mr. Hextal was the next pastor of the Church. He was a native of Broughton, near Kettering; became a member of the Church at Kettering under Mr. Saunders; for which, see the Memorials of the Church at Kettering. He was a student at Northampton under Dr. Doddridge; first settled at Creaton, then at Sudbury, from which place he came to Northampton. We have no record of the time when he entered on his ministry at Castle Hill, and no account of anything that transpired during his ministry; but under the date of April 16, 1775, we have this record: "It was this day agreed, by a majority of eighteen brethren of this Church, to dismiss the Rev. Mr. Hextal from his office as pastor, minister, and teacher." This appears to have led to very painful altercations between the friends of Mr. Hextal and those that were opposed to him, which ultimately led to a separation from the Church and congregation. Those who were attached to Mr. Hextal endeavoured to regain the pulpit for him by a process of law, pleading the right of the subscribers to a vote for the pastor; but this was overruled, as contrary to the deed which gives "the power to the Church (upon giving six days' notice by the deacons) to elect, place, and displace a minister as they think proper." The result was, that Mr. Hextal's friends withdrew, and built the Chapel in King Street, where Mr. Hextal ministered till the close of his life. The names of thirty members are given, as having been first admonished for withdrawing themselves from the Church, and, refusing to return, were declared as no longer standing in this relation to them. The name of Mary Doddridge occurs amongst those who had withdrawn. In 'Orton's Letters to Dissenting Ministers,' we have the following passage, in a letter dated December 26, 1762: "My last letters from Northampton encourage me to hope that Mr. Hextal will be comfortable and useful there." To this, Mr. Palmer, the editor, appends the following note:— [30]

An amiable and respectable minister, who removed from Sudbury on account of

dissensions occasioned by a party spirit in electing members of Parliament, and succeeded Mr. Gilbert in the congregation of which Dr. Doddridge had been pastor, where he soon met with equally cruel usage, and was obliged to withdraw to a new Chapel which his friends erected for him, where he ended his days in peace. His great candour and benevolence gave occasion to morose-minded people, who disliked some that espoused his cause, to charge him with a want of orthodoxy; whereas, in point of sentiment, he was in fact higher than the generality of acknowledged Calvinists. Such is the blindness of bigotry.

These unhappy circumstances greatly diminished the numbers in the Church. Under date of April 24th, 1777, we find the names of only 64 members, showing a great decrease since the death of Doddridge.

Rev. John Horsey was unanimously invited to the pastoral office February 2nd, 1777, and testified his acceptance of it on the 2nd of March. He was dismissed from the Church at Ringwood, to be received as a member of the Church at Northampton, and then ordained as the minister. The following is the account Mr. Horsey gives of the ordination service:—

Having accepted the pressing solicitations of my friends, I was solemnly separated to the pastoral office over the Church of Christ assembling on Castle Hill, Northampton, on May 14th, 1777. Mr. Scott, of Hinkley, began with prayer, and reading the 100th Psalm and 3rd Chapter 1st Epistle to Timothy. Mr. Towle, of London, delivered an introductory discourse, received the Church's account of the steps they had previously taken, read by Mr. John Wood, together with a renewal of their call; I testified likewise my acceptance of it, and delivered my confession of faith. Mr. Saunders, of Bedworth, set me apart by prayer and imposition of hands; Mr. King, of Welford, gave the charge, founded on 1st Cor. iv. 2; Mr. Rowley, of Warwick, prayed; Dr. Mayo, of London, preached on 2nd Cor. iv. 5; and Mr. Bull, of Newport, concluded in prayer. Our assisting friends officiated respectively with an amiable order and propriety, the Divine Spirit was eminently with us, and his blessing, we hope, will attend the important transactions of the day.

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*June 1st.*—I administered the Lord's Supper for the first time; it was a very comfortable season. May God grant us his presence in our future engagements of a similar nature!

Mr. Horsey's ministry over this people extended to the lengthened period of fifty years, during which time 170 members were added to the Church. He died on May 12th, 1827. Mr. Horsey was a man of very gentlemanly appearance and manners, great ease, affability, and much kindness; his style as a preacher pleasing, and rather attractive, not distinguished by much energy; but we have heard that in the first years of his ministry at Northampton it was popular, and drew together a rather crowded congregation.

Much has been said and written respecting Mr. Horsey's deficiency in orthodox views, or in distinct statements on some of the great points of evangelical truth. He had the charge of the academy for a time after its removal from Daventry, at the resignation of Mr. Belsham. Suspensions arising as to his sentiments on the person and work of Christ, he resigned his office as tutor, and the academy was for a time broken up; nor was the Church or congregation after this in a flourishing state under the ministry of Mr. Horsey. The attendance declined; the number of members diminished. This may be the case under certain circumstances where there is no deficiency in truth, or piety, or ability, on the part of the ministry, and hence may present no certain criterion of the one or the other; and there were a number, we believe, of truly pious devout persons of evangelical sentiments, who continued under the ministry of Mr. Horsey, esteemed his character, and prized his preaching. Yet it must be allowed, we apprehend, that there was a certain vagueness in his statements respecting the person and work of the Redeemer, which showed either that the mind of the preacher was not earnestly intent on discovering and grasping the truth, under a powerful impression of the value of the truth, or that it had formed opinions to which it was unwilling to give a clear and distinct utterance; but Mr. Horsey manifested the spirit of devotion, and a humble reliance on Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and would be found "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life."

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When Mr. Horsey's infirmities increased so as to render him incapable of fulfilling all the duties of his office, Mr. Charles Hyatt was invited to become co-pastor; but Mr. Horsey being removed by death before this connexion had been completed, Mr. Hyatt was then invited to take the pastoral charge, which he accepted, and was ordained September 25th, 1827. We present Mr. Hyatt's account of the engagements of the day:—

After solemn deliberation and prayer to God for direction, I accepted the invitation of my kind friends at Castle Hill to become their pastor, and conveyed that resolution in a letter to the Church, 1827. On Wednesday, September 26th, I was solemnly recognized as the pastor of the Church. Mr. Edwards, of King's Head Lane (now King Street) Meeting, commenced the services of the day by reading and prayer; Mr. Robertson, of Wellingborough, delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Toller, of Kettering, asked the usual questions; Mr. Hyatt, senior, offered up the ordination prayer; Mr. Morrell, of Wymondley, delivered the charge, founded on Rev. ii. 10; Mr. Fletcher, of Stepney, preached to the people, from 1st Cor. xvi. 14; Mr. Gray, of College Lane, concluded with prayer. It was a most delightful and interesting service. Nearly 50 ministers were present, and the impressions then made will, it is hoped, never wear away.

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After this settlement, some of the friends of the late Mr. Horsey separated from the Church and congregation, and commenced the Unitarian interest in the town. On this subject we present the following statement—

Friday, November 22nd, 1827, we held our first Church-meeting, when the following letter was read to the Church:—

*"To the Church of Christ assembling under the pastoral care of the Rev. Charles Hyatt.*

"We, the undersigned members of the Church of Christ assembling in Castle Hill Meeting, having, in obedience to the dictates of our consciences, united in the formation of a society of Christians, whose worship is directed solely to the one God the Father, agreeably to the express injunctions of our Saviour, deem it proper to withdraw, and hereby beg leave to announce our withdrawal, from the worship and communion of the Church to which we have hitherto belonged, on account of the discordance existing between the mode of worship as there practised and that which we believe to have been enjoined and observed by Christ and his apostles."—(Signed by nine members.)

The individuals who signed this letter, in connexion with some of the subscribers, formed themselves into a society professing Unitarian sentiments. [34]

The list of the members at Castle Hill after this contains but fifty names.

Mr. Hyatt's ministry in Northampton continued six years and three months, when he removed to be co-pastor with his father in London. He preached his farewell sermon March 21st, 1833. Something more than eighty members appear to have been admitted during this period.

Mr. Hyatt was the son of the Rev. Charles Hyatt, of Shadwell, London. He was born in the year 1805. Trained in the fear of God, he resolved, on leaving school, to devote himself to studies preparatory to the Christian ministry. Although but fifteen years of age when he formed this resolution, yet he was eligible for admission into Wymondley College, under the auspices of the trustees of Mr. Coward, and accordingly he entered there in 1820, under the patronage of Dr. Collyer. He honourably occupied six years in his studies, and then became the pastor of the Church at Northampton.

He was strongly urged by his father to resign his charge at Northampton, to undertake the co-pastorate with him in the Church at Ebenezer Chapel, Shadwell—the people having invited him to this office. His acquiescence in this request proved a great source of comfort to his venerable father, with whom he indeed laboured "as a son with the father" in the Gospel. He took an active part in the labours of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, and, in 1844, was chosen to be its secretary. The growing infirmities of his honoured father threw the whole weight of pastoral duties upon him; and his frame, always delicate and prone to disease, began to yield to the pressure of labour, which was too much for his strength. On the 16th of June, 1846, his venerated father died; and in nine short months after this, the happy spirit of the son was gathered to his fathers. This change came upon him somewhat by surprise. It is a well known symptom in pulmonary disorders, to look for restoration to health and activity even to the last; and when, therefore, he learned from his physician that there was no hope of his ultimate recovery, it was to him an unexpected announcement. But it caused him neither depression nor alarm. He was prepared for the event; and in the last days of his sickness he was favoured with a continued rapture of love, hope, and joy, which was never interrupted but by the paroxysms of pain which terminated his amiable and holy life. He died in the 42nd year of his age. [35]

Rev. John Bennett succeeded Mr. Hyatt in the pastoral charge at Castle Hill in June, 1833, and is the present minister of this Church. The number of communicants at the present time is 160. There are 300 children in the Sabbath-schools.

Since the commencement of Mr. Bennett's pastorate, four young men have gone out from this Church into the regular ministry. Three members of the Church are almost constantly engaged in village-preaching; but there are no stations connected with the Chapel.

The present Meeting House was built in the year 1695. It is just according to the general fashion of Dissenting places of worship of that era, in respectable towns—a plain building, entirely destitute of architectural ornaments, three galleries, and large pillars to support the roof. Commodious school-rooms were built for the Sabbath-school in the year 1825, at a cost probably of £500. About fourteen years ago the lower part of the Chapel was entirely repaired; lobbies made for the gallery stairs, stone steps to the galleries, new aisles, and cost about £400. It has just undergone considerable alterations—pillars removed, new roof, and new galleries, at a cost of £500. It was re-opened for worship on Wednesday, the 6th of October. We have been favoured with the following account of the services by the pastor:— [36]

On the Wednesday morning the Rev. J. Sherman, of Surrey Chapel, preached an admirable sermon, to a very large and deeply interested audience, the Rev. T. Thomas, of Wellingborough, having commenced the service with reading and prayer. In the evening the service was opened by the Rev. W. Todman, of Yardley, Hastings, who read the Scriptures and prayed. The Rev. Dr. Archer, of London, then delivered a most eloquent discourse, which was listened to with the deepest interest by an audience which filled the Chapel to overflowing. The friends dined together, and took tea at the



Milton Hall. On the following Sabbath the Rev. H. Toller, of Market Harborough, preached morning and evening, with his customary power and acceptance, to overflowing congregations. The various collections amounted to more than £85. The cordial and fraternal spirit manifested by the other Dissenting Churches in the town was such as to afford the deepest gratification to the friends of the Redeemer at Castle Hill. Altogether, the occasion will long be remembered with pleasure and thankfulness by this ancient Christian society.

In the vestry are Doddridge's table, chair, and looking-glass.

The present state of the Church at Castle Hill is such as, we have no doubt, excites grateful emotions to the God of all grace from the pastor and his flock; and in the words of their beloved Doddridge they would say,— [37]

"Th' eternal Shepherd still survives,  
New comfort to impart;  
His eye still guides us, and his voice  
Still animates our heart."

### SECTION 3.—THE CHURCH AT KING'S-STREET.

When discord and contentions arise in a Christian society they are productive of great evils—opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, they prove a hindrance to the advancement of individual piety, and to the extension of the kingdom of Christ among men. Yet the God who "makes the wrath of man to praise him," often overrules the disagreements that arise in his Churches for "the furtherance of the Gospel." In the preceding account of the Church at Castle Hill it will have been seen that during the ministry of Mr. Hextal dissensions arose, which led to his dismissal from his office as pastor by a majority of the Church.

In the month of August, 1774, Mr. Hextal was afflicted with a disease which rendered him incapable of fulfilling all his duties as pastor of the Church at Castle Hill. It was therefore determined to invite an assistant; and it appears that the greater part of the Church wished to have a minister who was not quite agreeable to Mr. Hextal and the major part of the subscribers. This was the occasion of much dissension. A great deal of acrimonious feeling was manifested; pamphlets were written on both sides; and at length a separation ensued; the Chapel in King Street was built, and Mr. Hextal carried on his ministry there. It was erected in the year 1776. [38]

In a preface written by Mr. Hextal to one of the pamphlets that was published, we find the following paragraph, which we extract as expressive of the principles he maintained, and the spirit he wished to exemplify and promote. After censuring the injudicious zeal of some, he observes,—

I mention these things, not to encourage a disregard or indifference about the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel—far be such a thought from me. I believe them, and will earnestly contend for them in the spirit of meekness. The doctrine of the divinity of Christ, on which I humbly apprehend the efficacy of his atonement depends; the fall of man, or his lost estate by the great apostacy; the deity of the Spirit, and the necessity of his influences to renew fallen man to the divine life, are doctrines I believe evidently discovered in Scripture. These I have constantly insisted upon in the course of my ministry, for the truth of which I can appeal to those who have heard me ever since I came to this place. But it has ever been my opinion, that these doctrines, which I look upon as the distinguishing glory of the Gospel, should be maintained in the spirit of love and candour, with soft words and the strongest arguments we can use; and sorry I am that the word 'candour' should sound harsh, and give offence to any Christians, especially to any that belong to the Church and congregation that enjoyed so long such a burning and shining light as Dr. Doddridge, in whose example and ministry the zeal for Gospel truth adorned with moderation, benevolence, and charity, appeared with such an amiable lustre; and who, "though dead, yet speaketh" in his learned, valuable, and useful writings. \* \* \* May we all be thoroughly convinced, and helped to act agreeable to the conviction, that he is the brightest ornament of his Christian profession, the best friend to the Church of Christ, and partakes most of the temper of heaven, who best loves all of every denomination that he thinks bear the name of Jesus, and most readily exercises candour and forbearance to those who differ from him in non-essentials. Should the separation here be permitted to continue, may we live in peace, and sincerely pray for each other. [39]

Here Mr. Hextal laboured until the close of his ministry, and ended his days amongst this people, dying at the age of 66 years.

The following inscription is on a tablet in the Chapel:—

LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

Sacred to the memory of the Rev. WILLIAM HEXTAL, a faithful minister of the Gospel, and sometime pastor of this Christian society; who remarkably exhibited in his life what he warmly recommended from the pulpit,—unfeigned piety to God, and universal benevolence to men.

Having endured many and great afflictions, both in body and mind, he entered into the rest which remains for the people of God, November 4th, 1777, aged 66.

Mr. Porter was the next pastor of the Church, entering on his office a short time after the death of Mr. Hextal. The register of baptisms, it is stated, was begun A.D. 1778, by Thomas Porter, pastor of the congregation that assembles in Kingshead Lane, Northampton. The last entry made by Mr. Porter is of a baptism that took place August 8th, 1784; the next being by Mr. Edwards, August 13th, 1786; so that Mr. Porter's ministry was not continued for much more than six years.

About the year 1786, Mr. B. L. Edwards became the pastor of this Church, and filled this office for 45 years, as he died January 2nd, 1831, aged 66 years. The following account of Mr. Edwards appeared in the *Congregational Magazine*, shortly after his death:—

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Mr. Edwards pursued his preparatory studies for the ministry at the Theological Institution then conducted at Hoxton, we believe under the tuition of Drs. Savage, Kippis, and Rees; and from thence he proceeded to the station which for so many years he has occupied with an unblemished character. As a minister of Christ, he united orthodoxy of sentiment with liberality of spirit; as a man, he was admired most by those who were best acquainted with him—warm and faithful in his friendships, of a most enlarged benevolence, and universally regarded as the ardent and consistent advocate of civil and religious liberty throughout the world. The later years of life were distinguished by a growing spirituality of mind; and as he drew near to the close of his labours upon earth, he seemed to increase in the fervour of his public ministrations. The illness which terminated in his death was of short duration. On the second Sabbath in December he preached three times: on the afternoon of the day he delivered a funeral discourse, founded on the exhortation of Christ to his disciples, "Be ye also ready," and distinguished by unusual earnestness and deep solemnity; and in the evening he closed his public labours by a sermon from Psalm xxxi. 19. Though from that time till within three or four days of his departure he was too unwell to leave the house, yet no painful apprehensions of immediate danger were excited in the minds of his friends. On the Thursday night preceding his dissolution he became, however, materially worse, from which time he rapidly declined, until, on the morning of the Sabbath, he received the summons, and entered into rest. An individual who on two occasions saw him during his illness, was gratified with the delightful frame of spirit he discovered when speaking of the heavenly world, and the blessedness of those who had reached that place. He is understood to have declared, a short time before his departure, his simple reliance upon the atonement of Christ; and in the anticipation of the great change, to have adopted the words of the Apostle, "I know whom I have believed." The nature of his afflictions, however, prevented him from conversing much; and though he expressed sufficient to satisfy his friends as to the calm and happy state of his mind, their hope of his meetness for the kingdom of heaven rests upon the evidence which a long life furnishes to them spent in the cause of Christ, and for the good of men.

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His mortal remains were committed to the earth on the 11th of January, in the presence of a large assembly, within the walls of the place in which, for so long a period, he had preached the Gospel of the grace of God. Mr. Griffiths, of Buckby, delivered the funeral oration; Mr. B. Hobson, of Welford, and Mr. T. Toller, of Kettering, conducted the devotional parts of the service. On the Sabbath following, the funeral sermon was preached to a crowded auditory, from a part of the 7th and 8th verses of the 4th chapter of the 2nd Epistle to Timothy, by Mr. James Robertson, of Wellingborough. Mr. Edwards for many years filled the office of Secretary to the Association of Independent Ministers of the County of Northampton, and was a liberal and disinterested supporter of the Provident Society connected with it.

The following inscription is in the Chapel for Mr. Edwards:—

To the memory of BENJ. LOYD EDWARDS,  
upwards of 45 years the able, conscientious,  
and affectionate pastor of the congregation  
assembling within these walls,  
this tablet is placed by his bereaved flock,  
as a testimonial of his faithfulness in,  
and their gratitude for, a connexion  
which terminated only with  
his lamented death, on the 11th of January, 1831,  
in the 67th year of his age.

Mr. John Woodward became the pastor of the Church July 1st, 1832. It appears that though this congregation has been highly respectable, yet the number of Church members has been comparatively few; for when Mr. Woodward became pastor, a list of members is given, numbering 33. From this time to April 5th, 1835, when Mr. Woodward resigned, 15 persons had been admitted to the fellowship of the Church.

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The next pastor was Mr. Thomas Milner, M.A., known as the author of 'The Seven Churches of Asia;' 'The Life and Times of Dr. Watts;' 'Scripture and Astronomy;' 'Gallery of Nature;' 'Descriptive Atlas of Astronomy,' &c., &c.

November 28th, 1847, Mr. G. Nicholson, B.A., the present pastor, entered on his labours here. Since that time 25 persons have been admitted to the Church, so that the present number of communicants is 72.

During the ministry of Mr. Milner new school-rooms were erected, at a cost of £336. 6s. 5d. There are 95 children in the Sabbath-schools.

The accommodation in the Chapel, we are informed, is not so great as it ought to be; nearly every seat being taken, so that there is no surplus room to which to invite the poor. Architectural difficulties have hitherto stood in the way of enlargement, but it is hoped that some way of surmounting them will, in no very distant period, be found.

#### SECTION 4.—COMMERCIAL STREET CHAPEL.

The Independent Chapel in Commercial Street, Northampton, presents a pleasing memorial of the Christian zeal and liberality of the late Thomas Wilson, Esq., of Highbury Place, London—a gentleman who devoted his time, his energies, and his property to the promotion of the cause of Christ, more immediately among Protestant Dissenters of the Independent denomination. [43]

Mr. Wilson's attention was directed to the town of Northampton as a place which, on account of its increasing population, required some additional efforts for promoting the kingdom of the Redeemer. After many inquiries had been made for ground that would present an eligible site on which to erect a Chapel, a purchase was made in Commercial Street for £600; and a neat and respectable Chapel, sixty-two feet by forty-two, was there erected, at a cost of £2,000, besides £100 for alterations. This was at a considerable distance from other places of worship.

The Chapel was opened for public service on the 9th of April, 1829. The Rev. J. A. James, of Birmingham, preached a very excellent sermon in the morning, on sanctification, from John xvii. 17—"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."

Rev. J. Stratten, of Paddington, preached with much energy in the evening, from 2 Thess. iii. 1—"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified."

The Chapel was for some time supplied by the Rev. Messrs. Blackburn and J. Clayton, of London; Adkins, of Southampton; Gear, of Harborough; Johnson, of Farnham; and Prust, of Highbury College.

After the Rev. Edmund Thornton Prust had finished his studies at Highbury, he was invited by the congregation, no Church having then been formed, to supply for six months.

On the 1st of December, 1829, a Christian Church was formed in the presence of Mr. Walter Scott, late of Rowell, now of Airdale, and the late J. Pinkerton, of Weedon.

Mr. Prust was afterwards chosen to the pastoral office by the Church and congregation unitedly, and was ordained on the 21st of April, 1830, when the following ministers were engaged:—Mr. B. L. Edwards, of Northampton, read the Scriptures and prayed—Thomas Toller, of Kettering, delivered the introductory discourse—John Sibree, of Coventry, asked the questions, and received the confession of faith—Walter Scott, of Rowell, offered the ordination prayer—John Leifchild, of Bristol (now Dr. Leifchild, of London), gave the charge, from 1 Tim. iv. 6, "A good minister of Jesus Christ," which was published by request—Charles Hyatt, sen., of London, concluded with prayer. [44]

In the evening the Rev. C. J. Hyatt, of Northampton, read and prayed—J. W. Percy, of Warwick, preached to the people, from 1 Thess. v. 13, 14—W. Gray, of Northampton, concluded with prayer.

The following reference is made to the services of the day, in an advertisement prefixed to the printed charge:—

The ordination was attended by a number of his brethren of the town and neighbourhood, of several denominations, who gave on that occasion an instance of brotherly love and concord that will not soon be forgotten. The young minister, with his only remaining parent, and the patron of the Institution from whence he had emanated, seated on either side, received the following address from a minister of his native city, who was well authorized to bear on that occasion a public testimony to his respectable attainments, his unblemished reputation, and his amiable manners, which from a child had procured him the esteem of a large circle of friends and acquaintance. A spirit of fervent love, of ardent prayer, and of devout seriousness, characterized the services of the day, and inspired the hearts of all who witnessed them with hopes of the most pleasing results.

Twenty-two years have passed since then, and those pleasing results have, through the blessing of the great Head of the Church, to a great extent been realized. The Church, which was originally formed of eight members who had received dismissions from Churches to which they had previously belonged, has received from the commencement to the present time 315 members. The present number of communicants is about 150. The number of scholars in the Sabbath-schools is about 400. [45]

Since the decease of Mr. Wilson, a marble tablet has been erected in the porch of the Chapel, with the following inscription:—

This Chapel was built A.D. 1829, at the sole expense of the late Thomas Wilson, Esq., of Highbury Place, London.

This tablet is erected in grateful commemoration of his liberality.

The congregation have erected galleries in the Chapel, with organ, and an additional school-room, at a cost of nearly £1000. A commodious school-room has also been lately built, on a site adjoining the Chapel-yard, for Sunday and Day Infant-schools, with class-rooms for senior scholars. The daily Infant-school numbers more than 120 children, and the Sunday Infant Class about 170. A tablet in the school-room has the following inscription:—"This School-room was built A.D. 1851, for the use of Sunday and Day Infant Schools in connexion with Commercial Street Chapel, and in memory of Stephen Prust, Esq., of Bristol, who was only prevented by death from erecting it himself."

In looking at the whole, encouraging indications, we consider, may be very clearly discerned of the Divine blessing attending the word of heavenly truth, and giving sanction and success to the efforts of his servants.

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## CHAPTER II.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT ROWELL.

In the days of the Commonwealth, when Cromwell was Lord Protector of England, a greater degree of liberty for the worship of God and the preaching of the Gospel was enjoyed, than had been known for many centuries before, or was again known till the revolution by William. During this period there came to Rowell, a populous village in the county of Northampton, Mr. John Beverley, a devoted Puritan, to preach the Gospel of Christ. This was in the year 1654. His labours were rendered successful in bringing a number of persons to an acquaintance with the Saviour he preached; and they were willing to make a profession of their faith in Christ Jesus. He directed those who had received the Redeemer to form themselves into a Congregational Church, for the enjoyment of divine ordinances in their purity.

Mr. Beverley appears to have been a man of eminent devotedness to God, partaking largely of the spirit of evangelical, practical, and experimental piety. His attainments in learning were considerable: he had been a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge; but he dedicated all that he had attained to the service of God in the ministry of the Gospel. He had a living offered to him worth £200 per annum, but he preferred labouring at Rowell, where he was not sure of £50; and he greatly rejoiced in the success that attended his labours. In the year 1655, those who had been converted under his ministry became united together in the fellowship of the Gospel as a Christian society. A Church covenant was drawn up, and signed by every member. This being the earliest of the kind that we have discovered among the Northamptonshire Churches, it may not be unsuitable to give it a place in these Memorials.

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*The memor. of a Covenant renewed and subscribed by the reformed Church at Rowell.*

Whereas, being by nature enemies to God and aliens from his covenant of mercy, hateful and hating one another, it pleased God of his free grace to admit us into covenant privileges by baptism, wherein we engaged, and whereby we were bound, to walk as new creatures adopted and redeemed, wholly attending to his blessed will revealed in the Gospel, we do now, with shame and loathing of ourselves, most solemnly acknowledge to his glory that we have most abominably corrupted ourselves, his worship, and the holy covenant of our peace, to the blemish of our holy profession, the scandalizing of many, the grief of God's Holy Spirit and people, and now, through mercy, to the grief of our own spirits; so that we abhor ourselves for all our former ignorant and disorderly walking. And seeing how God hath called upon us by his word and Spirit to lay hold yet again of his covenant, as in a proper season of reformation—seeing he is pleased to continue the proposal of such an unworthy people to himself, lo! how can we be ashamed of his truth and Gospel? We do, therefore, humbly tender ourselves to Jesus Christ and his ministry, in this renewed profession and covenant subscribed—viz., that, through the grace of God, we will constantly maintain and walk according to the whole will of God revealed in the Scriptures, and comprised in the articles above mentioned;<sup>[1]</sup> professing them against all error, heresy, and profaneness, in due order, as members of this one particular Church, for enjoyment of all Christ's ordinances, performance of all members' duties, in subjection to our pastors, ruling officers, and to each other in the Lord; holding due communion with all other reformed Churches of Christ in the world, that so we may be built up in knowledge and holiness, better to maintain our obedience to Christ, the common interest of the saints, and so

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more please and glorify God. Accordingly attest to remember his covenant and us, in the approaching day of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be all glory for ever. Amen.

Anno Domini 1655.

(Signed, John Beverley, Pastor; John Ponder, John Cooper, Elders; John Fox, Ralph Mun, Deacons. Then follow the names of thirty members.)

Mr. Beverley's was a short but a useful course at Rowell. After about four years' labour amongst them, he was removed by death, June 2nd, 1658. Some extracts we have seen from his diary strikingly indicate the possession of deep and experimental piety, and show that he often had great enjoyment in intercourse with God. It was seen in his spirit and conduct that he was a "man of God." His labours at Rowell, though short, were attended with the most important and permanent result, the benefits of which were experienced by the descendants of his flock.

He was a zealous advocate for the Congregational principles of Church government, writing several tracts in their support, addressing a letter to Dr. Owen, entreating him to employ his powers in their defence, in which he says—

To whom should such a truth, in such an extremity, betake herself for relief among all her children rather than to yourself, or such as you can prevail with? and judge, if you can justly, any more fit than yourself, even yourself, who have such a name in the learned and Christian world already, as that your very appearing might be sufficient vindication. May I not charge you in Christ's name to rise up once more for Christ, and for this part of his truth, also as in a former Church case, Esther iv. 14? What account can be given, but that God, foreseeing how useful you might be in such a juncture for relief of his truth now abused, did choose to set yourself in that signal place at Oxford, even for so signal a service, for such a signal portion of truth? And can you forbear to extend your hand in such a cause, who can dispatch so noble a work with such ease and facility?

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It is justly observed by Mr. Maurice, that Mr. Beverley was a man of great zeal for the cause of God, guided by that wisdom which is from above. This zeal was expressed in his own personal labours for Christ, in the place and among the people where Providence had fixed him; in his great concern for those places within his knowledge where the Gospel was not preached; and then in his earnest endeavours to stir up his fellow-labourers to be found forward in all their duty to Christ and his house.

When Mr. Beverley was removed by death, the Church at Rowell was "young and tender"; yet its members had been so well instructed in the things of the Gospel, and in their connexion with each other as a Christian society, that they exhorted each other and prayed together, and went constantly to Desborough for a time, two miles distant, to attend on the ministry of Mr. Browning, who, being afterwards ejected from his living, became pastor of the Church at Rowell.

Of Mr. Browning's early life, conversion to God, and entrance on the ministry, some account has been preserved, from which we obtain the following information:—That he descended from pious parents—was a child of many prayers—that his parents early dedicated him to God with a view to the ministry of the Gospel, and sent him to Oxford with this design; but his conduct was such as to cause great grief to them, and to involve himself in distress. After some years he was brought, by the divine blessing on the faithful preaching of the Gospel, to deep conviction of sin, and a real return unto God. He became united to a Church at Coggeshall, in Essex; his pastor and friends encouraged him to devote himself to the ministry. He went with Mr. Simms, his pastor, to a commencement at Cambridge, where he met Mr. Beverley, of Rowell, and Mr. Beverley was the means of introducing him to the people at Desborough; who, after hearing him preach, gave him a unanimous invitation to become their pastor, in the year 1657. He laboured successfully amongst them during five years, when, on the passing of "the Act of Uniformity," he gave up the living, rather than comply with the terms required.

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He then received an invitation to become the pastor of the Church at Rowell, which had been under the care of Mr. Beverley; and then the pious people at Desborough united with those at Rowell to form one society, under Mr. Browning's ministry. Though it was a stormy day, and scenes of trial, opposition, and suffering were before them, yet this worthy minister undertook the charge, dwelt amongst them, and preached the Gospel unto them; maintaining with great fervour and clearness the doctrines of divine grace, with the purity of God's worship, and the interests of holiness. In these trying days, his labours were successful in bringing, during his ministry at Rowell, about 135 persons to be united to the Church, many of whom came from different places around. In the year 1684, we have a brief statement in the records of the Church of this nature:—"From this time dates a sore persecution and scattering which lay upon us, that we hardly got together, much less obtained Church-meetings." A note to this statement observes, "This proceeding condemned afterwards by the Church." Again: "Kept a night in prayer to God, humbling ourselves before him. We partook of the Lord's Supper, and admitted two members." So anxious were they to be faithful to their God and to their principles in this time of trial.

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Mr. Browning was for some time confined in Northampton gaol for preaching the Gospel. From thence he wrote several letters to his flock in different places where they were resident. There is one published addressed to the Church at Rowell, another to the brethren of the Church at Broughton. From the former we give the following extract, as showing Mr. Browning's spirit, and

the wise and pious counsels he gave to his people.

He addresses them as "his dear brethren and beloved," and in one part of the letter observes:—

You are under the awe of that word, Heb. x. 23—25. A suffering day is the trial of our love to Christ. When there is no opposition it is easy. Do not hypocrites do so? But this is the commendation of Christ's followers; they "follow him whithersoever he goeth." "These are they that came out of great tribulation; they are before the throne, and serve him night and day; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them; the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall wipe away tears from their eyes." Come, my brethren, you weep now. Our tender Father has a handkerchief in his hand to wipe away our tears, ere long. Do not offend with weeping; too many tears may defile. "Woman, why weepest thou?" was our Lord's inquiry. Tears of joy become the saints, and there is no danger in them; they will be sure to drop into his bosom, and draw out, it may be the like in him; for he rejoices over us with singing, he rests in his love. Oh, my brethren, methinks I am with you, weeping with you, joying with you, praying with you, and hearing with you. It is true fellowship my soul has with you at a distance. I long after you much in the Lord; yet rejoicingly stay his good pleasure. I would not come out a moment before his time. I would not take a step without his direction. I am wonderfully well, better and better. The cup of affliction for the Gospel is sweeter, the deeper; a stronger cordial, the nearer the bottom—I mean death itself. Oh the joy, unspeakable and glorious, the dying martyrs of Jesus have had! How full freight have been their souls in their passage to their port! I tell you, if you knew what Christ's prisoners some of them enjoyed in their gaols, you would not fear their condition, but long for it; and I am persuaded, could their enemies conceive of their comfort, in mere vexation of heart they would stay their persecutions. "Therefore, my brethren, my joy, my crown, stand fast in the Lord;" rejoice greatly to run your race; fear not their fear; sit loose from the world; allot yourselves this portion, that God has allotted you, "through many tribulations to enter into the kingdom of heaven." Come, the worst is death, and that is the best of all. What, do we stick at dying for him, who stuck not at it for us? Do we find difficulty in that, which will be an entrance into glory? Do princes dread their coronation days? or any loath to come to their nuptials? Foolish hearts! why do we err, not knowing, rather, not believing the Scriptures? I must stay my pen to dry my eyes, because of the overflowing of God's love upon my soul. And now I see, if I had not something to keep me down, I could not bear the loads of God's favour. Blessed be God, blessed be God! "let every one that hath breath praise the Lord." "Oh, love the Lord, ye his saints!" My brethren, do not budge. Keep your ground: the Scripture is your law, God is your king. Your principles are sober; your practices are peaceable; your obedience to superiors known, in all those things wherein your obedience is required. If men have nothing against you but in the matters of your God, rejoice and triumph in all your persecutions.

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The following entry we find in the records of the Church relating to the death of Mr. Browning:— Mr. Thomas Browning, pastor of this Church, was gathered to his Father's house in peace, in an evil, persecuting day, May 9th, 1685, having served his Lord in this house with much pains and many tears, with much presence and success, about 23 years.

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After this, trials pressed heavily upon them, so that we are informed "the Church had but little communion for some months, till God put it into our hearts to humble ourselves, reform his house, and set upon his work, almost lost by five or six years' persecution, and the death of our pastor. We kept a solemn day of prayer, April 22nd, 1686, with good encouragement in it, by drawing out an account of God's dealings with the souls of those following." Then are given the names of seven persons admitted to the Church. Others were added in subsequent months of the same year; and admonitions were given to those who had fallen back for fear of persecution.

After an interval of four years, when a great and momentous change had taken place in the government and in the prospects of England, by the accomplishment of the glorious revolution by William, Prince of Orange; and when, by the passing of the "Act of Toleration," Nonconformists could no longer be persecuted according to law—a measure which our forefathers hailed with great joy, and which made a great change from their former condition—the Church at Rowell heard of the piety and talents of Mr. Richard Davis, who was a member of a Church in London of which Mr. Thomas Cole was pastor. Mr. Davis came to them on probation, and they highly approved of his services—desired him to obtain his dismissal from the Church of which he was a member, that he might be received amongst them; and then they invited him to take the pastoral oversight of them, which invitation he willingly accepted. The account of his ordination is given in the following terms:—

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On the seventh day, March 22nd, 1689, the said Richard Davis, by fasting and prayer of the Church, and imposition of the hands of the eldership in the name of the said Church, was set apart to and installed in the office of pastor or bishop of the said Church of Christ at Rowell; being the answer of many prayers of the said Church. The neighbouring Churches were made acquainted with their design, and sent to, that they might be present by their messengers to behold their faith and order; but when they saw how it was to proceed, several of the neighbouring ministers withdrew, saying, there was no business for them.

In this the Church at Rowell, with their pastor, proceeded according to what they considered to be the primitive model; but it was different to the practice of the Churches around them, and the pastors coming only to be spectators of their proceedings was by no means pleasing to them; hence they appear not to have looked with a very favourable eye on Mr. Davis, or on the subsequent proceedings of his Church.

Mr. Davis was born in Cardiganshire, in South Wales, in 1658; had a liberal education in his own country; and after some years removed to London, where he rose to such attainments in literature, that he was looked upon as well qualified to fill the office of master in a general school in the great city; and for several years he continued in a laborious and faithful discharge of its duties. He became a man of earnest, consistent piety.

In the first part of his acquaintance with divine things he sought an interview with Dr. Owen— [55] with Christian kindness he was received. The Doctor inquired of him, "Young man, pray after what manner do you think to go to God?" Mr. Davis answered, "Sir, through the Mediator." To which the Doctor replied, "Young man, that is easily said; but I do assure you that it is another thing to go to God through the Mediator indeed than perhaps many men, who make use of the expression, are aware of. I myself preached Christ some years when I had but very little, if any, experimental acquaintance with access to God through Christ, until the Lord was pleased to visit me with sore affliction, whereby I was brought to the mouth of the grave, and under which my soul was oppressed with horror and darkness; but God graciously relieved my soul in the powerful application of Psalm cxxx. 4, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;" from whence I received special instruction, peace, and comfort in drawing near to God through the Mediator, and preached thereupon immediately after my recovery." So free was this great man of God in communicating to others what he had felt, which, with other suitable remarks then made, was of great use to Mr. Davis, who, resolving to follow the Lord fully, made a profession of his faith in Christ, and became united to a Congregational Church. He was soon after urged to devote himself to Christ in the ministry of the Gospel. He began to preach, and "with that savour of spirit," it is said, "that warmth of soul, that zeal and judgment, that those who heard were amazed, and glorified God in him." Leaving the advantages of London, he came down to Rowell and became the pastor of this Church. He entered upon his work here with great earnestness of spirit, and pursued it with great and untiring energy. But the methods he adopted were very different to those which generally prevailed amongst the regular pastors of the day. Such was the ardour of his zeal that he could not confine himself within the bounds of the congregation that met at Rowell, or to the places immediately around them. His course of labour somewhat resembled that of Bunyan, of whom it is said, "that he took the whole circuit of Bedfordshire, and some neighbouring counties, for his diocese." But Mr. Davis did not confine these services for the diffusion of divine truth to his own personal ministry, but he called out and employed the brethren in the Church who were considered to be endowed with suitable gifts and attainments in the knowledge of the Gospel, to go and preach the word of the Lord in places that were destitute of a Gospel ministry. He employed what is denominated "a lay agency" to a considerable extent. There were many in those days who were strictly observant of ecclesiastical regularity, who thought none should preach but those who were educated for the work and ordained to the office. The proceedings of Mr. Davis gave great offence to such, and they severely censured this part of his procedure. The view which he took of the subject, and which he promoted among his people, is thus stated in the records of the Church:— [56]

The Church unanimously agreed, that though human learning was good in its place, yet it was not essentially necessary in the qualifications of any to be sent forth to preach the Gospel; and the Church unanimously agreed, that a Church of Christ had power within itself to choose, approve of, ordain, or send forth any to preach the Gospel, either by virtue of office, or otherwise in a probationary way in order to office, without calling in the assistance of the officers or elders of other Churches to approve with them, unless at any time they thought it necessary to desire their assistance by way of advice. [57]

Hence the Gospel was preached, to a large extent, by the pastor and some of the members of the Church at Rowell. Considerable numbers were brought from different places to become united to that Church. Those who were too distant to attend regularly the Sabbath services at Rowell, held meetings for prayer and religious intercourse where they resided; sometimes having the Lord's Supper administered to them, and sometimes attending with the united Church at Rowell. In some places this gave rise to another Church being formed, when the numbers were sufficient to sustain an interest, and to have a pastor of their own; this was the case at Wellingborough, Ringstead, Kimbolton, &c. It is said that the members of the Church have come to Rowell a distance of 20 miles and more, travelling with lighted lanterns part of the way on the winter mornings, and in the same manner on their return in the evening.

An interesting account is preserved of the method adopted, when the members that resided in Wellingborough and its vicinity were dismissed from the Church at Rowell, to be formed into another Church of the same order meeting at Wellingborough.

There were dismissed from us these following, to build a Church for Christ at Wellingborough, which dismission ran in these words:—

"Whereas it is the appointed way of the Lord Jesus (as it may be evidently manifest and deduced from the primitive practice), when Churches are growing too big and unwieldy to answer the ends of communion comfortably, and suitable to the design of

Congregational societies, that they then divide and multiply into more Churches, whereby the Gospel as to its faith, order, and worship, may come to be spread, propagated, and commended to many dark places and corners, by multiplying the golden candlesticks that are properly to hold forth the light thereof; the work of conversion, and the great method divinely appointed for gathering in the flock of God, may be most ably managed; the comfort and establishment of the saints by instruction and exhortation, with the due exercise of authority, and mutual holy watch and care, may be more effectually carried on; the conveniences of believers, their families and neighbours, most charitably consulted and provided for; and antichrist working in its various invented forms of Churches, as diocesan, provincial, national, patriarchal, and catholic, as under one universal pastor and pope, fully prevented: this Church therefore of the living God, that chiefly assembles at Rowell, has declared over and again this to be their judgment, that when any of those dear brethren and sisters that live remotely from Rowell increase into a complete number, so as to be able to answer the ends of their dividing and inchurching, and to bear the weight of those duties incumbent on a particular independent Church of Christ (in all which there must be high living by faith in the Lord Jesus), that this Church of Christ will not only consent to their dividing for to inchurch apart, but have declared it is their duty so to do. Hereupon, after the Lord Jesus having increased this Church of Christ into a great number through his mighty blessing, and especially that branch of them that lives in and near Wellingborough, our dearly beloved brethren and sisters there and thereabouts have requested us to dismiss them from us for this end, that they might incorporate into a Church distinctly and apart from us, and independent of us; we, therefore, by virtue of power and authority leagued by the Lord Jesus amongst us, with our officers, by the present do (they having first acknowledged their faith and oneness with us in the faith and order of the Gospel) dismiss our dearly beloved brethren (then follow the names of the brethren), and also with the like proviso dismiss our dearly beloved sisters (then follow the names of the female members), for that aforementioned end of incorporating together as an Independent Church; declaring that these, or any of these, as then actually dismissed from us, that same moment they actually incorporate by actually covenanting with the Lord and one another in the presence of messengers delegated and appointed by us for that affair, and not another—and those of them that do not at first covenant, shall be deemed still members of us till they actually covenant with that body; but do then declare them dismissed from us, and give our consent for them so to do, when they shall so covenant. Now, committing them to the Lord Jesus, to be blessed with the blessings of the upper and nether springs, and with all manner of spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord, that they may multiply and increase accordingly to many hundreds, and be fed and watered every moment by the Lamb in the midst of the throne, we do in testimony of this our letter of dismissal put our names."

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(There were included in this dismissal 27 brethren, 45 sisters.)

A certain gentleman once asked Mr. Davis "what business he had to go up and down babbling?" for so he called the preaching of the Gospel. Mr. Davis, in the presence of all, turned to him, and, with a countenance which testified a good cause and a good conscience, said, "Sir, I was upon the work of my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Do you know him?" Whereupon the gentleman was struck with silence, and many more with amazement.

The preaching of Mr. Davis, we suppose, must have been very fervent and affectionate, calculated to a very considerable degree to work upon the passions. It was probably in connexion with this that some disorders arose in their public assemblies. Some females became hysterical, and cried out; and various indications of strongly excited feeling were manifest for a time; and numerous cases of affliction, many of them nervous disorders, appeared amongst them. These things being noised abroad, and exaggerated, caused some reproach.

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The subject is thus noticed in the records of the Church:—"Feb. 17th, 1691, a day was kept solemnly by fasting and prayer for the afflicted, where Satan raged extremely; and the faith of God's children was by the uplifted arm of the mighty God of Jacob made to rise proportionably, to the praise of the glory of God in Christ; and since that day, through the goodness of God, the distemper has much abated on several, as a testimony that our God is the God hearing prayer in Zion." Again: "May 23rd, 1691, was a day kept solemnly in fasting and prayer for the afflicted, when God was eminently present; and at the close of the day some of our brethren, naming the awful name of Jesus of Nazareth, brought several of them to themselves, to our great amazement, and as an earnest to encourage our faith that that glorious name ere long will make them perfectly whole." Again: "June 31st, 1691, was kept, the greatest part of the day, solemnly in prayer for the afflicted, for the discovery of any secret mystery of iniquity, if any was at work in reference to them; and for the more clear discovery of the matter of Thomas Haley, because it had been such a thorn in the flesh of this Church of Christ."—We present these extracts to show that there was something rather peculiar in the state of the Church at this time, and in the view they took of the circumstances that arose.

As a specimen of the spirit of the times we may state, that there was a pamphlet published by the opposers of Mr. Davis, entitled, 'A plain and just Account of a most horrid and dismal Plague begun at Rowell, alias Rothwell, in Northamptonshire, which hath infected many places round about; or, a faithful Narrative of the execrable and noisome Errors, and abominable and damnable Heresies, vented by Richard Davis, pretended pastor to a people at Rowell, and by his

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emissaries, the shoemakers, joiners, dyers, taylor, weavers, farmers, &c.; together with a brief account 1. Of his and his parties' practices; 2. Visions and revelations; 3. Great boasts; 4. Admission of members into their society; 5. His people's self-condemnedness; 6. The number and quality of his hearers' admired fits; 7. Some queries to the country people as matter for further search; 8. An expostulation and advice to the people of Rowell. By Mr. P. Rehakosht, &c., inhabiting on the east side of the seat of the Plague. London: printed for the Author, 1692.' Whoever this author might be, the spirit of his work reflects far greater discredit on himself than any of its charges do on the pastor and his flock. Mr. Davis condescended to reply, and near the close of his pamphlet we find the following noble passage:

If there be any errors I maintain, I care not how soon they fall, though I fell with them; nay, if I could be convinced that I erroneously worded any matter, I should soon publicly declare against my own wording. It is not my own honour I seek, but the honour of him that sent me; and I hope I am always ready to bury my own honour in shame, provided I could secure thereby his name from dishonour and contempt. I should think hard of no confession of mine that should give glory to God. But if it be the truth of Christ I am assaulted for (as thereto I am persuaded it is), then all the attempts against it will be in vain: his truth is like himself—eternal, and will abide steadfast, bright, and insuperable, when I and my opposers are moulded to dust and ashes. In parting, I shall again recommend to them Gamaliel's prudent advice, viz., to let us alone; for if this council be not of God, it will fall of itself; but if it be of God, it shall stand in spite of all their rage and persecution, and they themselves will at last be found fighters against God.

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Mr. Davis had to pass through a large measure of censure and rebuke from his brethren. Intelligence was conveyed to the London ministers of Mr. Davis's very disorderly proceedings in sending out the members of his Church to preach; also, respecting disorders in the assemblies, and some reports of erroneous doctrine, as if he were approaching Antinomianism. Remonstrances were sent down to him. Mr. Davis stood upon his defence. He was harshly treated; and being of an ardent temperament, some things would be done and said by him that the prudent would not justify. A public controversy arose. Pamphlets were published on both sides; and neither side, perhaps, could be considered blameless in the matter. That there were some eccentricities in the case of Mr. Davis, and some incautious expressions, every impartial person we suppose would allow; but the spirit of fervent piety, the ardent attachment to the doctrines of divine grace, combined with a deep sense of the obligations to Christian holiness, and some eminent attainments in the divine life, with great labours, and much success, commend Mr. Davis to the grateful remembrance of all the friends of truth and piety.

The following testimony was borne to the sentiments and preaching of Mr. Davis, by the members of the Church at Rowell:—

We, the members of the Church of Christ over which Mr. R. Davis is pastor, and his constant hearers, having seriously considered the principles laid to his charge, do declare and testify they are utterly false, and that the current of his doctrine has been as he himself has laid it down. And further, the design of his preaching amongst us has been to offer pardoning grace, through the blood of Christ, freely to sinners; to press them to accept thereof on pain of damnation; to press us to holiness, from the principle of saving faith; to advance the person and offices of the Lord Jesus—likewise, the person, offices, graces, and gifts of the Spirit; and likewise, to advance electing grace reigning through the righteousness of Christ Jesus. We also attest, that all those evil practices laid to his charge, and especially the ridiculous falsehoods about admissions, are abominable untruths;—whereunto we have subscribed our names at the general Church-meeting, it being a solemn day of fasting and prayer.

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(Signed by 40 brethren, members of the Church.)

The authors of the 'History of Dissenters' state: "With all his peculiarities and extravagancies, which were probably increased by the unkind and bitter opposition of his brethren, Richard Davis appears to have been a very pious man, and an extraordinary zealous minister of Christ. From some occasional sermons of his which were published, it is plainly seen that he must have been remarkably popular. There is a simplicity, an animation, and a pungency in them, which, if seconded by a suitable elocution, must have made a powerful impression on the hearts of his hearers. His zeal was of the most ardent kind; and England at that time, perhaps, scarcely could produce a man of more ardent labours in the Redeemer's cause. Not satisfied with performing the duties of the pastoral office to his flock at Rowell, he added the character of an itinerant too, and extended his journeys 80 miles in every direction around the place of his abode. His converts became members of his Church; and as they lived at a distance, and could only attend on particular occasions, they had religious meetings among themselves for prayer, for conversation, for preaching, as opportunities were afforded. That they might enjoy these in the greatest abundance, he called forth the most intelligent members of the Church into action, and employed them in itinerating within his extensive circle.

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"Of these lay preachers, whom Mr. Davis sent out, several afterwards became pastors of Churches, formed from the societies which he had collected in the towns and villages in which he was wont to preach. To the honour of Mr. Davis it may be mentioned, that he had imbibed a principle, the want of which at that time was exceedingly injurious to the cause of religion, and

circumscribed within narrow limits the usefulness of many excellent men—it may be named the principle of propagation. On this principle did Mr. Davis act, and he united in himself the office and character of pastor, itinerant, and primitive bishop, presiding over his humble presbyters who aided him in the labours of his diocese. While we throw a veil of compassion over his infirmities, it must give pleasure to every friend of religion to witness the fervour of his zeal, and the multiplicity of his labours, to extend the knowledge of Christ as far as his exertions could possibly reach. Let posterity give to his memory the praise which is justly due, and hail Richard Davis as the morning star of propagation."—*History of Dissenters*, vol. i. p. 396.

In the year 1691 deaconesses were chosen to act in this Church. Though this is not a general practice now in the Churches, it is still thought by many learned men that there are references to such appointments in the writings of the apostles. Phebe is considered to have been a deaconess of the Church at Cenchrea; and those whose qualifications the Apostle points out in his letter to Timothy, which our translators understood to be the wives of the deacons, are thought by many to be persons appointed to this office, "deaconesses."

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Mr. Davis died in the 56th year of his age. When constant prevailing indisposition made it evident that his end was drawing nigh, the mutual affection expressed between him and the Church of which he was pastor was very remarkable. He would say to them with the greatest tenderness, "I die, but God will surely visit you;" while he would wrestle in prayer on their behalf, that the great Shepherd would take care of them in the wilderness. And their cries ascended to heaven for his stay amongst them; and floods of tears did they pour out to their heavenly Father on this occasion. But the time was come when he must die. His work was done; he must be called to his rest. Under date of September 10th, 1714, we have the following record:—"Mr. Richard Davis, pastor, after he had faithfully, with hard labour and travail, through many and great difficulties, slanders, reproaches, and persecutions, for about five-and-twenty years, served the Lord in this house, he was taken to rest, and to receive the crown of glory."

About a month previous to this, it was concluded at a Church-meeting to invite Mr. Maurice as an assistant to Mr. Davis. On the death of Mr. Davis, Mr. Maurice was invited to the pastoral office, which invitation he accepted, and was solemnly set apart to the office in the presence of messengers from other Churches, with fasting and prayer, on the 6th of January, 1715.

Mr. Maurice was a native of Wales; a member of one of the Churches in the principality; by them called to the ministry; settled for a time at Olney, in Buckinghamshire, and from thence removed to Rowell. The ministry of Mr. Maurice, in this situation, was continued for nearly 24 years, as he died at Rowell, 1738. He was a laborious and successful preacher of the Gospel; and his pen was employed in expounding and enforcing divine truth, and in illustrating the great principles of Congregational Church polity and the social influence of religion. The congregation continued to be large and increasing, so that on May 29th, 1734, it is recorded, "A talk concerning, and some subscriptions towards, enlarging the Meeting House, if the Lord will." And it appears that the present Meeting House was built in the course of the next year; for Mr. Maurice published a sermon from Psalm cxxii. 4, entitled, 'The tribes of the Lord appearing before him; or, families in public worship: a Sermon preached at the Opening of the new Meeting House at Rowell, November 9th, 1735.' Near the close of the discourse Mr. Maurice observes,—

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With regard to the place, where now for the first time we are met to worship the Lord, if it is possible in any sense for the stone to cry out of the wall, and the beam in the timber to answer it; if stones can speak, as our Lord said they would, if the children of men held their peace—then God has a voice in this work of his providence, which the man of wisdom will hear.

It calls upon us to bless the Lord for our established liberty of conscience, and for the amazing methods Providence made use of to procure, continue, and confirm it. Our fathers were glad to meet together in woods, deserts, and desolate places, for the worship of God, as much as they could out of the way of barbarous, cruel, and bloody informers; and yet were often hunted out and found by these servants of the powers of darkness, and put in prisons and dungeons for the sake of the truth—their families deprived of the necessaries of life by merciless and terrible fines and seizures: but, blessed be the Lord for the Revolution! and may the glorious and immortal memory of King William be in great esteem by all the Churches of Christ; and among them let us, let our children, and their children's children bear a part, in high praises to the God of tender providence at the remembrance of deliverances and enlargements past; and through the same tender mercies conveyed to us, and we hope to be continued to the end of time, may we be helped to make the best use and improvement of our liberty in all religious zeal for the faith and worship of our Redeemer; in sincere evangelical love to each other; and on all occasions in cheerful acknowledgments of duty to that illustrious family under whose wings it is preserved to us, by the providence of the Most High.

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And we are called to own His grace who giveth the everlasting Gospel, and gathereth poor sinners under the sound of it, making our assemblies so numerous as to stand in need of so large a place; and thankful we should be to the same Almighty hand for giving capacity, and a willing mind, to so many of us to contribute cheerfully to the charge. We hope generations to come will bless God for this; and as for us, we must say as David did: "What are we, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." The generous

assistance of our friends in London and elsewhere I hope we shall always thankfully acknowledge, and own the bountiful hand of our God therein; and I can never, without being deeply affected, relate or think of the extraordinary kindness of a religious family, descended from one of the godly elders first fixed in this Church of Christ. What things does our God treasure up in his providence! Nor should we forget to be thankful to the Lord, who, through all the work, though attended with many difficulties and some dangers, mercifully preserved all the persons concerned, so that without bruises or wounds they can view their finished work.

A controversy arose during the ministry of Mr. Maurice on the point, "Whether it was the duty of unconverted sinners who heard the Gospel to believe in Jesus Christ." Mr. Maurice was greatly concerned that such a question should arise, and published a small pamphlet, entitled, 'The Modern Question modestly stated.' To this there was a reply published; and then he wrote, 'The Modern Question confirmed and proved,' viz., that the eternal God does by his word make it the duty of poor unconverted sinners, who hear the Gospel preached or published, to believe in Jesus Christ.' This was not printed until after Mr. Maurice's death, for it is said to be "by Matthias Maurice, late pastor to a Church at Rowell, in Northamptonshire, 1739." It has an address to the reader by Mr. Bradbury, of London, who says, "The author of this work was a person whose learning, temper, and piety, made him very dear to me. At his desire I have perused and published these papers. He has in his letters assured me of the great concern this affair gave him, when a question of so much importance to the work of ministers and the duty of mankind came to be a matter of debate. The Church, to whom he was an affectionate pastor, has lain under a reproach which this book, and their desires to have it published, will effectually roll away." [68]

We introduce this work chiefly on account of a statement it contains from the Church. Prefixed to this little volume we find the following, signed by 52 of the brethren of the Church:—

*The testimony of the Church of Christ at Rowell, against the pernicious new opinion, at their Meeting, August 31st, 1737.*

Whereas of late it has been stated, embraced, and maintained by some, that God does nowhere in the Scripture make it *the duty* of poor unconverted sinners, who hear the Gospel preached, to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation, we, the Church of Christ at Rowell, being greatly concerned that God's revealed will should be so daringly opposed, and earnestly desirous that we, and our children, and all that name the name of Christ, may for ever be delivered from such a pernicious dangerous error, do in the most solemn manner, in the presence of the great God and our Saviour, testify our abhorrence thereof, and declare, that in the strength of Christ we will contend earnestly for the doctrine of faith once delivered to the saints, of which doctrine we look upon this to be a very valuable part—that God does in his word make it *the duty* of poor unconverted sinners who hear the Gospel preached, to be truly concerned for their souls and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. The denial of this we look upon to be a denial of the law of God, not to be borne with in an orderly Church, and attended with dangerous consequences against the Gospel and all the life and power of evangelical, practical religion. Wherefore, what God delivered to our fathers, and what our fathers in his fear delivered down to us, we think ourselves bound in conscience to deliver to our children; namely, that God does command unconverted sinners to repent and believe in his Son for everlasting salvation; and may our children deliver this with greater zeal, and with most desirable success, to following generations. Amen. [69]

Mr. Maurice published a volume entitled, 'Faith Encouraged'; 'Faith working by Love—Four Sermons on 1 John iii. 23; 'Monuments of Mercy; or, Some of the distinguishing Favours of Christ to his Congregational Church at Rowell;' also, a sermon on 'The help of the Holy Spirit in prayer.' But his most interesting and useful work we consider to be, 'Social Religion Exemplified, in several Dialogues, giving an account of the first Settlement of Christianity in the city of Caerludd, and of the administration of the ordinances and discipline of the Gospel in the Church there planted: with the remarkable success with which Christ blessed his own institutions to the recovering of its backsliding members, the satisfaction of those who were under spiritual distresses, and the edification and comfort of the whole Society;—in which many cases of conscience are judiciously answered.' This is a copy of the title-page of the first edition, 1740. It appears that this work came out in separate parts, and that the whole was not published until some time after the death of Mr. Maurice. [70]

There were 134 members of the Church when Mr. Maurice died.

The next pastor was Mr. Jonathan Sanderson. Application was first made to Mr. Wheeler, of Axminster, in Devonshire, who came and preached to them four Sabbaths, but entirely declined all thoughts of settling with them. After this, Mr. Job Orton was invited; but he declined accepting the invitation. Then application was made to Mr. Sanderson, who promised to come and assist them for three or four Sabbaths, when he had finished his studies with Mr. Eames. After a trial he was invited to become their pastor; when he thought the call of God so clear and plain, that he could not refuse complying with it, though considerable offers, more to his temporal advantage, were made to him. In May, 1741, he was set apart to the office. He gives the following account of the solemnity:—

On this day, the Church renewed their call to me to take upon me the pastoral charge

of them under the great Shepherd. Upon that, after having given the Church a particular account of my faith, publicly declared my acceptance of their call to the pastoral office, I gave up myself in a solemn manner to the great work they had called me to. Ebenezer.

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On June 3rd of the same year we had a day of prayer appointed, and invited several sister Churches in communion with us to join in seeking a blessing upon us as a Church, and upon my poor labours amongst them. [71]

Dr. Doddridge spake to the people, and Mr. Hall, of London, gave me a word of exhortation upon the occasion.

The ministry of Mr. Sanderson was devoted and useful, but short. Only six years after the time of his settlement we find it recorded, "Mr. Jonathan Sanderson fell sweetly asleep in Christ Jesus, April 18th, 1747."

When he entered on his office, and transcribed the names of those that were then members of the Church, he wrote—"The Lord grant that the Church of Christ at Rowell may increase in numbers, gifts, and graces, and purity, under the pastoral care of their unworthy servant, for Christ's sake, J. S. So be it. Amen." 38 members were added to the Church during his short ministry.

Mr. Sanderson was a native of Bradfield, a village about eight miles from Sheffield, in Yorkshire. He became early devoted to God, and dedicated himself sincerely to the work of the sanctuary. In the year 1737, when about 19 years of age, he entered a seminary in London, patronized by the Independent Fund, then under the direction of Mr. Eames, F.R.S., who, in the esteem of his contemporaries, was one of the most learned men of the age. The piety of Mr. Sanderson when at the academy appears to have been of the most decided, humble, evangelical, and experimental character. His preaching was very acceptable and useful, so that opportunities were presented to him to have settled in London, and he was advised by some of the ministers of his acquaintance to do so; but he yielded to the invitation of the people at Rowell, and believed that he saw plainly the finger of God pointing him there. He was received with much kindness and cordiality, and was greatly encouraged in the prospect of usefulness there presented. He was welcomed into the county by Dr. Doddridge, who addressed to him the following letter, almost immediately after he came to Rowell:— [72]

Permit me, my dear brother and friend—for so, though personally unknown, I will take the liberty to call you; permit me, with the utmost sincerity and pleasure, to assure you of my thankfulness to the great Shepherd of Israel for bringing you into these parts, to be employed among us, and under him, in the delightful work of feeding his flock, his pleasant flock.

I rejoice to hear by many hands of the acceptance you meet with at Rowell, and of the respect you have of neighbouring brethren and friends, who are so happy as to be at all acquainted with you; respect, which I fully concluded from the manner of your writing (in which I saw at once so much of the gentleman, the scholar, and the Christian) you could not fail to meet with in these parts, where, I bless God, we are not utterly forsaken of the spirit of serious piety and faithful friendship. Were not my engagements so many as they are, and now increasing by the care of finishing my 'Expositor' as soon as possible, I would have waited upon you before this. But I send these to beg the favour of you to breakfast with me at Mr. Saul's, at Kettering, Thursday se'nnight, if God spare our lives till then; and to contrive your affairs so as to go with me from thence to Wellingborough, where I shall dine that day, if God permit. By this means I shall have the pleasure of enjoying your company, and also of introducing you to the acquaintance of a friend or two there, with whom, if you do not yet know, it will be agreeable to you to form an acquaintance, or if you do know them, to improve that acquaintance.

I desire you would make my cordial service acceptable to all my dear friends at Rowell, for whom I have an unfeigned and tender regard; and assure yourself that I have all imaginable propensity to enter into a free, easy, and respectful friendship with you; and that, heartily recommending you to Him in whom, I hope, our friendship does and will centre, [73]

I am, Reverend and dear Sir,  
Your most affectionate brother and humble servant,  
P. DODDRIDGE.

*Northampton, March 16th, 1740.*

Mr. Sanderson commenced his labours at Rowell with great diligence and zeal; tokens of the divine blessing attended his labours. But his frame appears to have been too feeble to sustain the amount of labour in which he engaged, and it was not very long before symptoms of an unfavourable nature were discovered.

Notwithstanding the great affection manifested towards him at first, and the encouraging prospect opening before him, trials soon arose among his people. There were some whose spirit and conduct had been the occasion of painful trial to his predecessor, Mr. Maurice; and they began, but too quickly, to show a similar spirit towards him: those who denied the Gospel call to sinners as such, and who wanted all the privileges of Christianity without its obligations. Some of them soon withdrew their subscriptions from him, and talked of building a new Meeting. There was a worthy deacon of his Church, who stood firmly by him, and who wrote a very sensible letter, kindly and faithfully expostulating with them on their conduct; in the course of which he observes, "We are not without several sad instances which have fallen under our own cognizance, of Churches who, upon ceasing to contribute to a handsome maintenance of their pastor what was in their power, without injury to their families, have gradually dwindled and come to nothing. The reason of this, we apprehend, is very obvious; for when Churches cease to walk in the path of duty, the blessed God is pleased to suspend the influence of his grace, and to visit them with his afflictive hand. We are not arguing for a superfluity, for that you are incapable of doing; but only for a proper expression of love and kindness to your pastor," &c.

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Mr. Sanderson proved to be consumptive, and gradually grew worse, until he was removed by death in the 29th year of his age.

Dr. Doddridge was amongst the number that visited him in his last illness; and after his visit he wrote a kind letter to the father of Mr. Sanderson, in which he says, "Greatly have I loved him and esteemed him, as one of the most completely excellent and accomplished persons of his age that I have ever known. Greatly has God honoured him, as the instrument of usefulness, during these few years of ministerial service."

After the death of Mr. Sanderson, a friend wrote—"Poor Rowell lies in sackcloth. Oh, that she might know in this her day the things that make for her peace! They have my best wishes and earnest prayers that the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, may find out a man to stand in the gap, and fill up the breach which he has so awfully made, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep which have no shepherd."

In the year 1741 Dr. Doddridge published two sermons, the substance of which had been delivered at Rowell—"The Scripture doctrine of Salvation by Grace through Faith, illustrated and improved." In an address prefixed to these discourses to the Church and congregation of Protestants at Rowell he says,—

I cannot conclude this short address without congratulating you on the abundant goodness of God to you as a Church, in bringing among you that worthy and excellent person, Mr. Sanderson, under whose pastoral care you are now so happily placed. I know he is a faithful witness to the truths of the Gospel, and rejoice in that rich abundance of gifts and graces which renders him so fit to state and improve them in the most advantageous as well as the most agreeable and delightful manner. I hope and believe that the grace he so humbly owns his dependence upon will add happy success to his labours; and I heartily pray that you and neighbouring Churches may long be happy in him, and that God, who has by such various and gracious interpositions in your favour expressed his paternal care of you, may still delight to dwell among you.

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Shortly after the death of Mr. Sanderson, Mr. Moses Gregson was chosen, with great unanimity, to the pastoral office. His ordination took place April 20th, 1748. Upon this occasion, the service was conducted in the method generally adopted in other Dissenting Churches. Dr. Doddridge asked the usual questions, and took the confession of faith; Mr. King, of London, preached to the people; and Dr. Guyse gave the charge.

Mr. Gregson continued pastor for about forty years. During the course of his ministry 88 members were admitted to the Church. When years increased and infirmities came on, so as to render him incapable of discharging all the duties of his office, Mr. John Wood was invited to become co-pastor with Mr. Gregson; but before Mr. Wood entered on this office, the death of Mr. Gregson took place. In consequence of this change Mr. Wood was invited to become the pastor of the Church, which he accepted, and was set apart to the office in September, 1789; when Mr. Smith, of Bedford, delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Wood, of Creaton, offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Horsey, of Northampton, delivered the charge; and Mr. Toller, of Kettering, preached to the people.

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No records are preserved of the pastorate of Mr. Wood, though it continued until March 25th, 1811, a period of twenty-one years and six months, when Mr. Wood resigned his office as pastor of the Church at Rowell.

After an interval of two years, Mr. Walter Scott, from Hoxton Academy, was set apart to the pastoral office, on the 20th of May, 1813. On that occasion, Mr. Whitehead, of Creaton, delivered the introductory discourse; ordination prayer, Mr. Toller, of Kettering; charge, Mr. Gill, of Harborough, from 2 Tim. iv. 22; sermon, by Mr. Richards, from 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. In the evening, Mr. Griffiths, of Long Buckby, preached from Zech. vii. 25.

Mr. Scott's ministry was highly acceptable and useful, distinguished by a great fulness and rich variety of matter, and greatly valued through the county. It continued for twenty years, until the year 1833, during which period about 130 members were added to the Church.

New school-rooms were erected in the front of the front of the Chapel in the year 1826.

With his labours as pastor, Mr. Scott united the duties of tutor. For several years he had under his care a number of young men, most of whom were designed for the ministry, in a course of preparatory training, previous to their entering the Academy at Hoxton, afterwards Highbury. His labours in this department were considered to be eminently useful, so as ultimately to raise him to a higher sphere as a tutor.

In the year 1833 Mr. Scott received an invitation to become the resident Divinity Tutor of the College at Airedale, near Bradford, Yorkshire, with which he at length considered it his duty to comply. When it was first presented to him, "he laid it before the Church, desiring their advice and prayer. They unanimously expressed their desire that he would remain with them; and some of them did so in the strongest terms, stating it as their conviction that he ought not by any means to leave. After serious consideration, prayer to the Divine Being, and asking the advice of several ministers, he however came to the conclusion that it was his duty to leave. The Church in general were brought to say, "the will of the Lord be done."

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Some idea may be formed of Mr. Scott's habits while at Rowell, from a passage in an address delivered to the students at Airedale, and published in the year 1835. Recommending them in one part of it carefully to attend to the preservation of their health, he says,—

I would, in a special manner, recommend to you to take regular, abundant, and systematic exercise. On this subject I can speak with confidence, not only from observation, but from experience of both the most painful and the most pleasant kind. I assure you, that by neglecting exercise, by untimely late hours, and immoderate study, I injured most seriously my health. By systematic, determined, vigorous exercise, I have banished disease, regained my health, and even increased the vigour of both mind and body. Had it not been for exercise and attention to diet, as the means in the hand of God, it is my firm persuasion, rather it is with me matter of absolute certainty, that, instead of being able in the possession of good health to address you on this occasion, I should have been the helpless victim of more diseases than one which had begun to invade my frame; or rather, I should have been numbered with the dead. I have observed several running the same course which I had partly run, without having been arrested in it as I was; and the consequence has been, that though they were younger than I was, and at one time quite as healthy, they have years ago been consigned to the tomb.... I am very much disposed to believe, or rather I have no doubt, that, had the history of students and ministers in general been accurately written, the way in which they have neglected their health, entailed diseases on their frame, and shortened their lives, would furnish some of the most striking instances on record in the pages of history, of imprudence in those who ought to be eminent for prudence, and of folly in those whose office it is to teach wisdom to others. I have no doubt that some early and apparently premature removals of eminent ministers from this world, which have been thought to be most mysterious and unaccountable dispensations of divine providence, would be found to be the necessary result of their own conduct, in neglecting some of the most obvious rules of prudence for the preservation of their health. To have prevented that removal, God must have wrought a miracle.

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Mr. Scott is also the author of one of the volumes of Congregational Lectures on 'The Existence and Agency of Evil Spirits.'

After the removal of Mr. Scott, the Church at Rowell was supplied by several ministers, for some time remaining unsettled. On the 5th of October, 1836, Mr. Gallsworthy, a student at Airedale, visited Rowell, and preached for seven Sabbaths, when the Church unanimously agreed to invite him to become their pastor. This invitation he accepted; the ordination service being held October 4th, 1837, when Messrs. Toller, of Kettering, Hobson, of Welford, Scott, late of Rowell, and Green, of Uppingham, were engaged in the principal services of the day. The ministry of Mr. Gallsworthy only continued until December 24th, 1841, when he left Rowell, and became minister to a Church at Pinchbeck, in Lincolnshire. During his ministry 60 members were added to the Church.

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Some months after Mr. Gallsworthy had left Rowell, the present minister, the Rev. Richard Jessop, from Oldham, in Lancashire, accepted an invitation to the pastoral office, and commenced his stated labours at Rowell the 9th of October, 1842. Since that time more than 60 members have been added to the Church. A new school has been erected for the Infant Sabbath-school; and at the present time considerable alterations are about to be made in the Meeting House—re-pewing, new roofing, and enlarging—at an expense of from £700 to £800. The number of scholars in the Sabbath-schools is 320. Six villages are supplied with Sabbath evening services by the members of the Church. Present number of communicants is 130.

In reviewing the history of a Church that has been in existence now for nearly 200 years, what abundant reason is there for full satisfaction with the great principles on which it was founded, as agreeable to the word of God, and the means of sustaining, under God, the faithful ministry of the word of life, and the administration of the ordinances of the Gospel in their purity! Attached to the same principles, and exhibiting their happy and holy influence, this Church of Christ we trust will still go on and prosper—the great Head of the Church attending it with his constant presence and blessing.

## MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT KETTERING.

There are some places which present no claim on public notice from anything remarkable in their situation, their population, or their buildings; yet attain celebrity from the character, talents, and services of certain individuals that have been connected with them. This is the case with the town of Kettering. It is a comparatively small town, containing about 5,000 inhabitants, standing about the centre of the northern division of the county of Northampton; but this place has attained to some considerable degree of renown, on account of the religious advantages with which it has been favoured. By some persons it may be thought of with interest, as the birth-place of Dr. Gill and Mr. Brine, eminent ministers of the Gospel in their day; but it is far more extensively known, as the place where a Toller and a Fuller, though of different denominations, laboured together in the same cause during a space of more than thirty years. No town probably, for its size, has been so distinguished, by having two ministers, of such a high standing, engaged for so long a period as stated pastors of two societies. Their talents and attainments were of a different order, but though different, equally eminent. Fuller was most extensively known on account of his services to the Baptist Mission, and his able and useful publications, whilst he was highly esteemed as a minister of the Gospel—Toller, as a preacher of original manner, and remarkable interest and power, was greatly valued, and will be long remembered. [81]

But for a considerable period we find the town of Kettering distinguished by the faithful ministrations of Gospel truth. The Puritans, in 1591, are said to have held several meetings here and in the neighbourhood. Two hundred years ago, Mr. Thomas Maidwell, an eminent minister of Christ, preached the Gospel here, having become rector of the parish about the year 1650. Mr. Maidwell was a native of Geddington, a village three miles from Kettering. He was educated at Cambridge, became a good scholar, an excellent preacher, and a man of eminent piety. In the year 1662 he was ejected from the living, and ranked among the devoted Nonconformists of the day. After his ejection he frequently preached in his own house, and in other houses in the town; until at length he opened a Meeting House, which would hold from 300 to 400 hearers. In what year this took place is unknown. He lived for thirty years after his separation from the Church. Like many of his brethren in those days, he was tried by persecution. One H. Sawyer, Esq., a large landed proprietor in the parish, was a bitter enemy to the Nonconformists, and often tried to get Mr. Maidwell into his power. He frequently escaped with difficulty, sometimes in disguise. It is said that he was once cast into prison. He was also banished from his home by the "Five Mile Act," retiring for some time from Kettering, it is supposed to the house of H. Barwell, Esq., [2] of Marston Trussell, near Market Harborough. From thence he wrote to his people at Kettering three very excellent pastoral letters, which have been preserved. An extract from the first of these will be sufficient to show something of the principles and spirit of this minister of Christ. [82]

MY DEAR FRIENDS: Grace and peace be multiplied.—Since I heard of the great distress you are in on several accounts, it cannot but much affect and afflict me; and the rather, because my present dangers and sufferings add to yours, which makes the burden heavier to us both. But if our God, who directs, helps us to cast our burden on him, he will sustain it, and us under it, as at present he doth, blessed be his name! for though "we are troubled on every side, yet we are not distressed; though perplexed, yet not in despair; though persecuted, yet not forsaken; though cast down, yet not destroyed." Though we bear in our outward man "the dying of the Lord Jesus," yet if the life, spirit, and vigour of Christ be exercised in our inward man, we shall live to him eternally hereafter, as spiritually here. But the want of that divine vigour and true Christian magnanimity fills most souls with despondency, bowels with sighs, and tongues with complaints. Yet we have no reason to murmur against or complain of our God, who doth all things justly, and wisely, and well, but of ourselves, who neither know, do, nor suffer as we ought; but "in many things we offend all," and therefore all suffer justly. It's true, you will say—what is to be done under our present suffering?

Then he goes on to give them most suitable and important directions; such as, "Let every one search his and her ways." "Let not self-examination be superficial, but special, thorough, affectionate, heart-melting, soul afflicting, extraordinary, becoming so dark a day." "Press after a personal, relative, thorough reformation of what is amiss in heart, tongue, and life." "Have a daily vigorous recourse by a lively faith unto Christ." "Let that faith, in the reality and eminence of it, be more and more manifested in our new obedience." He gives them directions as to the purity of their worship—their spirit towards each other—their sitting loose to the world—giving up themselves entirely to God—giving all diligence in their Christian course—seeking to attain joy and peace in believing—and then closes in these words:— [83]

Thus, my dear hearts, I have answered your desires in your last I received; heartily letting you know, that though I am absent in body from you to my great grief, yet I am present with you in spirit, daily praying for you, longing to see you, which I should have done "once and again had not Satan hindered," which he will do till Christ comes and binds him in chains and removes him out of the way, and gives his people a quiet and full enjoyment of himself in each other. Which, that he may, is the earnest prayer of your unworthy pastor, solicitous for your souls' good.

Communicate this to ours.

It is uncertain in what year the Church was formed, as the first entry in the oldest Church-book is without date. The following is the first statement: "An account of the names of those who are in Church fellowship at Kettering, and have engaged to walk together according to the rules of the Gospel, under the ministry of Mr. Maidwell, pastor there." Then follow the names of 95 members residing in Kettering, and 91 in other places in the vicinity: total number of members, 186.

The Church was formed on Congregational principles, with a pastor, two elders, and two deacons.

Mr. Maidwell continued his labours almost to the last, and died January 9th, 1692, about 80 years of age. He was buried in the chancel of the parish Church, a stone being placed over his grave, with a Latin inscription, now scarcely legible. [84]

We are informed that "he was abundant in labours; never weary of his work, and seldom wearied in it: that he had the happy art of winning souls to Christ; that such was his peculiar aptitude for religious conversation, making a spiritual improvement of all earthly business and concerns he was engaged about, that it was considered a question, whether he did more good or converted more souls in the pulpit or out of it. He had an amiable temper, and breathed much of the spirit of his Divine Master, recommending continually the Gospel he preached by his lovely and consistent deportment." One "of whom the world was not worthy," but whose "memory is blessed." "He was a burning and shining light, and there were many who rejoiced to walk in his light."

After the death of Mr. Maidwell, Mr. Thomas Milway became pastor of the Church. The date of his settlement is not given, but it is supposed to have taken place between January, 1692, and June, 1694. It is supposed that he came from Bury to Kettering. His pastorate was but a short one, not more than four or five years. At the commencement of his ministry the Church numbered 167 members, and 61 were added while he was pastor. In the list of members at the commencement of Mr. Milway's labours, we find the name of John Gill, the father of the celebrated Dr. Gill, and the name of Elijah Brine, father of Mr. William Brine, a Baptist minister of some eminence, contemporary with Dr. Gill.

About the year 1696, Mr. William Wallis, a ruling elder in the Church, embraced the sentiments of the Baptists, and took upon him to baptize by immersion some of the members of the Church. This being brought forward in a Church assembly, in which it is said "to have been proved that he had no right or power to do so," he desired his dismissal, which was granted him; after which he began to preach in another place in the town; and six or seven of the members, embracing the same sentiments, left the Church with Mr. Wallis, and thus he became the first pastor of the Baptist Church in Kettering. [85]

From the parish register it is found that Mr. Milway was buried April 3rd, 1697.

In the 'Nonconformist Memorial,' mention is made of a Mr. Shepherd, as succeeding Mr. Maidwell at Kettering; but the evidence presented by the register of Mr. Shepherd's burial at Kettering shows that he must have immediately succeeded Mr. Milway, and that his labours here only continued for a few months, for he was buried March 21st, 1698. No account of his services is preserved in the records of this Church. We are informed that "he was a minister in the Established Church at Tilbrook, in Bedfordshire. When the "Bartholomew Act" passed, at first he conformed; continuing for some years in his living, a great blessing to the town and neighbourhood. He had the true spirit of his office; his preaching awful and affecting, and his life very holy. Being much followed from places around, the clergy greatly disliked him—used to reflect upon him at their visitations—looked upon him with an evil eye; so that at length, finding his situation very uncomfortable, he quitted his living, became pastor of a Dissenting congregation at Oundle, and came from thence to Kettering, where he died."

The next pastor of the Church was Mr. William Terry, supposed to have come from Hitchin to Kettering. He remained but a short time here, and then removed to London. During his ministry 36 persons were added to the Church. From the recollections of an aged intelligent woman it is stated, that Mr. Terry was popular as a preacher—that he had travelled in Holland and Germany, and did not seem inclined to settle long in any place. [86]

In the year 1709 Mr. John Wills became pastor of the Church. It is stated concerning him, "that he was a gentlemanlike man, of popular talents." During the first three or four years of his ministry 27 members were added to the Church; but his conduct at length gave a great blow to the cause with which he had become connected. He acted in a manner so contrary to the Christian character, and so injured himself as a Christian minister, as to be discarded by the Church. Between the dates of August, 1712, and July, 1715, he was charged with notorious lying, and other scandalous sins, for which he was repeatedly admonished by the Church; but not giving satisfaction by his spirit and conduct, he was dismissed.

After this he remained in Kettering about four years; set up a separate interest; drew up a Church covenant, July 15th, 1715, in which mention is made of 46 members, most of whom had belonged to the other Church, having been drawn away by him, though most of them returned during the ministry of his successor. His bad conduct caused him to be soon rejected by the party



that went off with him.

There was another part of his conduct towards his former charge which appears to have been very dishonourable. The people had raised a subscription, and purchased a dwelling-house for their minister, with a considerable garden. Mr. Wills occupied it as the minister, but wished to make some addition to it, and to secure himself prevailed on the people to have the house surrendered to him, which, from the regard they then had for him, they unwisely permitted to be done. Consequently, after the Church had dismissed him from his office, he still retained the house, and at length sold it, keeping the whole amount of the money, pleading as his excuse that it was but as much as he had laid out upon it, with other disadvantages that he had in removing. He went to Wellingham, Cambridgeshire.

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Such things as these would present some serious hindrances to the advancement of religion among the people, while a man of this character sustained the office of pastor, and afterwards sought to draw away disciples after him.

On the 11th of November, 1714, Mr. Thomas Milway, jun., the son of the former pastor of this name, was settled over them. At the time when his settlement took place, 112 persons are registered as belonging to the Church. During his ministry, which continued only for six years and a half, 48 members were admitted. He removed to Ipswich in March, 1721.

In reference to the removal of Mr. Milway from Kettering to Ipswich, we have received the following extracts from the Church records of the latter place:—

At a Church-meeting, the 26th of October, 1720, the Church gave a call to Mr. Thomas Milway, at Kettering, to the pastoral office, in the following words, and signed as underwritten by the brethren of the Church:—

*"To the Rev. Mr. Thomas Milway, at Kettering.*

"DEAR SIR,—The sovereign Lord of life and death having called to rest from his labours and affliction here our late dear pastor, the Rev. and worthy Mr. Benjamin Glandfield, the Congregational Church of Christ at Ipswich are thereby left as sheep without a shepherd. We, the members of the said Church, have humbled ourselves before the Lord by fasting and prayer, imploring his direction under this solemn dispensation, and do think our present duty is, the endeavouring to fill up that relation by calling one duly qualified for the pastoral office; and having several times had experience of the excellent gifts and graces God in his mercy hath bestowed on you, we cannot but acknowledge how generally acceptable they are to this Church and auditory; and having had several informations of your present circumstances at Kettering, and the way plain and easy for a removal; and considering that your settlement with us in the pastoral office is likely to be of great service to the interest of Christ in these parts, and for the uniting and settling of this Church, which otherwise is like to fall into great confusions—therefore, we, the brethren of the Church aforesaid, at a meeting this 26th of October, 1720, do hereby call and desire you to take the pastoral office in this Church, praying the Lord, the great Shepherd of the sheep, to direct, incline, and settle you with us, unto whose divine providence we commit this great affair, trusting the Lord will enable us to perform those duties required of us. We desire you at a convenient time as possible to return answer to our desires and call, which will greatly oblige, dear Sir, your most affectionate friends and servants in one Lord,

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(Signed) "Thos. Wyneall, }  
"Joseph Wyatt, } Deacons.

"With many others, brethren of the Church."

In another page, in Mr. Milway's own handwriting, there are the names of the 41 brethren and the 79 sisters who joined in the call of Thomas Milway to the pastoral office. "All these distinctly," he observes, "and one by one, gave their consent to my taking the pastoral office. The 10th of August, 1721, was a day set apart for solemn prayer to implore a blessing upon my pastoral labours," when he records the names of the ministers who engaged and were present, and adds, "We have good grounds to hope the Lord was with us, and did assist in the work; and that a spirit of supplication was poured out upon us. For which, his abundant mercy, may we bless him for ever; and may a gracious God say to pastor and people, 'From this day will I bless you.' Amen and amen."

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Short was the course of his ministry here; for we are further informed, that "the Rev. Thomas Milway died the Lord's-day, May 31st, 1724, in the morning, aged 47. He lies buried in the aisle, immediately in front of the pulpit, as does his wife, Mrs. Mary Milway, who died September 9th, 1751, aged 75. He appears to have been honoured and useful during his short ministry at Ipswich.

During this period, about the year 1715, the Meeting House at Kettering was threatened, and thought to be in danger of being pulled down by a lawless mob. The reaction that had taken place in favour of the Dissenters when they aided in effecting the glorious Revolution by William the Third, had now passed by. During the reign of Anne, the enemies of Dissent exerted themselves to abridge their liberties. The trial of Sacheverel, a high Church bigot, under the Whig ministry, and the triumph he obtained among the people, produced a great excitement. Mob violence was employed against the Dissenters, and many Meeting Houses were pulled down. The death of

Anne, in 1714, was succeeded by the peaceful accession of the first monarch of the House of Hanover, who at once declared that "he was determined to adhere to the principles of toleration, and endeavour to unite all his Protestant subjects by affording them all equal protection."

But there were numbers who considered it hard not to be allowed to persecute by law, and who therefore determined to avenge themselves and their defeated party by setting the law at defiance, in order to enjoy the luxury of worrying Dissenters. Hence in many towns in England, during this year, Dissenters were insulted, and their places of worship pulled down or burned. But the Meeting House at Kettering, though threatened, was preserved. "The mob supposed that the building was well guarded within by people armed for the purpose, which prevented them from making the attempt. It is not known what defence was made, but no mischief was done."

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At the time when Mr. Milway, junior, removed from Kettering, a small congregation of Dissenters in the noted town of Coventry had a Mr. Thomas Saunders preaching to them. He was a descendant from Lawrence Saunders, the martyr, who was burnt at Coventry in Queen Mary's days, 1555. The family had possessed a large estate at or near Bedworth, but lost the greater part of it on account of religion. A Mr. Julian Saunders, uncle of this Mr. Thomas Saunders, was a Nonconformist minister at Bedworth; and under him the nephew was educated for the ministry.

On Lord's-day, May 21st, 1721, Mr. Saunders preached, we suppose for the first time, at Kettering. Such was the favourable impression produced by his services on that day, that he was thought by the congregation to be a proper person to become their pastor; and they immediately began to take steps towards bringing him into this relation to them. It was treated by both parties, the Church and the minister, as a matter of high importance. The society to which Mr. Saunders ministered at Coventry was very unwilling to part with him. The Church at Kettering was equally anxious to obtain his services; and then he states, as one great reason that influenced his decision, "he should have ten times the number of people to preach to that he had at Coventry." After a suitable time for further trial, for consultation, and prayer for divine direction, he at length accepted the invitation of the Church at Kettering, and entered on his stated engagements there September 14th, 1721. He was set apart to the pastoral office by solemn services on November 23rd of the same year. The following is the account Mr. Saunders gives of the services of the day:—

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Thursday, November 23rd, 1721, was appointed a day of fasting and prayer upon the account of our sitting down together. Mr. Cartwright, of Buckby, begun with prayer, and prayed well. Mr. Some read over the call of the Church, and asked my acceptance, and then prayed, and indeed prayed in prayer. Mr. Tingey, of Northampton, preached from 2 Chron. xv. 2. Mr. Jennings concluded with prayer, and Mr. Norris prayed among us in the evening. And now to thee, O God! must I give an account for this, and all my actions. I have been persuaded in my own mind, and am still, that I ought to labour where I can do most for God, and that thou, Lord, wilt take it well at the hands of thy servants that study so to do. Let us be made blessings to each other. Let us find thy presence and grace with us. Let much be done for God amongst us, that may effectually answer the clamour of malicious persons, and "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," as well as be made confirming to thy people here. Propter Jesum Christum salvatorem nostrum, cui nunc et in secula seculorum gloria. Amen.

"In his younger days," observes Mr. Some, in giving some account of Mr. Saunders, "he was much addicted to those amusements and diversions in which too many in the present day lavish away their precious time, while their best and most valuable interests are neglected. But "it pleased God," who designed him for eminent service, "to call him by his grace, and to reveal his Son in him," which effectually reclaimed him from the follies of youth, and led him afterwards frequently to drop a tear over them, praying that they might be remembered no more. As soon as he had received the grace of God, it was his great concern to watch against everything that might obstruct his progress in religion, and to use all proper means to promote and strengthen the Christian temper in all its branches. It was a strong desire to do good to the souls of men, by "teaching transgressors the ways of God, that sinners might be converted to him," which inclined him to devote himself to the work of the ministry. He found so much real satisfaction in religion, that he was willing others might taste its pleasures; and he saw so much danger in a course of sin, that he thought he could not do a kinder office than to warn men of it, that they might escape the pollution and condemnation to which it would expose them. He was not so early in his preparation for this holy employment as some others; but with the blessing of God on his great industry and indefatigable endeavours, he soon came forth qualified with such endowments which are of the greatest importance to render ministers useful to the Church of Christ. He became eminently qualified for the ministry of the Gospel, and his labours were greatly blest to his people, by whom he was held in the highest esteem.

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The congregation so increased soon after Mr. Saunders came to Kettering, that it was found necessary to build a larger place of worship, which the congregation did in the year 1723. This building stands to this day, though it has undergone considerable alterations. It is 50½ ft. by 45½ within the walls, with three galleries. It is calculated to seat more than 800 hearers. At its erection some gentleman in or near London gave a handsome chandelier, with 24 sockets.

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During the ministry of Mr. Saunders, Mr. William Hextal, son of Mr. Hextal, a farmer at Broughton, a village about three miles from Kettering, became a member of the Church, and studied under Mr. Saunders for a time, preparatory to his entering Doddridge's academy, with a view to the ministry. It is recorded in the Church-book—"At a Church-meeting held June 2nd,

1731, Mr. William Hextal was received into our communion; and as he is now engaged in learning for the work of the ministry, I gave him a solemn charge in relation to these things; and added several things that I apprehended he should practise as a Christian, in order to his being a minister." At the close of his academic course, Mr. Hextal was settled at Creaton, afterwards removed to Sudbury, and from thence to Northampton.

Mr. Saunders published a funeral sermon preached at Woodford, near Kettering, from Rev. xiii. 14, entitled 'The Blessedness of Pious Persons after Death considered.' Also, a letter was printed, which he wrote in his last illness to his people; which was, by his direction, publicly read to them after his funeral sermon. "Well worth the attention," it is said, "of all destitute Churches." He died in the midst of his life and usefulness, after an illness of some months, July 21st, 1736. In the records of the Church it is stated that "he was an evangelical preacher, had a very happy delivery, an agreeable temper, and graceful appearance; was much respected by the Church people, and much endeared to his own flock, who lamented their loss many years after." His funeral sermon was preached by Mr. Some, of Harborough, from a passage Mr. Saunders had chosen, 1 Cor. xv. 10—"Not I, but the grace of God that was with me." We shall quote some passages from this discourse, relating to the character and qualifications of Mr. Saunders:—

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He had a great gift in prayer, and could express himself very copiously and pertinently in that sacred exercise, especially on particular occasions. His preaching was plain, scriptural, and experimental, in the good old puritanical strain. He did not affect "the enticing words of man's wisdom," which please the fancy; neither was he nicely curious in the form of his discourses; but it was his endeavour to touch the conscience and impress the heart. He insisted largely on the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, especially on the atonement of Christ and the sanctifying influences of the Spirit. He looked upon these as the two pillars in the New Testament temple, without which the whole building would soon fall to the ground. These were his favourite subjects, his delightful topics, which triumphed in his sermons, and diffused themselves through all his performances. He never failed to introduce them whenever the argument in hand led to them; and sometimes, like holy Paul, with whose writings he was so much delighted and edified, he did not scruple a digression which might exalt the name and grace of a Redeemer, and endear him to himself and his hearers. He was fully persuaded that these were the essential parts of the Gospel scheme; that they were clearly revealed in the holy Scriptures; that they could not be dropt without giving up Christianity: and what he had felt of the importance of them to himself was one great reason of his inviolable attachment to them.

He was diligent in his work, and in labours more abundant. Besides the care of his own congregation, which was very large, he frequently visited his friends abroad; preached several lectures; and was ready to lay hold on every opportunity to do good: and God wonderfully owned and blessed his labours. There were many added to the Church under his immediate care, and a promising harvest appeared to be springing up there, even when God laid him aside and called him to receive his reward. May it grow up to maturity, to the joy of such as may enter on his labours. But his usefulness was not confined to his own people: there are several in other places, both in the great city and in the country, which have reason to bless God for the benefit which they received by his ministry. His course was short, but it was well run. He had not quite twenty years allowed for public service in the Church of Christ; but there are few in these later times that have done so much in so short a time.

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He was a person of great moderation, and behaved with much decency and candour towards those who differed from him. He claimed a liberty of judging for himself in matters of religion, and as readily granted the same to others; which did not proceed from a coldness and indifference towards that which appeared to him to be "the faith once delivered to the saints," but from an earnest desire to secure and propagate it. It was his fixed and settled judgment that the mind of man could not be forced; that things must be received in the light in which they appear to the understanding; that heat and passion eclipse the glory of Gospel truths; and that severe censures, given out by fallible and uninspired men, would prejudice persons against them.

To his own people he was a tender and affectionate shepherd, sympathizing with them in their trials, counselling them in their difficulties, relieving and supporting them in their straits, and praying earnestly for them in all their troubles. So cordially was he united in affection to them, that no solicitations could prevail upon him to remove from them, though considerable offers were made him from abroad, and great importunity used to prevail on him to accept them. This endeared him very much to his flock, and did not a little contribute to the success of his labours among them.

He met with many uncommon afflictions, under which he generally appeared easy and cheerful. He did not burden his friends with long and tedious complaints, but poured them out before that God who is able to "help in every time of need"; and he was supported and carried comfortably through several of them. They certainly gave him uneasiness, and might impair his health; but they contributed very much to the improvement of his better part: he came forth out of the furnace as "gold tried in the fire"; and some of the best sermons he ever preached were those which succeeded his severest exercises. These led his thoughts very far into the mysteries of providence, and enabled him to set many of its darkest scenes in a fair light, that he might comfort

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those that were in any trouble by the comfort wherewith he had been comforted of God.

The sentiments and counsels of dying Christians, especially of ministers who have been devoted to their work, have some peculiar solemnity and weight. On this account we shall give a few passages from a letter, written by Mr. Saunders to his flock during his last illness, which was by his direction publicly read to his people immediately after his funeral sermon.

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD,—You well know that for a great while I have laboured under the afflicting hand of God, during a considerable part of which time I could not tell but I might be again permitted to speak to you in his name; but when at length all reasonable hopes of this kind were cut off, I began to think of writing a few lines to leave with you. My weakness increasing put me off those thoughts, until the importunity of a friend animated my former resolution and set me upon it.

Providence favoured me with a station of service among you for upwards of fourteen years, during which season I was led through a great variety of trying afflictions; under which, as God was pleased to direct and support me in a very surprising way, and at last delivered me, so I must in justice say that you behaved to me in the most affectionate and Christian manner. You were sharers with me in my afflictions; your mouths, upon every emergency, were readily opened unto God for me; you rejoiced with me in the removal of my affliction and every favourable turn given to my affairs; and you bore the many interruptions of my service with unparalleled patience and cheerfulness. This could not fail of begetting in me the greatest endearedness and tenderest affection for you; so that my soul was knit to you. My great concern was to serve you; I never thought myself so happy as when I was labouring among you; and often begged that, if it were consistent with the will of God, I might live and die amongst you. And I can now look back with pleasure, to think that I was enabled to refuse all the solicitations I had to leave you. God has been seen amongst us; there has been a glory upon our assemblies; and the great ends of a Gospel ministry, such as the conversion of some, and the training up of others for a better world, I hope have been in some measure attained amongst us. But now I speak no more, nor you hear me any more. And yet, though I am gone from you, I persuade myself, from the cheerful attention you paid to my services while among you, that you will at least lend an ear to what in this manner I say to you. In this respect you may truly apply that passage—"Being dead, he yet speaketh."

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In a further paragraph he states—

I have no other foundation for my own soul than what I have represented unto you as the only foundation for you to build upon, and that you know is God's everlasting love, displayed and drawn out in the sending of his Son, and all that he has done, is doing, and will do for us; and in the complete work of the Spirit in forming us for, and bringing us unto, the full possession and enjoyment of all at last. And what a glorious work, my friends, is this! You have it in miniature when the soul is born again: there is then every essential part; but there must be a great many perfecting strokes before the piece will be complete, and fit to be set in the presence chamber above. There are some sour and knotty pieces, that require more hewing and polishing than others. In some, the constitutional evil may perhaps not be removed, until the constitution itself be broken; which may in some measure account for the difference of the dispensations that good men pass through in this world.

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After other weighty remarks, he gives them advice as to the choice of a successor:—

(1.) Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together, to cry unto the Lord of the harvest to send a labourer amongst you: a loiterer will do you no good. Keep up, and all of you frequent, prayer-meetings. "If you seek him, he will be found of you." Whilst God is with and amongst you, all will be well. I have never yet seen, but where Churches have waited upon God, and kept up their application to him, they have succeeded well at last, though sometimes it has been long first. "He has never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me, in vain."

(2.) Let your first views of the person you fix upon be, at what he himself is: I mean, endeavour above all things to have a man of religion, who shall be able to talk over the great things of God in a feeling, experimental manner. If this be not the case, whatever his gifts may be, and how popular soever his talents, vital religion will dwindle under his ministrations; or, if you should maintain the name, the thing will be lost. Neither the orthodoxy of his judgment nor the popularity of his delivery will ever compensate the want of this. Nor can you expect a blessing from heaven, and that success should attend the service of that man that is not inward with God, and hearty for him in what he does. "The tree is known by his fruits."

(3.) When you have satisfied yourselves in the best manner you can as to the religious part, then have regard to prudence and temper. If a man have not prudence, what will he do that must necessarily be concerned with so many different dispositions—families under a great variety of circumstances, as well as those who are round about them? And if he is not a man of temper, you will have the less pleasure and advantage from his conversation. Some will neglect him; others will be afraid to communicate their

sentiments unto him. How many, otherwise famous men, who seemed to be formed for considerable service, have miscarried here!

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(4.) Remember, you are in a state of imperfection yourselves; and such, after all your care, will be the person you have to labour among you: a man subject to like passions and infirmities with yourselves—one who at times may need your pity and forbearance, as you share in his. However, though this be a reason against being too curious and tedious, yet, on the other hand, do not be too hasty in your determination. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety." You are to make the choice and determine the affair; but, in order to your doing this with steadiness and prudence, advise with some grave, solid persons, that you know are concerned for your welfare, and will give you the best direction they can.

(5.) I beseech and entreat you, that you "fall not out by the way, seeing you are brethren." Be together as the primitive Church was, with one accord as well as in one place. Oh, that of you it might be said, as of them, that "the multitudes that believed were of one heart and of one soul." Bury for ever—bury all former prejudices. How would my soul have rejoiced to have seen that happy day! But I please myself to think it will soon be, and therefore shall use the Apostle's words (Phil. ii. 1, 2), "if there be any consolation in Christ."

I had a design of saying something more; but He that has cut me short in all the other parts of my work, has done so in this last attempt of respect and labour of love: but they are the words of a dying man, and the real sentiments of my heart. I shall leave that passage with you (Acts xx. 32), "And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace," &c.

In the year 1727, Mr. Saunders being in London, Doddridge supplied the pulpit at Kettering for a Sabbath, when he was minister of Kibworth. A letter Mr. Saunders wrote to Doddridge immediately after this will just serve to show that while Mr. Saunders was blessed with much comfort and usefulness, it was not every one of the members of his Church that had imbibed the spirit of their pastor.

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*To Mr. Doddridge.*

*June 1st, 1727.*

MY VERY DEAR AND VALUABLE FRIEND,—I am extremely obliged to you for your kind and consolatory epistle, and also for your kind services last Lord's-day; but am very sorry that my clerk should abscond. I suppose it was to give a specimen of his high orthodoxy, and for fear his tender conscience should be defiled with some of good old Mr. Baxter's divinity. Now this man, who is so much afraid for himself, has lately put a son apprentice in London, where he frequently hears swearing in the family, and is obliged to go to church, and has not liberty so much as to come and hear me now I am in town. But I always observed that the most highly orthodox, are remarkably defective in some branch or other of the Christian character. This is the man, too, who was so much offended because Mr. Brock was not excommunicated for going to church, who has now obliged his own child to attend it for seven years! I hope my very good friend Doddridge will take no notice of his conduct, nor in the least slight his friends at Kettering upon that account. There are not many such as he, though I cannot say but there is more than one; but were they generally of his mind, I would preach the Gospel to the wild Indians before I would serve them. You have a great many sincere friends in Kettering that love you well, and are always pleased with your good services; and I may without compliment say, when I am there, that you have one who esteems you according to your desert, and that, in my opinion, is beyond any man of your standing I ever knew.

After the death of Mr. Saunders the Church wished to have Mr. Wood, afterwards Dr. Wood, of Norwich, to be their pastor, but he declined acceding to their request. Mr. Benjamin Boyce, then a student at Northampton, under Dr. Doddridge, was invited on probation; and on May 7, 1740, he was ordained. Of the ordination service Mr. Boyce gives the following account:—

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Mr. Julius Saunders, of Denton, introduced the solemnity with a very serious and suitable prayer; after which Mr. Floyd more fully engaged in prayer, with great copiousness of expression, and I hope with great fervency. Mr. Simson preached a very plain and evangelical sermon from 2 Cor. iv. 7—"We have this treasure in earthen vessels," &c. Mr. Goodrich read the invitation of the Church, to which the deacons present expressed their consent in the name of the Church by lifting up their hands, with which I declared my determination to comply. The same person received my confession of faith, which I publicly read; and after asking me several questions usual upon such an occasion, prayed over me. Dr. Doddridge gave me a very affectionate and important charge, which I desire never to forget; and to the people, a very free and affectionate exhortation. The whole solemnity was concluded by Mr. Dorsley in prayer.

Oh that God would make his strength perfect in my weakness, and his grace in my unworthiness! Oh that a double portion of his blessed Spirit may be poured upon me, who am so weak an instrument! and that such grace may be given me, who am less

than the least of all saints, that I may "preach the unsearchable riches of Christ," and may be owned of him in my sincere desires and mean endeavours, if it is agreeable to the purpose of his grace, to fit and prepare many souls, that are either brought home or are yet strangers to him, by faith and holiness, for the complete enjoyment of "the inheritance of the saints in light." Thus may the Church of God be daily increased and edified, till all its pastors and all its members shall meet together to ascribe glory and grace to Him that sits on the throne and the Lamb for ever. Amen.

Mr. Boyce continued his ministry for 30 years over this people. During that period 161 members were added to the Church, and at his death the Church numbered 120 members. He died October 24th, 1770, aged 54 years. "Mr. Boyce was a native of Coventry, educated for the ministry at Northampton; in size rather under the middle stature. He was a close student, a practical and experimental preacher."

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The Meeting House was new roofed soon after the commencement of his ministry, which indicates that it could not have been done well at the first, as it had only been built about 18 years. Several new pews were made over the stairs leading to the galleries, and where forms had before been set; which pews were immediately filled, and continued so, as did all the others, until his death. He was buried in the aisle before the pulpit, where his wife also, and mother, and two children were interred; and a handsome stone, with a suitable inscription, was placed in the front of the desk. "He lived much beloved, and died much lamented." Robert Hall observes, "that Mr. Boyce sustained the pastoral office for a long series of years with the highest reputation and success; and his death was deplored as an irreparable calamity, leaving it very improbable that a successor could be speedily found capable of uniting the suffrages of a people whose confidence and esteem he had so long exclusively enjoyed. Such is the imperfection of the present state, that the possession of a more than ordinary portion of felicity is the usual forerunner of a correspondent degree of privation and distress; and the removal of a pastor who has long been the object of veneration generally places a Church in a critical situation, exposed to feuds and dissensions arising out of the necessity of a new choice." This appeared in the case of Mr. Boyce's immediate successor.

Mr. Addington, of Harborough, delivered the funeral oration at the interment of Mr. Boyce, and Mr. Gregson, of Rowell, preached the funeral sermon, from 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. In the closing part of that sermon we find the following statements in the account given of Mr. Boyce:—

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It should be known that he feared the Lord, like good Obadiah, greatly, from his youth. He gave himself up to the Church of Christ under the pastoral care of Mr. Simpson, of Coventry, when he was 16 years of age. He acquired a rich stock of useful and valuable knowledge from those who were admirably capable of imparting from their rich treasures. Thus furnished, he began the sacred work of the ministry before he was 21 years of age, and has told you, in the last letter he will ever write, "It was the determination with which I preached my first sermon among you, to know nothing comparatively, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and I trust it has been my sincere concern to continue in that resolution to the last, testifying repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." You are his witnesses, my dear brethren, how well, through divine grace, he abode by his determination, and you well know that the doctrines of the rich, free, and sovereign grace of God were his delight to study and to preach; and you must know how wisely and judiciously he stated them—with what caution, guarding against every extreme, and every abuse of those great and glorious truths. You cannot but know with what discreet zeal, with what plainness and fidelity, he published the grace of God in the ever-blessed and glorious Redeemer. Was not this the chief topic he delighted to insist upon? and particularly to show what holy, divine, and heavenly influence it ought to have upon the hearts and lives of men? and did he not do this in a very persuasive and pathetic manner? Did he not preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and constantly in his ministrations lay no other foundation than Christ Jesus, which God has laid in Zion, for your faith and hope to build and rest your eternal concerns upon? How has he declared in that very serious and affectionate epistle he sent you, "I know no other foundation that God has laid in Zion; and the more I survey the excellence of it, as given us in the Scriptures, the more I can say it is tried and precious. Nothing else will do to support the stress of our eternal hope, or indeed the pressure of painful afflictions. Blessed be God, here is support! here is consolation! it rejoices me to think that there are so many that can add the testimony of their experience to mine." The great God had blessed him with a happy temper and amiable carriage and behaviour. He knew how to weep with those that weep, and to rejoice with those that rejoice. He abhorred the mean conduct of too many in this degenerate world, the speaking evil of others; and was he not an example to believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity, and in prudence, for almost thirty-three years (which was almost double the number of the years of his predecessor), amongst you, the people of his charge? Oh how comfortable and delightful was the frame of his mind in this his last illness, which suddenly came on him, made rapid progress in extinguishing such a useful and precious light in this our Israel! On the last Saturday se'nnight, being the 20th of October, when he lay down upon his dying bed, he found great comfort from those words, in Romans viii., former part of the 34th verse: "Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died." He spake these words with tears of joy. His language was, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee." When he was asked how he did by one of his friends,

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he answered, "I am well, for the consolations of God are neither few nor small; God has not left me, nor will he leave me." When I asked him how it was with him with respect to a better world, his answer was, with great pleasure in his countenance, "I can cheerfully trust my good God." He seemed always, during the intervals of his wanderings, to be praying, and before he died was very sensible; and, as far as can be learned, he spent his last breath in committing you, his dear people, to God in prayer (in which he had an excellent gift), and then sweetly fell asleep in Jesus, after having finished his appointed work and service.

Mrs. Boyce died little more than six months after the death of her husband, and that shortly after giving birth to an infant. From her funeral sermon, preserved in manuscript among the records of the Church, we present the following extract:— [105]

After having summoned the tender and happy husband from the amiable partner of his joys and cares, and left her in widowhood to mourn his absence for awhile, he calls her to follow him—takes her away from all her new-formed and pleasing connexions, and (affecting consideration!) takes her likewise from her new-born babe. Methinks I could now take the dear little forsaken stranger, and present it to you in my arms (in the arms of my affection I do)—hear it saying, in accents truly tender and striking, "Pity me, pity me, O my friends, all ye my late worthy father's friends, my dear mother's friends, for the hand of the Lord hath bereaved me; those who might have been the guides of my youth he has taken away." Say you not?—yes, I think I read the language in some of your countenances, and in your tears—"Though father and though mother, dear babe, have forsaken thee, the Lord take thee up."

Referring to the death of Mr. Boyce, the preacher observes—

Though, as a congregation, he has taken away from you an able, faithful, useful shepherd, who watched for your souls as one that must give an account—even under a trial and loss great as that is, it becomes you not to censure or complain. Our good friend who is now taken away manifested the happy influence of the Gospel hope in the composure of her spirit under that great loss which she lately sustained, and through the afflictions by which she was removed, thankfully embracing and sweetly relying upon the Redeemer's consolation to his disciples in John xiv. 2-4, "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c. Referring to him who has recently been taken away from her and from you, she said, with apparent pleasure, in her last illness, "I shall soon be with the good man in glory"; speaking in joyful terms of being taken to sing praises with the saints in glory, for ever and ever.

In the month of April, 1771, an invitation was given to Mr. John Fuller to remain amongst them twelve months on trial, with a view to his becoming the pastor. At the expiration of that time a unanimous invitation was given to him. Mr. Fuller was ordained August 6th, 1772, when we find Messrs. Denny, Wright, King, Gregson, Dr. Ashworth, Addington, Hextal, and Dowley, were engaged. Mr. Fuller had been a member of the Church in Gravel Lane, London, under the pastoral care of the Rev. Noah Hill. [106]

But in little more than two years from this time, dissatisfaction arose in the Church with the ministry of Mr. Fuller. It is stated, that "several persons proposed an assistant to Mr. Fuller, but the proposal was rejected by Mr. Fuller and his friends." The assistant proposed was a Mr. Richard Fuller, cousin to the pastor.

Under date of August 14th, 1774, we are informed "that a dissatisfaction having arisen in the minds of some of the Church members and subscribers with Mr. Fuller's preaching, and there being no prospect of peace and happiness, he this day declared his resigning his charge as minister and pastor; but supplied the congregation by others until Michaelmas, always behaving with a good temper and spirit, although his ministry was not by several approved." In our early days we have heard from some of the older members of the Church that the text of Mr. Fuller's farewell sermon was (Gen. xlv. 24) Joseph's counsel to his brethren, "See that ye fall not out by the way."

But after the removal of Mr. Fuller, great discord and confusion prevailed in the Church and congregation. The friends of the late pastor, who were attached to his person and ministry, were greatly displeased with the conduct of those who had been the means of his removal. Many things were done and said which were very painful to both parties, created much ill feeling amongst themselves, and exposed them to the derision of the men of the world. [107]

After some time they sent an invitation to Mr. Saunders, of Bedworth, who they understood was desirous to remove; but the invitation not being unanimous, it was declined.

Their attention was soon after directed to the Rev. T. N. Toller, who was a student in the academy at Daventry. Mr. Toller first preached to them as a supply, October 1st, 1775, when he was not quite twenty years of age. The first text was Acts xiii. 26: "Unto you is the word of this salvation sent." In the following April, two of the deacons went to Daventry to invite Mr. Toller to become their stated supply for three months; at the expiration of this time, he was again invited for nine months; after which he received an invitation to become their pastor, which invitation was cheerfully signed, June 15th, 1777, by 87 persons, as the call of the Church to the pastoral office. The ordination service was held May 28th, 1778, when Messrs. Gregson, of Rowell,

Palmer, of Hackney, Addington, of Harborough, Robins, of Daventry (Mr. Toller's tutor), Toller, of London (uncle to the pastor), and Bull, of Newport, engaged in the services of the day.

Thus commenced the longest pastorate with which the Church had yet been favoured; for Mr. Toller continued to labour amongst them until February 26th, 1821, making forty-five years and five months from the time of his first preaching at Kettering until his death. It was a ministry of much acceptance, extended influence, and great usefulness. It restored peace to a divided people; it preserved them in unbroken harmony through all its course; the congregation having often a crowded appearance, and the Church being generally in a prosperous state; not so much perhaps by the numbers added to the Church, as by the advancing piety, devotion, consistency, and intelligence of its members. [108]

There were 221 members added to the Church during the course of Mr. Toller's ministry. These members, we have no doubt, might have been greatly increased, had the methods adopted in some places for bringing forward candidates for the communion of the Church prevailed under the ministry of Mr. Toller. We should like to convey some idea to the mind of the reader of the nature of that ministry with which the congregation at Kettering were now favoured. It was in his stated services amongst his own people that the peculiar excellencies of Mr. Toller were developed. It was our privilege in early life to sit under that ministry, but we think we shall fail to present a correct view of the impression we have on our mind as to the distinguishing features, the peculiar beauties, of that ministry; and if we were to do this, the general reader would think it too highly coloured, as our first impressions of sacred things, our deepest and most lively emotions of a religious nature, in connexion with all that we may since have known or attained, appear to us to have been derived, under God, from the ministry of Mr. Toller. His person was above the middle stature; his appearance in the pulpit venerable and commanding; his voice deep and powerful; his manner all his own, and of such a character as to chain the attention of the audience—always earnest, sometimes most fervent and impressive, rising to a high degree of impassioned eloquence when his assemblies were crowded, as on the afternoon of the Sabbath. His language was always clear, forcible, and plain, suited to the manner of his preaching; his sentiments most decidedly scriptural, evangelical, and practical, with a considerable portion of experimental piety. His ministry presented a full exhibition of the Christian temper. His discourses were distinguished by great conciseness yet fulness of matter, presenting often the most familiar but beautiful illustrations. Some of his most impressive sermons were formed entirely on the applicatory plan—some of them founded on Scripture inquiries, such as, "What think ye of Christ?" "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" &c. During a very large portion of his ministry he delivered expository discourses on the morning of the Sabbath, which were distinguished by great beauty, variety, and richness of improving remarks. The afternoon sermon generally rose out of the morning exposition; not so frequently from a text taken from the paragraph expounded as a passage suggested by the main subject of exposition. But the prayers he offered in the stated services of the sanctuary were perhaps the most remarkable of the whole—the manner was so solemn; the tone so devotional; the adorations so sublime; the confessions so abasing; the petitions so full, fervent, and appropriate; the thanksgiving so expressive and exalted; the surrender so complete and unreserved; the whole placing us so much in the presence of God, leading us to feel what we were before him, what we needed from him, what provision was made for us, what we were receiving, and what services we should render; often leading us on to the dying hour, and to the opening grandeur of eternity. The value of such a ministry was apparent in the many cases of eminent piety that appeared amongst those that were trained up under it. Much of the Christian temper, the spirit of devotion, lively faith in the Redeemer, and the power of practical religion, were manifested in a considerable number of cases, considering the size of the place. There were "living epistles of Christ, known and read of all." We remember an eminently pious female member of the Church, of whom the pastor said, when improving her death, "He should esteem it an honour to be permitted to hold up her train in the heavenly world." While this showed the deep humility of the pastor, it showed the high estimate he had formed of the devoted member. [109]

In the year 1799 Mr. Toller received invitations from the congregations at Carter Lane, London, and at Clapham, to become their minister, with an offer of great pecuniary advantages; but such was the attachment felt to him by his people at Kettering, as manifested in their great anxiety on the subject, and in the affectionate addresses presented to him on this occasion, that he gave a decided negative to these urgent and repeated solicitations. [110]

In an address he delivered from the pulpit, in answer to those which he had received from his people, he bore a noble testimony to the kindness with which he had ever been treated by them; observing, "Twenty-four years ago I came to this place, under considerable and peculiar disadvantages, arising from extreme youth, inexperience, and the then critical and disjointed state of the congregation. I entered upon the station with fear and trembling, and with scarce a peradventure of being able to give any general or lasting satisfaction. During this interval, I have gone through many trying afflictions, some of which you have known, and others, some of the most trying, you have never known. I have many faults to remember this day before God, much coldness of heart, many neglects of duty, and much unfruitfulness in my office; but I will do you the justice to say, that I have no injuries from you to enumerate, no personal ill behaviour from a single individual in all this time to complain of; and if you had all treated my great Master with a regard proportioned to that I have received from you, I should have been the happiest and most blessed minister on earth," &c. [111]

He closed his days and his ministry together. Apoplectic seizures had weakened his frame, and at



length had rendered him incapable of fulfilling all the duties of his office; while they indicated to him that his end was drawing nigh. In a letter written to his people, he intimated his wish to have an assistant. They invited the eldest son of their pastor, then preaching at Wem, in Shropshire, to become assistant to his father. This invitation he accepted; but before he entered on this new sphere of duty, the earthly career of his beloved and venerated father closed in death. "He preached on Lord's-day morning, February 25th, 1821, with much of his usual animation, from Isaiah lxiii. 7-13, and remarked at the close of the discourse what encouragement this passage affords the widow and the fatherless to put their trust in God, finishing his last public discourse with these lines of Doddridge:

"To thee an infant race we leave,  
Them may their father's God receive;  
That ages yet unborn may raise  
Successive hymns of humble praise."

He spent the evening surrounded by his family, and conversing with his children in a strain of cheerful piety; and after a night of sound repose arose as well as usual the next morning. About noon, leaving the parlour, he was found a few minutes after in an apoplectic fit, or a seizure resembling apoplexy. Several medical men repaired to the spot, but life was extinct. [112]

His remains were interred in the ground belonging to the Meeting House on Thursday, the 8th of March. On that occasion Mr. Horsey, of Northampton, read the Scriptures and prayed, and Mr. Edwards, of the same place, delivered the funeral oration. Mr. Hall, of Leicester, preached the funeral sermon on the same day from Heb. xiii. 7—a sermon which presented a most impressive representation of the responsibility attaching to a people that had been favoured with such a ministry, and the tremendous consequences that must follow the misimprovement of such advantages.

Mr. Toller only published during his life a sermon on the "faithful saying," entitled "A Plain and Popular View of the Evidences of Christianity"; a sermon occasioned by the death of the Rev. Samuel Palmer, of Hackney, Mr. Toller's most intimate friend, from 2nd Timothy i. 10—in which occurs this striking passage:—

Suppose this house had been three times its present size, and had been filled for half the century past with a constant crowd of hearers; suppose the fame of the venerable man now gone had been shouted to the skies, and he had been held up as the pride and prince of preachers; but after all, this had been *all*:—suppose selfish motives had been supreme, under the disguise of love to souls; a mere notional religion had been propagated; people had been only amused, and amazed, and made to wonder and admire; but no minds really instructed, no hearts humbled, no sinners turned from the errors of their ways, no Christian graces implanted, no Christian duties promoted; in this case all these fifty years (as we have seen) must end; and what is the consequence? What would all this parade and popularity have proved to him? Only the bursting of a glittering bubble; the retreat of an actor from the stage amidst the clappings of the theatre, which he was to hear no more. There is one passage of Scripture which, when realized, is worth all the cases of this kind which could occur put together, viz., when a dying minister can look round on a weeping, affectionate flock, and say, "Ye are our epistles, written upon our hearts," &c. I say, the genuine application of such a passage as this to a dying minister would be worth infinitely more than all the applause and popularity in the world. [113]

Two discourses, occasioned by the death of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, were also published.

Since the death of Mr. Toller two volumes of sermons, and a volume of expository discourses on the Book of Ruth, have been published, as transcribed from the Author's shorthand manuscripts. To the first volume of sermons was prefixed a memoir of Mr. Toller, by his friend the Rev. R. Hall.

We will transcribe from that memoir an ever-memorable anecdote, or rather, the ever-memorable use the preacher made of a domestic incident to illustrate a most important subject:—

On one occasion he preached from Isaiah xxvii. 4—"Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." "I think," said he, "I can convey the meaning of this passage, so that every one may understand it, by what took place in my own family within these few days. One of my little children had committed a fault, for which I thought it my duty to chastise him. I called him to me, explained to him the evil of what he had done, and told him how grieved I was that I must punish him for it. He heard me in silence, and then rushed into my arms and burst into tears. I could sooner have cut off my arm than have then struck him for his fault; he had 'taken hold of my strength, and had made peace with me.'" [114]

After the death of Mr. Toller his son was invited for six months as a probationer for the pastoral office; at the expiration of that time he received a unanimous call to that office, which he accepted, and was ordained in October, 1821, when Messrs. J. Hall, Horsey, Edwards, Scott, Bull, and Hillyard were engaged in the principal services of the day. Thus, the eldest son of the late pastor, who had been educated for the ministry at the academy at Wymondley, succeeded to the place of his father in the most harmonious manner, and with the most cheering prospects of comfort and usefulness. During the 31 years that have elapsed since then, that harmony has been

uninterrupted, that comfort and usefulness continued—the son pursuing a similar plan to that which the father adopted, in expounding the Word of God on one part of the Sabbath, to give enlarged views of Scripture truth, and to present the almost boundless variety the Book of God contains, habitually aiming to preserve a connexion between one part of the Sabbath services and the other. During the ministry of the present Mr. Toller 211 members have been added to the Church.

In the year 1849 very extensive alterations were made in the Meeting House, together with the building of a new vestry, school-rooms, class-rooms, and a dwelling-house for the sexton; the whole cost of which was about £1400, which was paid off within two years from the re-opening. The place is greatly changed from what it was. The large chandelier, with its dove and the olive leaf, is gone; the beautiful gaslight taking the place of the candles. The old pulpit is removed from its place, having long ago lost its noble sounding-board, it being now understood that the voice is better heard without such an appendage. The spacious windows on each side of the pulpit are lost, to make way for the new school-rooms, which are open to the Chapel. But the whole, we believe, has been greatly improved; additional room having been made for the hearers on the Sabbath, for the week-evening lecture, and also for the accommodation of the Sabbath-school, its Bible and its Infant classes. The present number of Church members is nearly 200; the scholars in the schools about 280. [115]

Services are conducted in seven villages by members of the Church, chiefly on Sabbath evenings.

An impartial review of the whole will, we believe, present to the pastor and the flock the most abundant reason to "thank God and take courage."

In the history of this Church, we cannot but observe the very interesting fact which it presents, of 75 years having been already filled up by the ministry of the father and the son (and we trust that there is a probability of years of useful service being added in the case of the latter to the period that has passed), during which a Christian society and a numerous congregation have been preserved in peace, with the interests of vital religion advancing. While such a fact speaks well for the spirit and continued improvement of the people, it says much also for the Christian temper, the consummate prudence, the able and successful labours of the pastors, while to God they would unitedly ascribe all the glory.

At Warkton, about two miles from Kettering, occasional services are held. In this village Mr. Thomas Stone, another of the Puritan ministers, was rector—"a person of good learning," it is said, "and great worth: a zealous Puritan, and a member of the classes." "He died, an old man and full of days, in the year 1617." Bridges observes, "that he was inducted into the living of Warkton in the year 1553." If this statement be correct, he must have been rector of that place 64 years. He was a learned man, of great uprightness, and uncommon plainness of spirit, minding not the things of this world; yet, according to Wood, "a stiff Nonconformist, and a zealous Presbyterian." At Geddington, the birth-place of Mr. Maidwell, the first pastor of the Independent Church at Kettering, there is a Chapel regularly supplied on the Sabbath evenings. This place of worship was provided by Mr. Nathaniel Collis, for many years a respectable bookseller in Kettering, and a deacon of the Church—Geddington was his native place. [116]

Services are also conducted on Sabbath evenings at Great Oakley, five miles from Kettering; occasionally at Orlingbury, five miles in another direction; also at Thorpe and Loddington.

## BROUGHTON.

The Dissenters of Kettering have conducted occasional services in the village of Broughton, about three miles distant on the road for Northampton, for many years past. But rather more than five years ago, there were four or five young men in this village who began to think of the things which belonged to their everlasting peace; they formed themselves into a little band, and resolved that they would meet weekly and study the holy Scriptures, and encourage each other in the ways of God. They subsequently joined a Christian Church at Kettering. Becoming anxious for the welfare of those around them, they had a cottage licensed for preaching; that was found too small for those who wished to attend. In the meantime several other Christian friends came to the village, and at length, in the year 1850, a Chapel was erected; it is a neat structure, capable of containing about 200 hearers. In January, 1851, a Christian Church was formed, consisting of 19 persons; Mr. Toller and Mr. Robinson, of Kettering, being present, and conducting the services. This village Church is formed on the broad principle of Christian union, designated simply a Christian Church, without denominational distinction; its present number of communicants is 22. There is preaching here on the afternoon and evening of the Sabbath, by friends from Kettering and other places. An interesting Sabbath-school is conducted, numbering more than 60 children. The teachers express the earnest desire that many of them may be gathered into the fold of Christ, and become useful in their generation. [117]

This place was once noted as the residence of the eminent Puritan divine, Robert Bolton, B.D. He was presented to the rectory in the year 1609, and continued until his death, in 1631. It is stated concerning him, that "he was a most authoritative and awakening preacher, being endowed with the most masculine and oratorical style of any in his time;" that "he was so deeply engaged in his work, that he never delivered a sermon to his people in public till he had preached it to himself in private."

"His remains were interred in the chancel of Broughton Church, where there is a half-length

figure of him with his hands erected in the attitude of prayer, resting on a book lying open before him; and underneath is a monumental inscription in black marble, of which the following is a translation:"— [118]

Here lies,  
peaceably sleeping in the Lord,  
the body of Robert Bolton,  
who died December the seventeenth,  
in the year 1631.  
He was one of the first and  
most learned of our Church.  
His other excellencies all England knoweth,  
lamenting the day of his death.

Mr. Bolton published a number of works; those most known in the present day are his 'Directions for Walking with God,' and his 'Four Lost Things.'

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## CHAPTER IV. [119]

### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT MARKET HARBOROUGH.<sup>[3]</sup>

If a stranger were passing through the small but respectable town of Market Harborough, on the road to Leicester, with the intention of observing what was most worthy of notice, he would see on the right of the principal street, in the upper part of the town, a handsome structure, of considerable dimensions for the size of the place. On the front of the building he might notice the inscription—"Independent Chapel." If an intelligent traveller, he would think, Surely this was not the first origin of Independency here! This must have been erected for a body of some standing in the town. On inquiry, he would find that there had been an old Meeting House, which had stood at the top of the lane leading for Great Bowden for more than 150 years, during the whole of which period a numerous and respectable body of Dissenters had assembled in it; but that the building, with its plain walls, its high pews, its deep galleries, its antique pillars, and irregular form, had been entirely taken down; and this Chapel, in a more eligible position, had been raised by the present congregation. And he might be informed that it was nobly done; for after the most liberal subscriptions, amounting to £1600, a moiety of which was lost by the failure of the bank in which they were deposited: (in consequence of this, an appeal was made to the public, the result of which about made up the loss sustained:) the whole amount that remained to complete the cost was raised on the day of opening; the sum expended in the erection of the Chapel exceeding £3000. [120]

From this introductory statement, we shall lead the reader back to the early history of this cause.

In looking backward for 190 years, we find that by the "Act of Uniformity," passed in the year 1662, Mr. Thomas Lowry was ejected from the Church in this place. Though we have no record of his life or his labours, beyond the statement "that he was a native of Scotland, and had a living in Essex before he came to Harborough," yet by his Nonconformity he teaches us that he had embraced principles which led him to refuse to bow to the dictates of men in the things of God, and which prompted him rather to sacrifice his worldly interests than what related to truth and a good conscience.

The probability is, that some of the people to whom he had ministered would become Nonconformists with their pastor; but whether he obtained any opportunities of preaching to them after his ejection is not known. Subsequent events lead us to the conclusion that the principles of Nonconformity must have obtained a number of adherents in Harborough and its vicinity; because we find that, eleven years after the passing of the "Act of Uniformity" (*i.e.*, in the year 1673), Mr. Matthew Clarke became the stated pastor of an Independent congregation here. This brings before us the first clear and certain information relative to the early history of this cause in Harborough. [121]

A short distance from Leicester lies the village of Narborough, where, at the restoration of Charles II., Mr. Matthew Clarke was the rector; the living being worth at that time about £120 per annum. His father and grandfather had both been ministers in the Church. He was educated, under the best masters, with a view to the profession—first, in the Charter House, in London; afterwards, under Dr. Busby, at Westminster; and under Dr. Temple, at Trinity College, Cambridge. He was a diligent student; became eminent for his scholarship: but what was still more important, he became early devoted to God; associated himself with some students who were remarkable for piety, and who engaged in such exercises as tended to prepare for the work of the Christian ministry, for which they were designed. He obtained the degree of M.A.

He was presented to the living of Narborough in 1657. After pursuing his labours there for five years, he was ejected as a Nonconformist. He was earnestly pressed to conformity by Mr. Stratford, the patron of the living, but could not by any means bring his conscience to a

compliance with what the law required. For conscience' sake he was a sufferer. Devoted to his work, he took every opportunity of preaching the Gospel in Leicestershire and parts adjacent. He was watched narrowly by some furious justices of the peace; and though he had the happiness often to escape, yet he was three times a prisoner in Leicester Gaol, for the crime of preaching the Gospel! After dwelling for a time in a lone house in Leicester Forest, and being driven from thence by the "Five Mile Act" to Stoke Golding, he was invited to Harborough, where he came and settled in 1673; and had a large congregation. This appears to have been the first and the permanent settlement of Protestant Nonconformists of congregational principles in this place.

[122]

In connexion with Harborough, Mr. Clarke also took the charge of a congregation meeting at Ashley, a village about five miles from the former place; and during the whole course of his subsequent ministry he regularly preached at Ashley in the morning, and at Harborough in the afternoon, every Lord's-day. His ministry appears to have been highly valued, and to have been eminently successful; at the close of it the Church numbered 202 members, a very large proportion of them living in the villages surrounding Harborough—some of them a number of miles distant. In the character of Mr. Clarke were combined unbending integrity and conscientiousness, with great kindness of spirit and manner. Of the first we have proof in his decided Nonconformity—in his willingness to suffer rather than to sin—in his following the path of duty, whatever might be the dangers to which it exposed him—in his steady pursuit of all the labours of his calling until laid aside by his last affliction—in his firm resistance of acts of injustice and oppression, as shown when, being convinced that the King's tax on his salary was unjust, he firmly and successfully refused payment: of the latter we have proof in his affectionate regard to the truly pious wherever he beheld them—in the peaceful temper which he breathed—in the kind and profitable intercourse he promoted between his brethren—and in the conciliatory spirit he manifested towards those who were the enemies of the Gospel, or of the cause he supported.

[123]

Mr. Clarke had one son, named after him, who for a time became an assistant to his father in the work of the ministry at Harborough. The venerable father contrived, amidst all that he suffered for conscience' sake (and he drank largely of the bitter cup), to take peculiar care of the education of his son, whom he early instructed in the learned languages, together with several young persons who were studying under his tuition for the ministry.

The parent's wish to see his son a preacher of the same Gospel for which he was suffering was honourable to himself, but it seems to have led him to devote that son to the work without waiting to see whether God approved; which, but for the grace bestowed upon the youth, might have been a fatal injury to himself and thousands more. After revolving the question seriously in his mind, and reflecting on the sacrifices which the ministry would require, the son was at length animated to comply with the father's desire, by the consideration that they that "turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

On examining his own religious character, he said that he had endured much distress because he could not discern that remarkable change which many had experienced; still, however, he dreaded above all things a hypocritical profession; and though at first he thought his abstinence from sin, as well as his attention to secret prayer and other duties, might have arisen from a fear of offending his parents, yet he trusted that at last they sprang from the principle of love to God.

[124]

After he had acquired, not only Latin and Greek, but also several of the Oriental languages, in which his father possessed uncommon skill, and had added to them a familiar acquaintance with Italian and French, he went to study for the ministry under Mr. Woodhouse, a celebrated teacher in Shropshire. From thence he removed to London; and having joined a Church there, and heard several of the most celebrated preachers, he returned to Leicestershire, where he began his ministry as assistant to his father, amidst the storm that raged in the year 1684. He was so useful that very large additions were made to his father's Church while he was with him. "When he was present," says Mr. Neal, "at the declaration which the new converts made of the powerful impressions received under his ministry, oh, how he would humble and abase himself before God in prayer, and set the crown of his success upon the head of free grace!" During the first three years of his ministry he also laid the foundation of several congregations in that country. He was in 1687 called to preach at Sandwich, in Kent, where he was detained by the importunity of those who derived benefit from his labours; but after two years was recalled by the equal solicitations of his father and the flock in Leicestershire. But though he then settled with them, they were compelled by a sense of duty to give him up almost immediately, for, having preached an occasional sermon in London, he was invited to assist Mr. Ford in Miles' Lane. This was his final removal from Harborough. After Mr. Ford's death he became the sole pastor of the Church, was the means of changing a declining cause into one of the most prosperous Churches in London, and attained a very high degree of popularity and usefulness, which were maintained by the divine blessing even to the close of his life. With the inspiration of friendship added to that of genius, Dr. Walls composed a Latin epitaph, which was inscribed on his tomb in Bunhill-fields; and at the request of friends he gave an English translation, which would furnish an eloquent and spirited memoir of the deceased. This epitaph we insert here, because Harborough was the scene of his youthful days, his early education, his decided piety, and his first stated engagements in the ministry, which were so excellent and successful as to give promise of all the future eminence he attained. It may be found in the last volume of Watts's Works, page 439.

[125]

SACRED TO MEMORY.  
In this sepulchre lies buried  
MATTHEW CLARKE,

A son bearing the name  
Of his venerable father,  
Nor less venerable himself:  
Trained up from his youngest years  
in sacred and human learning:  
Very skilful in the languages:  
In the gift of preaching,  
excellent, laborious, and successful:  
In the pastoral office,  
faithful and vigilant:  
Among the controversies of divines,  
Moderate always, and pacific:  
Ever ready for all the duties of piety:  
Among husbands, brothers, fathers, friends,  
he had few equals:  
And his carriage toward all mankind was  
Eminently benevolent.

But what rich stores of grace lay hid behind  
The veil of modesty, no human mind  
Can search, no friend declare, nor fame reveal,  
Nor has this mournful marble power to tell.  
Yet there's a hast'ning hour—it comes!—it comes!  
To rouse the sleeping dead, to burst the tombs,  
And set the saint in view. All eyes behold,  
While the vast records of the skies, unrolled,  
Rehearse his works, and spread his worth abroad;  
The Judge approves, and heaven and earth applaud.

[126]

Go, traveller; and whereso'er  
Thy wandering feet may rest  
In distant lands, thy ear shall hear  
His name pronounced and blest.

He was born in Leicestershire, in the year 1664.  
He died in London, March 27th, 1726,  
Aged 62 years,  
Much beloved and much lamented.

The elder Mr. Clarke continued his labours at Harborough and Ashley, until he was seized with palsy on one side; after which, perceiving that his work was done, and his end drawing nigh, he removed to his daughter's (Mrs. Allen, of Norwich), where he died, about 1708, nearly 80 years of age.

There is preserved, in the handwriting of Mr. Some, a copy of a Church covenant, that appears, from its early date, to have been adopted during Mr. Clarke's ministry. Being one of the oldest of the kind, and very concise, we think it deserves to be transcribed and inserted here.

We do solemnly, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, "who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks; who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass," declare, that by the grace of God we will henceforward endeavour to reform whatever is amiss amongst us, according to the best understanding we have of the holy Scriptures, which we believe to be the only rule of faith and worship; humbly avouching the Lord to be our God, and humbly hoping that he hath avouched us, though most unworthy, to be his people. Subscribed May 30th, 1690.

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The persevering labours, the consistent character, the extended efforts, and important influence of Mr. Clarke in this situation, appear in the members that composed the Church, as before stated, and 172 of whom were gathered from about 30 villages in the vicinity. The village Chapels being few in number in those days, the Nonconformists travelled from the places around to assemble for worship at Harborough and Ashley, as the centres where, on the Lord's-day, they could meet together.

The next pastor of the Church is one concerning whom the language is verified, that "the memory of the just is blessed"; for though the modesty and deep humility of Mr. Some were such that he forbade any memorials being published of his life and character, and before his death destroyed all his papers that presented anything of this kind, yet his name is mentioned with great veneration and esteem to this day. It appears probable that he was assistant or co-pastor with Mr. Clarke a short time before the close of his labours; that he came to Harborough about the year 1706, as his name stands in the first trust deed of Ashley Meeting House about that time, as the recognized minister of both places. He took the sole pastoral charge in 1709, as he then entered the names of all the members of the Church in a book, which he preserved. He united the pastorate of Ashley with Harborough, and laboured at both places in the manner of his predecessor, connecting with them also a considerable extent of village itineracy, by which his character was much endeared and his ministry greatly blest.

Mr. Some had one son, who was training for the ministry, but who died before he fully entered on the work. He was for a time a fellow-student with Doddridge, and became his most intimate friend; so that, immediately after his death, Doddridge writes to Mr. Clarke, of St. Albans— [128]

It pleased God, in the afternoon of yesterday, to take away my dear companion and brother, Mr. Some. There was no person in the world of his age whom I respected more or loved so well. At the academy we were partners in study; and since I came to Harborough he would, when his health would permit it, take frequent journeys with me to Kibworth on the Lord's-day. And what sweet counsel have we taken together when "we went to the house of God in company!" I have been informed of some of his expressions of respect and tenderness for me, which affect me exceedingly. He has ordered me to preach his funeral sermon from Psalm lxxiii. 26: "My flesh and my heart fail me, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." But my mind is so shattered with grief, and mine eyes filled with tears, that I hardly know how to read or write.

In another letter he says: "Mr. Some, though he appears to feel it like a parent, yet supports himself under it with a serenity and fortitude worthy of so excellent a Christian and minister."

The eminence to which Mr. Some attained, and the success of his ministry, is partly attested by the fact that 270 persons were added to the Church during his pastoral labours.

Doddridge came to reside at Harborough while minister at Kibworth, to enjoy the society and friendship of Mr. Some. In the year 1729 he became his assistant, taking services alternately at Kibworth, Harborough, and Ashley; and by the earnest advice of Mr. Some he commenced his academy at Harborough.

When the Dissenting ministers in the neighbourhood agreed to meet at Lutterworth, to spend a day in humiliation and prayer for the revival of religion, Mr. Some preached upon that occasion a very important appropriate discourse—from Rev. iii. 2: "Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die"—"On the methods to be taken by ministers for the revival of religion." He also published a very excellent funeral sermon for Mr. Saunders, of Kettering, from the text he had chosen, 1st Cor. xv. 10: "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me." [129]

We have further discovered a small volume of 56 pages, entitled 'The Assembly's Catechism Explained, and the principles of religion therein contained confirmed by the Holy Scriptures, by David Some. Second edition, 1727.' It has an interesting preface, a part of which we shall copy, as illustrative of the views entertained by this eminent man, and the methods he adopted for the improvement of the rising generation.

The design of the following pages is to render public catechising easy and profitable.

When young persons see a great deal before them, which they are required to commit to memory, they soon grow weary of this exercise, and find excuses to absent themselves from it. This difficulty is removed by the narrow limits of this essay.

I fear there are many in all our assemblies "who need to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God," and yet their age and circumstances prevent their submitting to this way of instruction. There is a particular regard had to these in this composure. The questions are so framed that there is room for enlarging upon them, as the importance of the argument may require. The treating upon the heads of divinity in this way insensibly leads into a freedom and easiness of expression, which is hard to attain in a more set and continued discourse: this hath the more direct tendency to inform the judgment and fix the attention. I have seldom observed a drowsy hearer whilst I have been engaged in this part of my work; I wish I could say so of the other parts of it. [130]

I hope I need not make any apology for adding the Scriptures; this will be acceptable to everyone who values them. Besides, this will acquaint children betimes with their Bibles, and teach them that their religion is derived from that sacred book as the fountain of it. \* \* \* \* \* If any should condemn the whole of this undertaking as paying too great a regard to human composures, I can assure them that I have long since learned to call no man master upon earth. I have not attempted to explain the doctrines contained in this Catechism because it was composed by that learned body of men, the assembly of divines, but because I verily believe that for the substance of them they are agreeable to the word of God. I was early instructed in them, and have now reviewed them with some attention and care, lest the prejudices of education should have been the principal reason of my adherence to them; and after the most impartial search, I cannot discover anything so absurd and inconsistent in this scheme of religion as some have represented: and I hope I may be allowed the liberty of judging for myself.

I am fully convinced of the usefulness of public catechising, by more than twenty years' experience. I have seen the good effects of it, and purpose to allow it a share in my public labours while God continues life and a capacity for service; and if any of my worthy brethren shall make use of this weak performance, I heartily wish that the divine blessing may attend their endeavours to promote real religion and practical godliness.

D. S.

*Q.* What are the benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

*A.* The benefits which do either accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

May true believers be assured of God's love? Yes. (Rom. v. 5.) "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." May they have peace of conscience? Yes. (Rom. xv. 13.) "The God of hope fill you with all peace in believing." May they have joy? Yes. (Rom. v. 11.) "We also joy in God." Is the Holy Ghost the author of it? Yes. (Gal. v. 22.) "The fruit of the Spirit is joy." Shall true Christians grow in grace? Yes. (Prov. iv. 18.) "The path of the just shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Is perseverance the Christian's duty? Yes. (Phil. iii. 14.) "I press towards the mark." And their privilege? Yes. (1st Peter i. 5.) "Who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." What may we infer from hence? I. That religion is not a melancholy thing. (Prov. iii. 17.) "Her ways are ways of pleasantness." II. Growth in grace is an evidence of the truth of it. (Mark iv. 8.) "Others fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased." III. That weak Christians should not be discouraged.

When his death occurred, Doddridge wrote—"It is to my unutterable grief that I hear this day that our dear friend, Mr. Some, is dead. I hardly know how to bear it." Again: "We know in whose hands our lives are, and those of our friends who remain—a soul-quieting thought, which I would apply to the unspeakable loss I have sustained in the death of that great and good man, that invaluable friend, Mr. Some, whom I honoured and loved as a parent."

Mr. Barker, of Hackney, wrote—"The death of the excellent person you have lately lost afflicts me greatly. There are few such ministers anywhere, and few such men in any age. I know that his modesty was excessive, but am sorry to find that it has deprived us of those memoirs, which, touched over by your hand, would have been very instructive and entertaining; but if we must not read his life and character, let us remember and imitate his exemplary piety, prudence, and diligence. This truly revered and excellent man died May 27th, 1737. God was pleased to favour him with a serene and cheerful exit, suited to the eminent piety and usefulness of his life. "I am well satisfied," remarks Doddridge, "that considering how very generally he was known, he has left a most honourable testimony, in the hearts of thousands, that he was one of the brightest ornaments of the Gospel and the ministry which the age has produced; and that all who have had any intimacy with him must have esteemed his friendship amongst the greatest blessings of life, and the loss of him amongst its greatest calamities."

An interesting memorial exists, written by Mr. Some, which shows the method he adopted in admitting candidates to the Church; clearly indicating what he considered their qualifications should be; what was the nature of the connexion they were about to form; and with what spirit and purpose they should unite themselves to the society to which they desired to be admitted.

*Questions to be addressed to Candidates for Communion.*

1. Wherefore do you desire communion with this Church?
2. Will you endeavour to walk circumspectly and peaceably amongst us, as it becomes a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ?
3. Will you attend upon the ministry and ordinances of this Church as often as you can?
4. Do you purpose to stand by us, and steadfastly to adhere to us, if times of difficulty and trial should come?
5. Do you therefore, in the presence of God and his people here assembled, give up yourself to the watch and care of this Church, promising to submit to the discipline that is exercised therein, so far as it is agreeable to the mind of Christ revealed in his word? If these be your designs, then in the name of our blessed Redeemer, and with the consent and approbation of this Church, I open the doors thereof for your admittance into it, and declare you a member of it, earnestly desiring that God would bless you in it.

Towards the close of Mr. Some's ministry the Chapel House was purchased of Walter Renals, and bought by Knightley Holland, for the use of the minister for the time being.

In the year 1844 this house was taken down, and the new Chapel erected near to the spot where it had stood; for some years before it having ceased to be occupied by the minister of the place.

After Doddridge removed to Northampton, as Mr. Some, through the failure of his strength, was incompetent to undertake the whole of the services devolving on him, he was provided with another assistant in 1730, in Mr. J. Halford, a native of Northampton, who, though he never enjoyed the advantages of an academical education, possessed good natural talents. He remained until 1734, when he removed to Horselydown. After the removal of Mr. Halford, Mr. Some had no other assistant to the day of his death, but most probably restricted his labours. He died in the

57th year of his age; "and," said this holy man of God with his dying breath, "If any ask how David Some died, let it be answered, that he sought and found mercy." Dr. Doddridge preached his funeral sermon, after his remains had been interred in the chancel of the parish church of Great Bowden. The knowledge of the spot is only preserved by tradition, which must be attributed to that fatal modesty which induced him in his last moments to commit his writings to the flames. His best earthly memorial is in the affection and reverence with which his name has been so long cherished.

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After the death of Mr. Some we find an unsettled interval of fifteen years, during which many changes took place; and no records were preserved by the Church of the events that occurred, or of the state of things amongst them.

We learn from the correspondence of Doddridge, that the year after the death of Mr. Some, Mr. Toaker received an invitation of such a pressing nature to become the pastor of the Church at Harborough, that he was constrained to accept the call; but two years after this he speaks of the ordination of one of his students, Mr. Isaac Wilkinson, over the Church at Harborough, being fixed to take place May 9th, 1740. Then again, in a letter written to Dr. Clarke, of St. Albans, February 27th, 1741, he speaks of Ashley and Harborough as being vacant.

In the list of Doddridge's students, given at the close of the last volume of his 'Correspondence,' we have the names of Samuel Smalley, as settled at Harborough, who entered the academy in 1737; and of Jabez Hiron, as minister at Harborough, who entered the academy in 1745. All that we can gather from these statements is, that the congregation was during this period in a very unsettled state, not having become united for any length of time under any pastor, or having anyone to settle peacefully and usefully over them until the year 1752, when a pleasing change took place in the choice of Mr. Stephen Addington.

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It appears that Mr. Addington was a native of Northampton, and a student under Dr. Doddridge, by whom he was treated with all the kindness of a father. He commenced his labours at Spaldwick, Huntingdonshire. He had not, however, been there more than two years before this situation was offered to his acceptance, which had been chosen and marked out for him in the wishes, at least, of his foster parent. The following circumstance led to the appointment: Upon the resignation of a pastor who had never felt himself at home among the people, their choice was divided between two persons, who had been proposed by their respective friends. At length it was wisely agreed by both parties to withdraw their suffrages from each in favour of a third candidate, if one could be found who should be agreeable to the whole congregation. At this juncture Mr. Addington was recommended to them by the Rev. Mr. Gilbert, of Oakhampton, and in 1752 received a unanimous invitation to settle amongst them. Accordingly, in the month of July he removed to Harborough, and established himself in the very house where his good friend had lived. He was ordained in September, 1753, on which occasion the service was conducted by the Rev. Mr. Gilbert, of Northampton, Mr. Goodrich, of Oundle, Mr. Boyce, of Kettering, Mr. Gregson, of Rowell, and Dr. Ashworth, of Daventry.

The first five years of Mr. Addington's residence were devoted exclusively to the duties of his pastoral office. His congregation was considerable, and some of them came from a distance of several miles; but the Church at Ashley had now a pastor of its own, so as no longer to require the stated engagements of the minister at Harborough.

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So entirely did Mr. Addington appear to possess the confidence and affections of his people, that he became scarcely less their friend and counsellor in their various secular concerns than their spiritual guide and instructor. The leading object of all his plans was their moral and religious improvement. In pursuance of this great design, it was Mr. Addington's custom to distribute and associate as many of his people as he could into classes, according to their age, sex, and situation. In these societies they were in the habit of meeting at stated times for prayer and religious converse, often attended by their minister; the societies were always under his superintendence, and once in every year (about Christmas) each of them spent a comfortable evening together at his house. Even the female servants had their annual day, on which, after assembling in the Meeting House, and spending a part of the afternoon in cleaning it, they partook of a social and friendly entertainment provided for them.

Mr. Addington's labours among his people were both acceptable, and beneficial to the great purposes of the Christian ministry. His strain of preaching was chiefly practical and experimental, and his delivery animated and affectionate. But beside his many ministerial and pastoral engagements, Mr. Addington at length added the arduous undertaking of a boarding-school, in which he succeeded the Rev. Mr. Token, of Kibworth, whose school was removed to Harborough. During a part also of this period he extended his pastoral charge to the congregation at Kibworth. At this time he was by no means a strong and healthy man; and after continuing his exertions of one kind or another for nearly thirty years, he began to find some failure in his energy and activity; and under this impression it seemed prudent to contract the sphere of his duties. Whilst preparing to carry his design into effect, circumstances occurred which eventually issued in his removal; the active part which he took in the politics of the day somewhat affecting both his usefulness and his comfort towards the close of his residence at Harborough. While he was thus circumstanced, he received an invitation to a charge in Miles Lane, London, which determined his removal in October, 1781. It was not, however, without the severest struggle that he resigned a connexion that had long been endeared to him by almost everything calculated to produce and to cherish reciprocally in the parties the most cordial esteem and the liveliest affection. The connexion might indeed not be said to have been broken

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up, but exchanged for an intimacy differing only in the mode and in the degree of its friendship, and which continued to the end of his days.

After Mr. Addington's removal from Harborough, he became tutor of an academy first established at Mile End, which afterwards existed at Hoxton, and then at Highbury.

"The friends of evangelical truth, lamenting the heterodoxy or coldness of another seminary, associated to provide for the Churches pastors of a different spirit. At first they engaged some ministers of established reputation for piety and orthodox sentiments, to give lectures at their own houses to such young men as were selected from the Churches in London and its vicinity. This mode, however, soon proved so inconvenient that they were compelled to provide in 1783 a building at Mile End, to which they invited Stephen Addington, minister of Market Harborough, as tutor of what was now called 'the Evangelical Academy.' The friends of the institution procured him a diploma of Doctor of Divinity; but as he had lately relinquished a similar charge under the impression of declining vigour, he had scarcely begun to 'gird up the loins of his mind' to the duties of his new office with the hope of extensive usefulness, before he was attacked by a severe indisposition, which laid him aside for some time. Though he recovered beyond expectation, and resumed his labours with new ardour, he was again disabled by affliction, and at length compelled to resign his office as tutor in 1789. [138]

"As he had been chosen pastor of the congregation in Miles Lane, he continued to labour there under the pressure of infirmities, but encouraged by the generous attachment of his flock, for years after he resigned his academical charge."

In February, 1796, he was called away from his labours and trials by death, in his sixty-seventh year. "He was an amiable man, of correct deportment, ardent piety, and zeal for usefulness. His learning was extensive rather than profound; he projected more works than he found time to execute; and his dread of living in vain induced him to grasp at objects to which his strength was inadequate. As a preacher, he was more esteemed than admired, for his elocution was defective, though earnest; and his thoughts, always good, were seldom great. His 'Treatise in Defence of Infant Baptism,' and his 'Life of the Apostle Paul,' are the best known among his publications, of which our limits will not allow us to give the full list."—So write the authors of the 'History of Dissenters,' Vol. iv., p. 264.

Of the 'Treatise on Baptism,' Job Orton says—"Addington hath lately published a small piece upon it, which I think comprehends everything valuable that hath been written." [139]

A dedication to his congregation at Harborough is prefixed to this Treatise, from which we make the following extract:—

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—You have, in the following pages, the result of a free and serious inquiry into the Scripture doctrine of Christian baptism. After reading many controversial tracts on the mode and subjects of this ordinance, I found myself obliged to examine the sacred pages before I could be thoroughly satisfied either as to the manner or time of life in which it ought to be administered. Previous to this inquiry, I endeavoured to divest myself of every prejudice, and determined to follow the truth whithersoever it might lead me. Far be it from me to assert that I have nowhere mistaken the language of the Holy Spirit in the several passages that either give an account of the administration of Christian baptism or tend to explain the nature and design of the institution; but this I hope I can say, that I have endeavoured to enter into the true meaning of them, and have explained them in a sense that appears to me (upon the maturest consideration) most consistent and scriptural. I think myself obliged to tell you, that the inquiry has afforded me abundant satisfaction. The reasons for our practice of baptising children, and that by sprinkling or pouring of water, appear to me now in a much stronger light than before; and I am more fully convinced than ever that the specious objections that are thrown out against it have no solid foundation in reason or the word of God.

This is dated, Harborough, September 6th, 1770.

The interval was not very long from the resignation of Mr. Addington to the settlement of Mr. Gill, as Mr. Addington's resignation is dated August 12, 1781, and Mr. Gill commenced his labours in the early part of 1782. During the interval the pulpit was supplied by neighbouring ministers, and the students from the academy at Daventry; among the latter of whom was Mr. Belsham, afterwards recognized as the champion of Socinianism. The principal candidates were Mr. Bennett, who afterwards settled at Kiderminster; Mr. Cooke, who finally settled at Halifax; and a Mr. Severn. During this state of indecision, Mr. Garner, in his travels into Yorkshire, heard of Mr. Gill, who, being highly recommended as an excellent man, was introduced to the Church at Harborough. [140]

Mr. Gill was a native of Netherthong, a small village near Holesfirth, in Yorkshire. He was educated at the academy at Heckmondwicke, and commenced his labours at Swanland, not far from Hull. After a residence of about eight or nine years in that place, he was invited to the pastoral office over this Church and congregation. Mr. Gill's acceptance of the invitation is dated March 22nd, 1782. Mr. Gill continued his labours after this union for a long period, with honour to himself and benefit to others. He was permitted to preach the Gospel to them for more than six-and-thirty years, while he lived among them for at least half a century. A paralytic affection rendered it necessary that he should retire from his labours and resign his charge, in the year

1818. In the interval between this period and his death, he was, with the exception of the time he spent at Coventry with a son, regular in his attendance at the Meeting where he had ministered; and though all the powers of his mind were much impaired, his relish for the word was undiminished, and his habits of devotion never left him to his dying hour.

This holy and venerable servant of God breathed his last at the house of his son-in-law, Mr. French, of Great Bowden, on the evening of February 2nd, 1832, at the age of 79. He was buried in the ground connected with the Meeting, when Mr. Wild delivered the funeral oration; Mr. Bicknell, of Crick, and Mr. Robertson, of Wellingborough, engaged in prayer; Mr. Chater, of Kibworth, giving out the hymns. His funeral sermon was preached on the Sabbath following, by Mr. Scott, of Rowell, from Acts xi. 24: "He was a good man," &c. (the character of Barnabas). During the ministry of Mr. Gill 248 members were added to the Church. [141]

Having some recollections of Mr. Gill's person and ministry, from having heard him a few times in the latter part of his labours, in his own place of worship and in neighbouring places, we should describe him as rather above the middle stature; very grave in his aspect; his manners gentle and kind; his spirit devotional and fervent; always serious in his work; his matter plain, pious, experimental, decidedly evangelical in sentiment: his voice was not of great compass. Mr. Gill was not distinguished by grasp of mind, power of reasoning, depth of thought, or extent of information. His powers, whether natural or acquired, were not of a high order. His case shows us what may be done by the weight of character, fervent consistent piety, without superior mental endowments, in filling a respectable station with credit and usefulness. Mr. Gill was considered to be exemplary in visiting his flock, and to this was added the care of a considerable boarding-school, which he had for a number of years; and our impression is, that more time was spent in such engagements than could comport with the efficient discharge of the duties of the pulpit. Hence we fear, from what was manifested in the state of the Church and congregation after his retirement, that the result of his labours was not of the most satisfactory kind. [142]

On the resignation of Mr. Gill, Mr. Jukes, now of Bedford, supplied Harborough for many months with great acceptance. Mr. Francis, of Lancaster, also came as a candidate for a short time.

Mr. Gear, now of Bradford, Wiltshire, then a student at Hoxton Academy, succeeded as a probationer, and was invited by a large majority to take the oversight of the Church. The want of entire unanimity led Mr. Gear at first to decline accepting the invitation; but, upon its being renewed, he ultimately complied with the call, and was ordained to the pastoral office in October, 1822. The ministers engaged were Messrs. Notcutt, of Wilbarston, now of Ipswich; Robertson, of Stretton, afterwards of Wellingborough; Maslem, of Hertford, Mr. Gear's pastor; Dr. Harris, of Hoxton, Mr. Gear's tutor; Scott, of Rowell, now tutor of Airedale Academy; Green, of Uppingham; and Roberts, of Melton.

Mr. Gear continued his labours at Harborough until the year 1830, when, not finding that concord and good feeling between him and the people necessary for each other's mutual advantage and happiness, he complied with an invitation he received from Bradford, in Wiltshire. Letters were addressed to him signed by 375 persons, urging his stay at Harborough, but he declined to do so. After his departure, a handsome gift of plate was presented to him, as a memorial of esteem and affection from his numerous friends.

Mr. Gear's removal, and a difference of opinion concerning the candidates which were recommended and heard, led to considerable altercation and painful division of feeling. The following ministers supplied the pulpit as probationers: Mr. Johnson, from Highbury; Mr. Wooldridge, from Gideon Chapel, Bristol; Mr. Hewlett, late of Newberry. Mr. Slye, of Potterspury, was unanimously invited to visit Harborough as a probationer; but, having no desire to remove from his people, refused. [143]

Mr. Wild, late of Gainsborough, and educated under Mr. Joseph Fletcher, of Blackburn, was recommended to the friends at Harborough by Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool. In May, 1831, Mr. Wild was invited to spend three or four Sabbaths, at the expiration of which time he received an invitation to the pastoral office; but conceiving the time he had spent among them too limited to form a just opinion of the people and the suitabilities of the place, he engaged to spend a month or five weeks more before he gave his final answer to the wishes of the people. Mr. Wild accepted the invitation, and his recognition as the pastor took place November 9th of the same year. Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool; Scott, of Rowell; Toller, of Kettering; Roberts, of Melton; Chater, of Kibworth; Hewlett, of Lutterworth, engaged in the services of the day.

Mr. Wild's ministry here was of short duration, and attended with the want of unanimity and peace; so that in the year 1835, perceiving the continuance of dissatisfaction, with no prospect as he thought of party feeling abating, and consequently little hope of future comfort and usefulness, he sent a notice of his intention to resign, which was read by Mr. Hobson, of Welford, on Lord's-day, January 11th, 1835, his ministry having continued about three years and a half.

The present pastor (Mr. H. Toller) is the fifth surviving son of the late Rev. T. N. Toller, of Kettering. He pursued a course of preparatory study under Mr. Walter Scott, late of Rowell; and afterwards was a student at Coward College, London. At the expiration of his studies, he was invited as a probationer to Harborough, and ultimately to take the pastoral charge, which he accepted, and was ordained October 27th, 1836. His brother, Mr. Thomas Toller, of Kettering, delivered the charge—Mr. Edward Mial, then of Leicester, the introductory discourse; and Mr. Mursell, of the same place, preached to the people. [144]

Though the Church and congregation could not be considered in a happy, prosperous state, when this settlement took place, yet they gradually attained to a condition of peace and prosperity to which they had for some years been strangers.

In the ninth year of Mr. Toller's ministry the present Chapel was built, to which we have referred at the commencement of this account. On the day of opening, large assemblies were collected together, and a noble spirit of liberality was manifested. Dr. Reed, of London, preached in the morning, from Num. x. 29; Dr. Leifchild, in the evening, from Rom. v. 9. Mr. Alexander, of Norwich, preached on the next Sabbath. The whole amount collected at these opening services was £199. 1s., and donations were presented of sufficient amount at once to set the Chapel entirely free from debt. All this made it a season of gladness and of lively interest to the people.

Since this effort they have gone forward with renewed vigour and united energy. The number of members added to the Church during the present pastorate is 179. The present number of communicants is 163. The general Sabbath-school connected with the place contains 150 children. In the Infant-school, conducted on the Sabbath, there are 80 children. For the use of the latter, a room has been recently erected over the general school-room, with class-rooms for the elder children, at a cost of £230, the whole of which has been paid. Occasionally services are conducted, chiefly on Sabbath evenings, by several members of the Church, in five villages in the vicinity of Harborough.

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The whole aspect of things in this Christian society now presents a happy illustration of the sentiment, that a united people, under a faithful pastor, will go on and prosper.

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## CHAPTER V.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT ASHLEY AND WILBARSTON.

It might appear to be difficult to some of the Nonconformists of the present day to decide, why their forefathers should fix on this village as a place where they should carry on the stated ministrations of the Gospel, and form a Church on Congregational principles. The population of the village is too small to present a suitable sphere in itself for a Dissenting congregation, while the Episcopal Church has the patronage of the State and receives her emoluments. It was probably regarded by those engaged in its formation as presenting a central spot, where the Nonconformists who resided in surrounding villages might conveniently assemble. Hence, during its early history the hearers travelled from a number of places in the vicinity. One of the stated hearers, who died at an advanced age a few years ago, and who had been connected with the place from his earliest days, informed the writer that he remembered hearers coming from thirteen villages to attend under the ministry of the Gospel at Ashley. Since that period Chapels have been erected in several of those villages, in which stated services are conducted; and this, as a matter of course, diminishes the number of travellers to the old places.

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The history of the Independent Church at Ashley is connected, during the first 60 or 70 years of its existence, with that of Market Harborough. It was formed under the labours of the same minister, about the same time (1673), and continued under the charge of the same pastors until some time after the death of Mr. David Some. For the character and labours of its first pastors (Mr. Matthew Clark and his son, succeeded by Mr. Some, who had Doddridge as an assistant for a time), the reader is referred to the preceding memorials of the Church at Harborough. The record of members of the Church, preserved in the handwriting of Mr. Some, shows that Church-meetings were held at Ashley, members admitted there, the Lord's Supper administered; proving that it was regarded as a distinct Christian society, under the pastoral charge of the minister of the Church at Harborough. After Doddridge came to reside at Harborough, and became assistant to Mr. Some, he took his turn in preaching at Ashley. Tradition says, that on one occasion he baptized nine children at the house of a respectable farmer at Weston, about a mile from Ashley, whose family were long connected with the place, and at whose house the minister frequently, in those days, dined on the Sabbath. From Doddridge's own pen we learn that some of his published sermons to young people were preached at Ashley, for he dedicates them to the young people in the congregations at Northampton, Harborough, Kibworth, Hinchley, and Ashley, as the places where they had been preached. The following note is appended to the sermon entitled 'The Orphan's Hope,' from Psalm xxvii. 10: "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up":—"This sermon was preached at Ashley, in Northamptonshire, March 6th, 1725, to some young persons whose father, mother, and sister had all died of the small-pox a few days before." In the introduction to the discourse he observes—

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There are few precepts of the Gospel which will appear more easy to a humane and generous mind than those in which we are required to weep with them that weep; and surely there are few circumstances of private life which will more readily command our mournful sympathy than those of that afflicted family, to the poor remains of which you will naturally, on the first hearing of these words, direct your thoughts, and perhaps your eyes too—the circumstances of a family which God hath broken with breach upon

breach—of those distressed children whose father and mother have forsaken them almost at once, and who have since been visited with another stroke, which if alone had been very grievous, and when added to such a weight of former sorrows is, I fear, almost insupportable. I believe all of you who are acquainted with the case sincerely pity them, and wish their relief; but I am under some peculiar obligations to desire and attempt it, not only on account of my public character, but as I know the heart of an orphan, having myself been deprived of both my parents at an age at which it might reasonably be supposed a child should be most sensible of such a loss. I cannot recollect any Scripture which was then more comfortable, as I think none could have been more suitable, to me, than that which is now before us.

He touchingly and beautifully addresses the orphan family towards the close of the discourse.

It must have been eight or ten years after the death of Mr. Some, which took place in 1737, before the Church at Ashley had a pastor placed over it separate from the Church at Harborough, for the first pastor here appears to have been a Mr. John West, who had been a student at Northampton in Doddridge's academy; for though we have no account preserved of the period when he commenced or when he closed his ministry, yet we find that he entered the academy at Northampton in the year 1740. If immediately on the close of his studies he became the pastor of the Church at Ashley, according to the usual term this would not take place until 1745 or 1746; and as we find another pastor chosen within eleven or twelve years from this time, and have no further account of Mr. West, it is probable that he closed his life and his ministry at a comparatively early age.

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In the year 1757, Mr. Samuel Bacon was chosen pastor of the Church at Ashley, in which office he continued for 32 years. The residence of Mr. Bacon's family was Sutton-in-Ashfield; he studied for the ministry at the academy at Mile End, when Dr. Conder and Mr., afterward Dr., Gibbons were the tutors.

It is supposed that Ashley was Mr. Bacon's only charge; during his ministry here his residence was at Wilbarston. No particulars have been preserved of his character or ministry, the success of his labours, or the state of the Church while he was pastor. He appears to have been highly esteemed, and was spoken of by his friends as one of the most lovely, amiable men they ever knew. Mr. Bacon was one of the first trustees for the Meeting House at Weldon and the property connected with it, and one of the monthly lecturers there for a number of years, frequently conducting also the extra service they obtained on a Sabbath evening in addition to the monthly lecture. At Corby also Mr. Bacon had some engagements of a similar nature. We find his name inserted in the account of the ordination of Mr. J. Fuller, at Kettering, in 1772. He died rather suddenly, February 6th, 1789, and was buried in the Meeting House, beneath the pulpit, where Mrs. Bacon was also interred, and Mrs. Talbot, one of his three daughters.

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In the same year that Mr. Bacon died, Mr. George Bullock was invited to become the pastor, and entered on his stated ministry; residing, like his predecessor, at Wilbarston. He was a student at Mile End when Dr. Addington was tutor, and we have heard that he was a favourite student of the Doctor's; one memorial of this we have seen. There is in the hands of a daughter of Mr. Bullock a neat pocket Bible, in two volumes, published in 1640, that evidently was used by Dr. Addington when he preached in the villages in the vicinity of Market Harborough, having on the fly-leaves the texts of the sermons noted down very neatly, with the places where they were preached, and the time of the service; also four hymns selected from the Olney Hymns by Newton and Cowper, suitable to sing at the services, written in shorthand, according to the system of Jeremiah Rich, improved by Doddridge. This Bible was given by his tutor to Mr. Bullock, as the following memorandum, written in each volume by Mr. Bullock, testifies:—

GEORGE BULLOCK.

The gift of my very dear, highly honoured, much esteemed friend and tutor, the Rev. S. Addington, D.D., No 5, Grove House, Mile End, London, November 6th, 1788.

About four years after Mr. Bullock commenced his ministry at Ashley, a building was purchased and fitted up at Wilbarston for a Meeting House. Occasional services in a licensed room had for some time been held; and the attendance increasing, it was thought desirable to have a larger place and more regular services. This Meeting House was opened in the year 1793, and from that time it was connected with Ashley, to have one service by the pastor every Sabbath morning or afternoon alternately, and occasionally a Sabbath evening lecture; so that he became the minister of both congregations, regularly travelling from one place to the other to conduct these services.

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In the early part of Mr. Bullock's ministry at Ashley there was some considerable increase in the congregation and the Church; but this did not continue to the close of his course. After labouring for about twenty years, in the month of January, 1809, he was seized with a paralytic affection, which laid him aside entirely from all public service. He resigned his charge, seeing no prospect of restoration, in March, 1810; and in the year 1811 he died, at the age of 48 years, and was interred in the Meeting House at Wilbarston, where a tablet is erected to his memory.

After this Mr. William Notcutt was invited to the pastoral office, and was ordained June 6th, 1811.

Mr. Notcutt preached at both places in the manner of his predecessor, and during some part of his ministry took monthly services at Slawston and Hallaton; but now there is a stated pastor,

who preaches regularly at both these places. During the ministry of Mr. Notcutt a vestry was added to the Meeting House at Wilbarston for week-evening services and for the Sabbath-school. In the year 1820 the Meeting House was enlarged, at an expense of about £200. The ministry of Mr. Notcutt continued here about 15 years, and in that time about 50 members were added to the Church. In March, 1826, he resigned his charge, and removed to Ipswich, where he is still labouring as pastor of the Independent Church in Tacket Street.

After this removal, there was an unsettled interval of about five years. For a short time the two congregations separated, and tried to have a minister for each, when a Mr. Bromiley was at Ashley and Mr. Hill at Wilbarston. While Mr. Bromiley was at Ashley the Meeting House underwent some alterations—was new pewed, and the inside considerably improved; but it still remains, as to the appearance of the building, in the state of one of the oldest Nonconformist village Meeting Houses, with its thatched roof without, and its uncovered beams within; and it may stand for years to come as a venerable relic of the olden times. The first trust deed of the present Meeting House is dated 1706. [152]

After a short trial of separation, it was thought to be best to re-unite the two places; and in the year 1831 the present minister, Mr. Thomas Coleman, who had previously been pastor of the Independent Church at Wollaston, was unanimously invited to take the charge of both congregations, and he has conducted the services at both places for 21 years.

At this time it was thought desirable that the residence of the minister should be at Ashley, as most in the centre of the connexion; a dwelling-house was therefore prepared, adjoining the Meeting House, as the residence of the minister for the time being; ground was purchased for the building, a garden, and a small burying place behind the Meeting. The alteration of the Meeting, the purchase of the ground, the building, &c., must have cost more than £400, which has been entirely paid off. There are about 17 acres of land that have been purchased with moneys left to the interest by different persons, which are put in trust for the benefit of the minister for the time being. There are now standing, as members of the Church, about 56 persons; the Sabbath-schools contain about 60 children. There are occasional services conducted in three villages in the vicinity, where there are rooms licensed for public worship. [153]

If we took pleasure in dwelling on opposition encountered, we could record instances which would reflect dishonour on the opposers, while in the result the goodness of God and the power of the Gospel were manifested. Nor might it be thought unsuitable to place amidst these 'Memorials' a statement of the following facts, while names are concealed:—That a new rector, appointed to one of these villages, seemed determined to distinguish himself by opposing the occasional services that had been held in a licensed house for twenty years. He summoned his parishioners to meet in the Church; told them his design to put a stop to the preaching in the house; announced it as a very improper thing to have preaching in a house, and in a room where people lived; and when reminded of the Saviour's promise, that "*wherever* two or three are gathered together in his name," replied, "Ah, that might be all very true in those days, when there were no churches built nor clergymen appointed; but it did not apply now." Having gained the great man of the village on his side, nothing would do but they must have a notice drawn up and served on the occupiers of the cottage where the service was held, that they must leave it, if they did not give up the preaching; and this was persisted in; though a noble Earl who had property in the village, to whom the pastor sent a statement of the case, expressed his decided wish that the service should be continued in its usual course,—and when after considerable effort another room, more commodious, was obtained, gave a handsome donation towards fitting it up for the service, and expressed his fervent wish that the Lord would give his gracious blessing to the services that might be held there. In the varied circumstances connected with this case, there was a striking display—on the one side of the narrowness and oppression engendered by the spirit of bigotry, and on the other of the liberality and kindness of enlightened Christianity. A few years have passed since then, and the occasional services are still continued. [154]

A voluntary Christian society, situated like this at Ashley, in the course of such a long period, having now existed for 175 years, must have undergone many changes. The erection of new places of worship in localities where its hearers and members in the early period of its history used to reside, has at length confined its connexions to four or five villages in its immediate vicinity, and they are of small population, and several of the old Dissenting families have been removed from them. Being simply an agricultural district, without trade or manufactures, there is no prospect of much increase. As young persons rise into life they remove to other places for employment, and some of the most active and useful have been thus lost to the place that gave them birth: but still a small Church remains to bear its testimony to the great principles of the Gospel, and to the truth and faithfulness of God; and it may yet extend and prosper, by united believing prayer and earnest effort, under the blessing of the great God of Zion.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT WELFORD.

In the extra-parochial district of Sulby, about a mile from the village of Welford, was founded in

the twelfth century a monastery for a certain order of monks. It was handsomely endowed, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The site is now occupied by farm buildings. But as another illustration of the changes which occur in this mutable world, there resided, 180 years ago, in some part of that abbey, a man who would not conform to the dictates of his fellow men in the things of God—"a man of worth, a man of letters too;" one eminent for learning, talent, piety, usefulness; who laid the foundation of two Dissenting interests in the county of Northampton, and kept a Dissenting academy at Sulby, or a seminary for the education of young men, several of whom became eminent Dissenting ministers. This person was the Rev. John Shuttlewood, A.B. He was born at Wymeswold, in the county of Leicester, January 3rd, 1632, of respectable parents, who sent him to the Grammar-school at Leicester, and afterwards to Christ's College, Cambridge, where he obtained the degree of A.B. He was ordained to the ministry in 1654, not by episcopal ordination it would appear, but in the method more generally adopted in the days of the Commonwealth, in the congregation of Raunston, with an honourable testimonial from the classical presbytery of Wirksworth, in the province of Derby. [156]

The deep humility, piety, and devotedness of his spirit were manifest by a solemn dedication of himself to God, drawn up about this time in Latin, of which the following is a translation:—

O my God, on account of my sins thou hast afflicted me with thy judgments! Thou art just, O Lord! in all thy dispensations towards me, because I have grievously offended against thee. I have followed the world; I have too much indulged the flesh; and I have been very often overcome by Satan. To thee I give up myself, to live to thee. And now, before God, the searcher of hearts, I promise and engage to leave my worldly concerns to the companion of my life; to renounce the flesh with its affections; and to study the good of the souls which thou art committing to my care. Now, O Lord! do thou so strengthen and fortify me by the Spirit of grace against all these my enemies, that I may obtain the victory over them. And that I may seriously perform these my good resolutions, let this paper, signed by my name, be a witness against me, if I lie before thee.

JOHN SHUTTLEWOOD.

A man of such a spirit we should expect to find among those who refused to conform to the terms prescribed to the ministers of the Church, soon after the restoration of the second Charles. On this account he was ejected from the living of Raunston and Hoose, and afterward exposed to great suffering for his Nonconformity, and his attempts to conduct the worship of God and preach his word in a way his conscience approved. In the year 1668, when he was uniting with some others in singing a Psalm, one Mr. B., with thirty or forty horsemen, with swords drawn and pistols loaded, came and seized him with many that were worshipping with him. Several of both sexes were beaten and driven into the field, and there dismissed upon promising to appear the next day before a justice of the peace. Mr. Shuttlewood was conveyed to Leicester Gaol, where he was a prisoner for some months. After the "Conventicle Act" passed, he was again seized by one Charles Gibbons, a notorious persecutor and profane swearer—taken by him from one justice of the peace to another; and warrants were issued to distrain upon him for £20, upon the owner of the house where he preached for £20, and 5s. apiece on others. [157]

In 1674 Mr. Shuttlewood was living at Lubenham, a village about two miles from Market Harborough. There his house was entered when he was conducting divine service; a warrant was obtained to distrain upon him for £40, when seven of his milch cows were taken and sold.

A short letter is preserved which was written to his wife from Leicester gaol, which shows the exemplary resignation, meekness, and faith with which he passed through his trials. It was written February 20th, 1668.

MY DEAR WIFE,—Myself and fellow prisoners are in good health. I bless God, I am very well satisfied with his dispensations towards me in reference to my landlady's proceedings; so that I am no longer disquieted with them, nor solicitous about them, but patiently wait God's gracious disposal of me. Perhaps infinite wisdom foresees some inconveniency which we are not aware of, and therefore is about to remove us. I am loath to leave the society of my dear brethren, Mr. Clarke and Mr. Southal; but I hope in the end God will so dispose of us, that we shall have cause to say, it is best for us to be where God shall carry us. I know not which way to look; but our "God is a very present help in a time of trouble," and will let us see that it is not our forecast, but his providence, which shall provide an habitation for us. Let us rather beg an improvement than a removal of his dispensations. Remember me to my father, children, &c. Thus, in haste, I remain, &c. [158]

The Mr. Clarke, mentioned in this letter, we suppose to have been Matthew Clarke, the first pastor of the Independent Church at Harborough and Ashley, as he was cast three times into the same prison, and was connected with Mr. Shuttlewood in sufferings, and also in services and enjoyments.

He was obliged frequently to change his abode—sometimes in Leicestershire, sometimes in Northamptonshire, to escape from his foes; acting on the directions given by his Lord, "If they persecute you in one city, flee unto another." After a time he went to reside at Sulby, a place remarkable for its picturesque and secluded situation. The family of the Paynes, at Sulby Hall, then favoured the Nonconformists. Here he appears sometimes to have had a flourishing

seminary. A memorandum of his in a pocket almanack states "that six students were added to his academy in one year." The following persons, amongst others, studied under him, and rose to eminence: Mr. Julius Saunders, afterwards minister at Bedworth; Mr. John Sheffield; Mr. Matthew Clarke, son, we suppose, of Mr. Clarke of Harborough, afterwards minister in London; Dr. Joseph Oldfield; Mr. Wilson, the father of Mr. Samuel Wilson, of London; and Mr. Thomas Emlyn. In the memoirs of the last of these it is said, "that his parents chose to bring up their son to the ministry among the Nonconformists; and that for this purpose he was sent, in the year 1678, for academical education to Mr. Shuttleworth (should have been Shuttlewood), at Sulby, near Welford, in Northamptonshire." Here he stayed four years. In the year 1679 he took a journey to Cambridge, and was admitted to Emanuel College, but returned again to Mr. Shuttlewood. These circumstances indicate that Mr. Shuttlewood resided at Sulby a considerable time. It was during this period that he gathered a congregation at Welford and at Creaton. But such was the spirit of the times, and such the dangers to which the Nonconformists were exposed, that at Welford, in the year 1674, they met in a secluded part of the town, on the premises of Mr. Edmund Miles, where they fitted up a place of worship, which was the first Dissenting Meeting House there; but such were the activity and zeal of their enemies, that they thought it prudent to vary their places of meeting, and to set a guard against the inroads of their foes. They might have adopted the language of Nehemiah as their own: "We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch day and night because of them." There was a house occupied by Mr. Charles Hanscomb, secluded in a narrow yard from the main street, and open to a field in the direction of Mr. Shuttlewood's house. Here the persecuted minister and his people often met, one of the number being appointed to watch, while the rest were engaged in worship; so that when the informers were seen to approach notice might be given to Mr. Shuttlewood and his hearers, who escaped by the window into the fields. Sometimes they met in the pastures which surrounded the house at Sulby, amidst the darkness and the damps of night. These were days of trial, when the reality of religious principle was tested and its power appeared.

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Mr. Shuttlewood was blest with a robust, vigorous constitution, yet was of a very tender spirit; and the death of one of his children so deeply pierced him as to bring on many bodily complaints, which he carried with him to his grave. His constitution was greatly injured by the sufferings he endured, and also by his preaching at unseasonable hours, and in unsuitable places; so that his health at length rapidly declined, and he died when on a visit to the Church at Creaton, March 17th, 1688, in the 58th year of his age. A humble stone was erected to his memory in the Churchyard, with this brief but honourable inscription:—"Mulum dilectus, mulum deflendus"—"Much beloved, much lamented".

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Now the flock at Welford were as sheep without a shepherd. They had not been formed into a regular Christian Church under the ministry of Mr. Shuttlewood; and for about ten years they were destitute of a pastor, or any stated ministrations of divine truth amongst them. Some of them, during this period, travelled as far as Bedworth, in Warwickshire, upwards of twenty miles, to hear Mr. Julius Saunders. Such was the love these servants of Christ had for the Gospel, that in the dark mornings of the winter season they travelled by the light of a lantern as far as Lutterworth, where they left it till their return in the evening, when it was again lighted to conduct them home. It appears that there were many in those days that would travel as far as their feet would carry them, rather than be entirely deprived of the ministry of the Gospel.

Some extracts from the records of the Church at Bedworth, kindly sent to the writer by the present pastor of the Church, show that there were, in the year 1687, five persons from Welford added to that Church. This was the second year in the history of that Church; and at the close of it the pastor wrote, "thus has God increased us and doubled our numbers, and many of them stars of the first magnitude." William Powers, from Welford, who joined the Church at Bedworth, appears to have been a man of eminent piety. On one occasion Mr. Saunders writes, "It was while brother Powers was earnestly praying the Lord to thrust forth labourers into his harvest, that I was set at liberty from the bond that was on my spirit." In 1688, a female servant in one of the Welford families attending at Bedworth was added to the Church. In the fourth month of that year a Church-meeting is held at Welford, when several persons from Elkington and Cottesbrook are added to the Church. In the last month of this year we find two more from Welford joined to the Church at Bedworth; but the pastor records, that in the third month of the next year "there was great dissatisfaction expressed at a Church-meeting, on account of my going to Welford and preaching there the last Lord's-day, where there seems to be a mighty work of God upon the hearts of many carrying on."

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Mr. Saunders wished to devote one Sabbath in the month to the people that met at Welford; but this was strongly opposed by some of the Church at Bedworth, who probably desired to have the pastor always with them on the Sabbath.

One Valentine Drake showed great opposition to the pastor going to preach at Welford; "but the Church," adds Mr. Saunders, "gave me liberty; they declared that it was meet that, as a ruling elder, I should appoint my own meetings to preach." "The trouble was great that I met with, all about going to Welford one Lord's-day in the month." The opponents ultimately prevailed, so that the minister was obliged to give up the services there. "In the 9th month, 1689, a solemn assembly of the Church. The Church refused to cast out Valentine Drake for all that he had done; and he had done much evil. He drew many after him; made a schism in the Church; manifested fiery passions in our Church-meetings; and so far prevailed, that I was necessitated to break off from going to Welford, whereby that great and blessed work that was going on was made to cease. Many that had a hand in breaking it never flourished in their souls after. In those days my

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hands were weak."

"In 1691, brother William Powers, from Welford, was chosen to be a ruling elder. On the twelfth day of the twelfth month, at Welford, the brethren being assembled together—Mr. Davis, brother Tebbirt, and brother Taylor, from Rowell—I gave brother Powers a charge to fulfil his office; he declared his willing mind to do so, and that he did accept of the office." "Elizabeth Ridgly, of Haslebeeche, Northamptonshire, joined this Church, 1687. She was a diligent saint, who came to our Church-meetings seventeen long miles, twelve times in a year, and that on foot." It is supposed the distance was not far short of twenty-seven miles.

Some of the Welford hearers attended at Kettering and at Harborough until the year 1698, when the Rev. John Norris came to Welford. He had been educated to Sheriffhales, in Shropshire. When Mr. Norris came to Welford, the days of liberty and peace had so far dawned upon the Nonconformists that they could no longer be persecuted according to law; and his ministry proving very acceptable to the people, a new Meeting House was built capable of seating 500 hearers, which was opened in the year 1700; and in the same year Mr. Norris formed them into a Christian Church. The first time he administered the Lord's Supper, there were twenty-six members united in celebrating the Saviour's death; but after a few months the number increased to sixty members. The ground on which the Meeting House was built was given by the Paynes, of Sulby Hall; and five of the members of this family united with the twenty-six who first formed themselves into a Church under Mr. Norris. [163]

Mr. Norris was very popular as a preacher, much beloved as a Christian minister, especially by his brethren in the ministry. He was engaged at the ordination of Doddridge, at Northampton, in asking the questions, and offering the ordination prayer. Doddridge regarded him with affection and veneration, as a father. He died very suddenly, February 8, 1738, in the sixty-third year of his age: he was buried in the Churchyard. The following lines on his tombstone were written by Doddridge:—

Decked with each manly and each Christian grace,  
The friend of God, and all the human race—  
While earth and heaven beheld him with delight,  
From earth to heaven he winged a sudden flight.  
Lo! angels pressed to bear their charge above,  
To kindred realms of piety and love.

Doddridge preached his funeral sermon, from Genesis v. 24: "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."

We present a few passages from this discourse, descriptive of the character and ministry of Mr. Norris.

I may be permitted publicly to acknowledge (says Doddridge) the sense I have of the favour of divine providence, in leading me so early into the acquaintance of this excellent person, and blessing me with so great a share of his friendship, with which I was honoured from my first entrance into the ministry, and which his singular humility and condescension, wisdom and piety, have rendered exceedingly delightful and improving to me in all the succeeding years of life.

And surely I should be greatly deficient in the duty of this day, if I did not solemnly charge it upon you frequently to recollect your obligations to the divine goodness in giving you so able and so tender a shepherd, and in continuing him amongst you for so long a time with such cordial love, that repeated, unanimous, and earnest solicitations from the most considerable congregations in the neighbouring counties could not prevail upon him to remove from you. So evident was it that "he took the oversight of you, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." [164]

It may eminently be said of you, my friends, in a spiritual sense, that you have been "fed with the finest of the wheat," as the pure and uncorrupted truths of the Gospel have been preached amongst you with plainness and seriousness, and in the spirit of love. Your minds have not been amused with useless subtleties and barren speculations; you have not been vexed with strifes of words, unprofitable and vain; nor grieved with passionate invectives against your brethren of any denomination—invectives, which are never more criminal than when delivered in the name of the Lord, and which too often turn the food of souls into poison, and that which should have been for their welfare, into a trap. This "good man brought out of the good treasure of his heart good things"; his generous and benevolent soul overflowed with sentiments of candour and love; and he was never more in his own element, than when he was telling you that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost": and I firmly believe, that in the thirty-eight years of his ministry among you he never delivered a sermon or a sentence inconsistent with that great principle.

I join with you in lamenting that none of those elaborate and judicious discourses which he delivered among you, from Sabbath to Sabbath, are, or can be, published to the world: for though it is certain that his graceful and venerable aspect, and his easy yet lively manner, gave a peculiar beauty to them as delivered by himself; yet, when I consider how judiciously his thoughts were selected, how methodically they were disposed, and with what propriety, elegance, and spirit they were expressed, I am well



assured they would generally have been esteemed a rich addition to that great number of practical writings with which our age and country is already blest, and with which I hope it will still abound. \* \* \* \* \* And, for what he was in the domestic relations of life, I had almost said, I wish it may not be too long, but I will rather say too tenderly, remembered. The loss of a husband so constantly obliging, so affectionately sympathizing, so well furnished as a prudent guide and a pleasant companion, and so well disposed for the offices of both, will, I fear, be too deeply felt. May the sense of it be tempered with those divine consolations which he was so eminently fit to administer, but which have not surely lost their value, and will not, I trust, lose their relish, though no longer administered by him. May the children which were dear to him as his own, never forget with how much diligence he instructed them; with how much importunity and constancy he prayed for them; and with what tenderness he watched over all their interests.

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I may add, even in the decline of life this light was growing brighter and brighter; and though his removal, while his capacities of usefulness were to the last so great, must be very affecting to you, yet I cannot forbear saying that you have some peculiar reason to be thankful for the manner and circumstances of his death.

Nature was not racked with tormenting pains, nor worn out by a tedious, consuming illness; but the good man grew a little drowsy towards the evening of his long day, and, having "served his generation according to the will of God," gently "fell asleep" as he was going from one apartment of the house to another, and all the business and struggle of dying was over in less time than could have served him to get up the stairs, as he was attempting to do. It is a delightful thought, that God dismissed his servant in so peaceful a manner that his death so much resembled a translation, and "he was not, for God took him."

Mr. Norris preached the last Sabbath he lived, and concluded the public service with a copious, lively, and affectionate prayer for his people, which could not have been more suitable if he had known he was then taking his last farewell.

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After the death of Mr. Norris, Job Orton preached his first sermon at Welford, and received an invitation from the people to become their pastor; but this he declined, as he did several other invitations, on account of his engagements as assistant to Dr. Doddridge in the academy.

Another of the Doctor's pupils, a Mr. Charles Bulkley, was settled over the Church at Welford; but early in the next year after his ordination he changed his sentiments on the doctrines of the Gospel, and on the ordinance of baptism; consequently, he was requested by the Church to resign his office as pastor over them, which he did, and retired to London, where he joined the General Baptists.

At this juncture, Mr. Bottrill, a gentleman of considerable property, connected with the Church at Welford, was at Weldon, a village about eight miles from Oundle; and there he happened to hear a young minister preach, who was a native of Oundle, and was on a visit to his widowed mother, who resided there. This apparently incidental circumstance was the means of bringing about a connexion that was long continued, and of a very happy and useful character. This young minister was Mr. King, son of a late pastor of the Independent Church at Oundle.

When Mr. Bottrill returned home, he induced the Church at Welford to invite Mr. King to preach to them, which he did for two Sabbaths, much to their satisfaction. After some further probation, he received a unanimous invitation to become their pastor, which he accepted, and was ordained in the spring of the year 1743; the Rev. Mr. Hill, of London, and Dr. Doddridge, preached on the occasion. When Mr. King became pastor, the number of members in the Church was 87.

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There are some interesting circumstances connected with Mr. King's early history, worthy of notice. If he was, like Samuel, early devoted to God, it was in connexion with his mother having the spirit of Hannah in pleading for him, and giving him up to God. His father was the Rev. Joseph King, highly respected as the Independent minister at Oundle. His mother, Mrs. Hannah King, was a lady distinguished for her piety and intelligence; and she earnestly desired to have a son, that she might devote him to the service of the sanctuary.

Her desire being granted in the birth of a son, she, like Hannah, called his name Samuel, as a constant memorial of her prayers and her purpose. She fondly hoped to see him trained by paternal instruction for the Christian ministry, when, by a mysterious providence, with a sudden stroke she was bereft of her beloved partner, in the midst of his usefulness and in the vigour of his life, being but 46 years of age. Still, amidst the sorrows, the trials, and difficulties of widowhood, her boy not four years of age, and a family dependent upon slender means for support, this mother cherished her fond impression concerning this son. At an early age he was placed in the Grammar-school at Oundle, and made great proficiency; from thence he was removed to the classical School for Dissenters at Mount Sorrell, Leicestershire, then under the direction of Mr. Thomas Watson and Mr. Abel Ragg—the same Mr. Ragg who had been Doddridge's fellow pupil and intimate friend, and who died in the same year with his other beloved friend and fellow pupil, Mr. David Some, junior.

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From his earliest days, Mrs. King endeavoured to impress her son's mind with the important truths of the Gospel; and the Lord blessed her efforts and heard and answered her prayers, in the conversion of her son. When he had left home his religious impressions were deepened by the

epistolary admonitions of his mother, and by the religious instructions of his tutors. When he removed from this school he lived for a time with an uncle at Long Thorpe, who was an extensive farmer, and steward to Sir Francis St. John, who lived there. In this situation he improved the leisure afforded by agriculture in a diligent attention to mental and devout exercises. Thus occupied, he came to a settled determination to enter the ministry; which purpose, after due consideration, he disclosed to his mother. This was joyful intelligence to her; and she lost no time in communicating it to a friend and patron, Mrs. Cooke, of Newington, a lady greatly esteemed for her piety and liberality. With characteristic promptitude and kindness, she immediately engaged to support him while prosecuting his studies at the academy. He was placed under the tuition of Dr. Abraham Taylor, at Deptford, in 1735; he continued there till 1740, when the institution was removed to Stepney.

Mr. King attended the ministry of Mr. Thomas Bradbury, at New Court, with whose Church he became connected.

While he was at Deptford, a party of the students went one evening to bathe, when Mr., afterwards Dr. Thomas Gibbons, going beyond his depth, was in danger of drowning. No one present could swim except Mr. King, who at the moment was standing at the water side at a short distance. On hearing the cries of the other students he hurried to the spot, plunged into the water, caught Mr. Gibbons by the hair when in the act of sinking, and thus rescued him from a watery grave, as animation was suspended, and was with considerable difficulty restored. Dr. Gibbons ever after retained a most affectionate attachment to Mr. King, and after he was settled at Welford paid him several visits and preached for him, and always recurred to this providential deliverance with grateful recollections.

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The congregation at Welford, when Mr. King became its pastor, was considered to be large and respectable, hearers attending on the Sabbath from fourteen villages around. In connexion with this circumstance it may be mentioned, that in some of those villages there are now stated congregations, either of the Independent or Baptist denomination, with pastors placed over them, while the congregation at Welford is as large as ever; which shows a considerable increase in the number of Dissenters in those parts in the course of the last century. Mr. King was very diligent and laborious in the work to which he had become devoted, preaching several nights in the week in the villages around, beside the constant services of the Sabbath. His ministry was rendered eminently useful, so that the Church doubled its numbers in the early years of his pastorate.

He married Miss Elizabeth Norris, the only child of his predecessor, by whom he had a family of ten children. It was a circumstance not honourable to his people, considering their numbers and the wealth of some individuals among them, that Mr. King had to struggle with pecuniary difficulties, which almost led to his removal from them. A pressing invitation was sent to him from the congregation at Castle Gate, Nottingham, to be co-pastor with the venerable James Ross, M.A., with an offer of more than double the salary that he was receiving at Welford. The difficulties attending him here, with his numerous family, inclined him to attend to this call; but when it became known to his people, they waited upon him, expressed their great regret that he should think of leaving them, their firm attachment to him, reminded him of the providential way in which he was brought amongst them, and referred to the happy effects of his labours; which, after some deliberation, prevailed, so that he determined to continue with them and to maintain the struggle with the difficulties that attended him. But the providence of God at length appeared for him. A Miss Cooke, an aged maiden lady, the only survivor of a wealthy family, bequeathed to him some property, which, with some other legacies he received, enabled him to give his children a liberal education, and to place his sons in respectable situations; and also, in some degree, to gratify his benevolent feelings in the exercise of liberality to those who were in distress.

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During the ministry of Mr. King, Mr. John Wood, a native of Welford, became a member of the Church, and was called to the work of the ministry. He passed with great credit through his academical course at Daventry, and became first minister at Sudbury, in Suffolk, and afterwards at Creaton, in Northamptonshire, where, after twenty years' labour, he died. The young people of Mr. King's flock engaged a large portion of his sollicitude; his public and private instructions were eminently blessed to many of them.

It was a great gratification to this excellent minister to be able to sustain his aged mother in the decline of her days—to promote her comfort by receiving her into his house, where she died, in 1763, at the advanced age of 81 years. With what delight would such a mother behold the answer to her prayers in the devoted labours and usefulness of this son, whom she had asked of the Lord, and consecrated to him; and with what peculiar interest must such a son look on that aged mother as she was ripening for heaven, to whom, under God, he owed all that he had attained!

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He lost his beloved partner, who was of great value in such a sphere, after a lingering illness, in the 60th year of her age. When his own infirmities increased and strength failed, so as to render him incapable of fulfilling the duties of his office, after about 40 years' labour amongst them he resigned his charge in 1782, and went to reside at the house of the Rev. James Horsey, of Northampton, who had married one of his daughters. There, enjoying the affectionate attentions of his daughter, he peacefully ended his days, November 6th, 1788, in the 74th year of his age. His remains were conveyed to Welford for interment; a funeral sermon was preached by his son-in-law, Mr. Horsey, to a crowded audience, from words chosen by the deceased (Jude, verse 21): "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." The sermon was printed at the request of the Church and congregation. Mr. Horsey observes—

About forty years ago God placed his servant in this part of his vineyard, and enabled him to labour, both in season and out of season, to defend his cause in this town and neighbourhood. That his talents were generally acceptable, most who hear me know. The plainness of his style (for he always aimed to be understood by the lowest of his hearers), the evangelical complexion of his doctrine, and the seriousness of his address, endeared him peculiarly to other congregations as well as his own; and numbers in this and in neighbouring counties ascribe to his instrumentality their first serious thoughts of God and eternity. With many present he has laboured even from your infancy, endeavouring, by an attention to catechising, suggesting the most simple and easy remarks, to bring you to an early acquaintance with the holy Scriptures. And no greater pleasure could he feel than to see the children of his charge "walking in the truth." As you have risen into life, he has regularly addressed you by his annual instructions to the youth of the assembly, cautioning against the paths of the destroyer, and directing your feet in the way of peace. Oh, how often have I seen him, with marks of inward reverence and undissembled piety, sit like good old Simeon "waiting for the consolation of Israel"! And when a word has been dropped, to bring his former charge to his remembrance, with the tenderest tokens of friendship, and the falling tears of affection, would he waft up a prayer to heaven for your prosperity.

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Mr. King only published two sermons, one preached to his own people on the murrain among the cattle, and another delivered at the ordination of Mr. Joshua Symonds, at Bedford, 1767.

After Mr. King's resignation there were three pastors, each of whom continued for a very short time over the people at Welford. Mr. William Severn was ordained May 22nd, 1782. It is stated that he was a very popular preacher, possessed of uncommon talents; that his Sabbath evening and week-day lectures were anticipated with great pleasure by his hearers, who were strongly attached to him: but he resigned his charge in less than two years, went to Hinckley, in Leicestershire, and at length, we regret to state, departed from the faith he once preached, and died some years after in connexion with a Socinian congregation in Hull. A Mr. Northend was the next who was invited to Welford; but the invitation was far from unanimous, so that, though he accepted it, his services continued for a very short time. In the spring of 1789 Mr. Evan Johns was settled as their pastor; but this gentleman, we are informed, much injured his usefulness, and lessened the esteem of his friends for him, by practising the absurd theory of animal magnetism, which induced him to tender his resignation, and he left, in 1790, for Bury St. Edmund's.

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In 1792, Mr. John Clement Bicknell, a student at Newport Pagnell, was invited on probation; and in February, 1793, he was ordained pastor. The following ministers were engaged on that occasion, viz.:— Messrs. Hillyard, of Bedford; Greathead, of Newport; Grundy, of Lutterworth; Carver, of Wellingborough; Summers, of Wellingborough; Gill, of Market Harborough; Davis, of Wigston; Gardner, of Kilsby.

Soon after this settlement, the old Meeting House being much out of repair, it was determined to erect a new one in a more eligible part of the town, near the residence of the pastor. This was opened for worship in 1793; and a few years after, in 1799, a more respectable house was built for the minister on the site of the old one, which together cost the people about £1500; and, to their honour, the whole was in a short time discharged.

The Church appears to have decreased in number during the changes that had taken place, as there are only 41 names given as members when Mr. Bicknell was settled. In the course of his ministry 56 members were added. He filled the pastoral office at Welford for about 18 years and 9 months, as he resigned his charge in 1811. In the latter years of his life Mr. Bicknell was minister at Crick, where he died at an advanced age, in the year 1849.

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In October, 1812, Mr. Benjamin Hobson, of Driffield, Yorkshire, visited Welford as a probationer, on the recommendation of Mr. Gill, of Market Harborough. After supplying four Sabbaths, he received a unanimous invitation from the Church and congregation to the pastoral office, which he accepted, and entered on his stated labours February 21st, 1813. The number of members in the Church at this time is stated as 43.

Mr. Hobson was born at Sheffield, in the year 1780. In the account given of his early life, we have another case presented, amongst the thousands that have been known in the Church of God and in the ministry of the Gospel, of one who had to trace his early impressions of religion to the efforts of a pious mother. From early youth he was the "subject of pious emotions," which he always attributed with grateful and filial affection to the piety and prayers of his mother. "Her earnest importunity at family prayer for the salvation of her children," he said, "often affected me, and I believe was the means of leading me to see the value of my soul and the necessity of dependence on Jesus Christ." He derived benefit from some of the last sermons of the Rev. Jehoiada Brewer, and at length joined the Church under the care of Rev. James Boden. He commenced his studies for the ministry at Homerton; but during the first year his health was so affected that he was obliged to return home. This led to a change in the place where his studies were to be pursued. At the urgent request of his mother, that he might not be placed so far from home, in case sickness should return, he obtained admission into the college at Rotherham in 1802, having for his tutors Dr. Edward Williams and Mr. Maurice Phillips. He pursued his studies with commendable diligence, and obtained general esteem by his consistent piety. His first pastoral charge was at Driffield, in Yorkshire, where he was ordained on the 8th July, 1806. Here his labours were useful and his ministry prized; but in the year 1813, influenced in a great degree

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by the advice of his friend and relative, Mr. G. Collison, of Hackney, and Mr. G. Gill, of Market Harborough, he removed to Welford: and here he continued until within four months of the close of his life, serving this people as their faithful and affectionate pastor for about thirty-five years; and he did this with general acceptance and prevailing usefulness. During his ministry 115 members were added to the Church. His devoted piety was always manifest. With an earnest concern to promote the highest welfare of his charge, with an ardent attachment to the cause of God, with strong desire to advance the kingdom of the Redeemer, and to be a blessing to those around him, he steadfastly pursued his labours. He had much of the spirit of devotion—was a man of prayer, a man of God. His preaching was earnest and affectionate, plain and faithful. He was the attentive village pastor, that took some delight in visiting his flock. If his talents were not of a high order, they were of a useful character. If his mind was not powerful, his spirit was affectionate and fervent, and his views of evangelical truth clear and decided. If a sanguine temperament rendered him at times too susceptible, religious principle triumphed, and Christian prudence prevailed. He had a large share of domestic happiness, earnestly seeking the spiritual welfare of his children, their early acquaintance with God, and decision for the Saviour. He had the happiness of seeing all of them, in the morning of life, "choosing the good part which shall not be taken away from them."

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He greatly loved the Missionary cause, and endeavoured to promote a missionary spirit amongst his people. He had one son. That son was engaged in the medical profession, but he was at length anxious to go as a medical missionary to China. The father's love to the Missionary cause was now put to the test; and its sincerity was fully proved. Though for a time conflicting feelings agitated his mind, and parental affection prompted him to say, "Anything but *this*," yet in the strength of the Lord God he was enabled to present this sacrifice with a willing mind, and could but rejoice that he was counted worthy to be so closely identified with the Missionary cause. He was Secretary for about ten years to the Northamptonshire Independent Association, and was generally held in high esteem by his brethren. The last meeting of this Association, before Mr. Hobson removed, was held at Welford, when he resigned his office, and the ministers present testified in a gratifying manner their esteem and affection.

In the year 1847 his declining health rendered it necessary that there should be some change in his ministerial duties. An attempt was made to obtain an assistant; but increasing indisposition, arising from chronic bronchitis, together with some things appearing which were painful to his feelings, decided him at length to relinquish the work, and try the effect of a change of air. He left Welford on the 18th of May, 1848, and numbers of his people felt and said that not their faithful minister only, but their father and their friend, they were about to lose.

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He went to the island of Guernsey, with the hope that a milder climate might benefit his health and recruit his strength. But he continued to decline; and just four months after bidding farewell to his people at the sacramental table, he was called from the scenes of time to join the Church triumphant above.

In the closing scene, looking at life in the light of eternity, what he had been enabled to do in the service of God seemed to be nothing in comparison with what he had failed to accomplish. His feelings for some weeks were not only checkered, but very painful. The state of his mind was dark and distressing, arising, no doubt, from physical weakness, and the completely relaxed state of the nervous system. But the last week was one of great mercy. The enemy was not suffered to distress, nor fears to agitate: his mind was kept "in perfect peace, being stayed on God." He often spake of Christ as the *rock*. He died on the evening of the Sabbath, September 3rd. His remains are deposited in the new cemetery at Saint Peter's Port, Guernsey. The event of his death was suitably improved there by the Rev. W. Wild, from Phil. iii. 9; and at Welford by his successor, from Hebrews xi. 4: "He being dead, yet speaketh."

Mr. Hobson was succeeded in his labours at Welford almost immediately by Mr. Walter Gill, who had pursued his studies for the ministry at the seminary at Hackney. He entered on his probationary services in May, 1848, and was ordained in the month of April in the following year. Mr. Ransom, Mr. Gill's classical tutor, delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Toller, of Kettering, offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Toller, of Harborough, asked the usual questions; Mr. Keynes, of Blandford, delivered the charge; and Mr. James, of Birmingham, preached to the people in the evening.

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The present number of members in the Church is about 80. There are 130 children in the Sabbath-schools connected with the congregation, viz.—boys, 72; girls, 58: there are 23 teachers.

There are occasional services conducted on Sabbath evenings in the village of South Kibworth, where there is a small Chapel held in trust by some of the Welford friends.

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## CHAPTER VII.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT CREATON.

In the accounts of the Nonconformist ministers who in the year 1662 sacrificed their livings in

the Established Church, in obedience to what they regarded as the claims of truth and of conscience, we find the name of Mr. Richard Hook, ejected from the rectory of Creaton, Northamptonshire. After his separation from the Church he preached for some time in his own house; but he afterwards removed from Creaton, and went to reside at Northampton. Though we have no certain information as to the results of Mr. Hook's ministry, yet there is some reason to conclude that a number of the people left the Church with their pastor, and sought for spiritual instruction, as they had opportunity, under the ministry of the Nonconformists. It was probably after the removal of Mr. Hook from Creaton that Mr. Shuttlewood, another of the Nonconformist ministers, began to preach the Gospel in this place. At that time his residence was at Sulby Abbey, near Welford, and his labours appear to have been then divided chiefly between Welford and Creaton. For a more particular account of Mr. Shuttlewood, his labours and his sufferings in the cause of God, we must refer the reader to the memorials of the Church at Welford. But it was when on a visit to his friends at Creaton that he was seized with an affliction that quickly terminated his useful life, and raised his spirit to that "rest that remaineth for the people of God." Here he ended his days, and here his remains were interred in the Churchyard, where a plain stone was erected to his memory. [180]

Mr. Ironmonger is said to have been the next Nonconformist minister here, after Mr. Shuttlewood. In an account of the ordination of Mr. Tingey, a predecessor of Doddridge at Northampton, we find a Mr. John Ironmonger, of Buckingham, engaged. We think it probable that this was the person that for a time ministered at Creaton. A Mr. Dale, minister at Creaton, was present at the ordination of Mr. Tingey, in 1709. The pastor immediately succeeding was Mr. Barker; then Mr. Chambers is recorded as the next minister here, and he died in 1735. After this came Mr. Hextal, who was a native of Broughton, in Northamptonshire; a member of the Church at Kettering; for some time studied under Mr. Saunders, his pastor, preparatory to his admittance into the academy at Northampton under Dr. Doddridge, which he entered in the year 1732.

On the completion of his studies, it is stated that he settled at Creaton in 1736; but his ordination did not take place until 1738, for there is still preserved in the handwriting of Doddridge the testimonial that was given on the day of ordination, of which the following is a copy:—

*Creaton, April 26, 1738.*

This is to certify, that the Rev. Mr. Wm. Hextal, having given full satisfaction as to his abilities and qualifications for the work of the ministry, was this day set apart to the pastoral office by prayer, fasting, and the imposition of our hands, at the desire of the Church of Christ in this place, who unanimously invited him to the exercise of the said office amongst them. [181]

Witness our hands—P. DODDRIDGE, D.D.; JAS. WATSON, Leicester; THOS. CARTWRIGHT; J. DRAKE, Yardley; J. HUNT, Newport; SAML. TAILOR.

We find a list of members of the Church, containing forty-seven names of persons that were communicants at the time of Mr. Hextal's settlement; then follow the names of twenty-one members, over which the pastor has written, "Taken in since I came." These members were resident in ten different villages.

In the handwriting of Mr. Hextal we find a copy of the following recommendation. Though it is without date or any full direction, yet it appears to have been an application to the manager of some fund for assistance.

The congregation at Creaton, lately under the care of Mr. Chambers, have unanimously made choice of Mr. Hextal to succeed him, after finishing a regular course of academical learning at Northampton acceptably, and where his temper and conduct secured him very respectful regard from the people. As his abilities, principles, and character are very satisfactory to us, and, according to our view of things, worthy of the esteem of others, we take the liberty to recommend him to your favour and encouragement, as one that promises usefulness, and we think, by the divine blessing, may be instrumental in supporting the interests of Christianity in that society. Your favourable view of this our recommendation will lay an additional obligation on ———.

*To the Rev. the Ministers, and the other Gentlemen, Managers, &c.*

It was a short time after the settlement of Mr. Hextal, that a minister's meeting being held at Creaton, Dr. Doddridge preached his interesting sermon, entitled 'Christian Candour and Unanimity stated, illustrated, and urged,' from Phil. ii. 1, 2, which was afterwards published, with a Dedication to the Countess of Huntingdon. The ministry of Mr. Hextal at Creaton continued until the year 1752, when he removed to Sudbury. [182]

The next pastor was Mr. Warburton. For some time he assisted Mr. Gilbert, the successor of Doddridge at Northampton, and preached at Creaton in the afternoon of the Sabbath. Mr. Gilbert dying in 1760, Mr. Warburton confined his labours to Creaton, where he was minister for about twenty years. After his removal, Mr. John Wood, from Sudbury, was unanimously chosen his successor the same year. Mr. Wood was a native of Welford, sent out by the Church there, during the ministry of Mr. King, to preach the Gospel: he was educated at the academy at Daventry. He laboured here for about twenty years, and closed his life and his services in the Church on earth in this place. He died April 7th, 1790, "leaving the Church," it is observed, "in a declining state."

The next pastor was Mr. Joseph Whitehead, who came to Creaton in 1793, and continued his labours here for twenty-three years. When Mr. Whitehead entered on his ministry here there were twenty-two members of the Church, and seventy-one were added during the years of his pastorate. In the second year of Mr. Whitehead's labours the present Meeting House was erected. The old building, which held about 400 persons, was occupied on a lease of ninety-nine years, supposed to have commenced about the date of 1694, as it was at the expiration of that lease that the new place of worship was reared.

The fidelity and zeal with which Mr. Whitehead discharged his ministerial office was crowned with such success as greatly to increase the Church and congregation. The medical assistance which he was always ready to afford to those who needed it, rendered him extensively useful to the afflicted poor in his neighbourhood. His candid and friendly disposition endeared him to his brethren in the ministry. His exemplary patience, under painful bodily affliction, displayed the excellence of his Christian principles. As he advanced in life, he evidently appeared to grow in grace; acting habitually under the eye of his Master, he was prepared for his change. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing." He died at the house of his friend, the Rev. H. Knight, of Yelvertoft, after a few hours' illness. His remains were interred, with every token of respect, at the foot of the pulpit where he so often urged upon his people the great doctrines and precepts of the Gospel. Six of his brethren bore the pall. The Rev. Mr. Jones, minister of the parish Church, attended, as a token of his high esteem for the deceased. The Rev. G. Gill, of Harborough, began the funeral service with prayer; the Rev. B. L. Edwards, of Northampton, delivered a very affecting and appropriate address; the Rev. J. Gronow, of Weedon, concluded the solemn service. A large congregation of people assembled on the occasion, whose undissembled grief showed how much he was beloved. On the following Lord's-day the Rev. H. Knight, in whose house he died, improved the affecting providence, from Heb. xiii. 7-9. The place of worship was thronged before the service commenced, and many hundreds could not gain admittance.

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Mr. T. Aston succeeded Mr. Whitehead. He had pursued his studies for the ministry at Hackney, and was ordained over this Church and congregation September 23rd, 1817. On that occasion Mr. Hobson, of Welford, commenced the service with reading and prayer; Mr. Gill, of Harborough, stated the nature of a Gospel Church; Mr. Knight, of Yelvertoft, offered the ordination prayer; Mr. D. W. Aston, of Buckingham, brother to the ordained minister, delivered the charge, from Col. iv. 17; Mr. Toller, of Kettering, preached from Luke x. 11; Mr. Griffiths, of Long Buckby, concluded.

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Mr. Aston admitted thirty-two members to the Church during his ministry, which continued until about the year 1826, when Mr. Williams became the pastor of the Church, who gives the following account of his ordination to that office:—

Having received a unanimous invitation from the Church and congregation at Creaton to become their pastor, I was ordained October 7th, 1828. Mr. Edwards, of Northampton, delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Griffiths, of Long Buckby, offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Scott, of Rowell, gave the charge; and Mr. Hobson, of Welford, preached to the people. Mr. Aston left Creaton about two years before. The first year of the interval was supplied by Mr. Robertson, afterwards of Wellingborough; and the second, by an interesting young man of the name of Jocelyne, who was on probation, and had received a call from the Church to remain, but was prevented entering on the pastoral office by death. He ruptured a blood-vessel by digging one day in the garden; went to the west of England for the benefit of his health; but was soon called, as we hope, to the country where none of the inhabitants shall say any more, I am sick. J. WILLIAMS.

We find a record of forty-seven members as belonging to the Church when Mr. Williams commenced his labours, and fifty-one were admitted during his ministry, which continued until March, 1840. Of the removal of Mr. Williams it is stated, "that it was owing to the secession of some individuals from the Church and congregation, who, being Baptists, succeeded in raising a Baptist interest in Spratton, about a mile from Creaton. Mr. Williams very handsomely left 150 volumes for the use of his successors."

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Mr. Martin succeeded Mr. Williams as pastor. His first visit was in May, 1840, when he preached two Sabbaths. Mr. Fletcher, from Highbury, preached five Sabbaths as a probationer, but retired on discovering that the congregation was not unanimous. Mr. Martin preached four Sabbaths in August and September, when he received an invitation to become a probationer for three months, at the close of which he was unanimously called to the pastoral office, and was ordained April 28th, 1841; when Messrs. Bull, of Newport, Prust, of Northampton, Griffiths, of Buckby, Harry, of London, and Toller, of Kettering, were engaged in the principal services of the day. The ministry of Mr. Martin continued here for little more than seven years; for it is recorded that he preached his farewell sermon at Creaton on Sabbath-day afternoon, May 21st, 1848, having accepted an invitation to the pastorate of Whitefield Chapel, Wilson Street, Long Acre, London. During his ministry forty-five members were added to the Church.

Mr. Mandeno, from Newport, Salop, the present pastor of the Church, entered on his stated engagements at Creaton on the first Sabbath in October, 1848. The present number of communicants is 60. There are 80 children in the Sabbath-school.

Occasional services are conducted in two villages in the vicinity of Creaton.

## MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT DAVENTRY.

Circumstances of rather common and incidental occurrence are sometimes the immediate precursors of events which are followed by important results to future generations, while they may have a bearing on the eternal interests of a number of undying spirits. Something of this nature appears in the origin of the Christian Church, of the Independent denomination, in the town of Daventry.

Nonconformity took early root in this place. After the Bartholomew Act, secret meetings for worship were frequently held late at night, and conducted occasionally by ministers, at a house in the hamlet of Drayton, where considerable numbers from the town and neighbourhood often assembled, in which was a backdoor opening into the fields, to facilitate retreat in case of detection—no unnecessary precaution, in those days of persecution. A Mr. Worth, ejected from the living of Kilsby, preached at Daventry for some time after his ejection.

The following account was given to Dr. Ashworth, about the year 1747, by Mr. Thomas Porter, a member of the Church, then 80 years of age, or upwards—a man of a very respectable character and remarkably sensible.

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An aged minister, who lived some considerable distance beyond Daventry, in his way to London lay at the Swan Inn (formerly the principal inn) in this town, where he was taken ill, and confined for a week or longer. Mr. Lindsey, who kept the house, and all his family, behaved to him with much kindness, and it appears to have been a very regular house. The minister, on the evening before he departed, desired the family to come into his room, when he particularly thanked Mr. Lindsey and each of his family for their civility to him, and expressed much satisfaction in the good order of the house; "but," said he, "something leads me to fear there is not the fear of God in this house. It grieves me to see such honesty, civility, economy, and decency, and yet religion is wanting, which is 'the one thing needful.'" On this, he entered into a close conversation on the nature and importance of real and inward religion, which he closed with telling them he had with him a little book, lately printed, which he would give them, and wished them to read it carefully; then gave them 'Baxter's Poor Man's Family Book.' This fixes the date to 1672, or later—the year in which that book was printed.

It is not certain who the minister was, or that Mr. Lindsey ever saw him again or knew his name; but it is suspected that it was Baxter himself. Mr. Lindsey read the book with pleasure, sent for other of Mr. Baxter's works, and he, and some of his children, became excellent characters.

Upon this he grew weary of the inn, and, being in plentiful circumstances, retired to a house in the middle of High Street, which had a small close behind it, at the extremity of which, upon the Back Lane, there stood some out-buildings, which he converted into a Meeting House. The people enjoyed it during his life, having now got a settled minister, and formed into a Church. This was probably after the Revolution. He always intended, and often promised, to settle it in form; but dying suddenly, it never was done. The heir-at-law was well inclined to it, but melancholy, so that the people dare not trust to a settlement from him. At length they purchased it of those in whom it was vested, repaired it, and continued to use it until 1722, when Mr. Mattock, then the minister at Daventry, built the present place, the old one being by this time much too small.

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"The original license granted to Mr. Lindsey, or, as he is there called, Linzey, in pursuance of the royal Declaration of Indulgence, with the signatures of the King and Lord Arlington, the Secretary of State," says the late George Baker, Esq., in his 'History of the County of Northampton,' "is now in my possession; and being the only document of the kind known to be extant in this country, a copy of it is subjoined."

CHARLES R.

Charles, by the Grace of God King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c., to all the mayors, bailiffs, constables, and others our officers and ministers civil and military, whom it may concern, greeting.

In pursuance of our Declaration of the 15th of March 167½, we have allowed, and we do hereby allow, of a roome or roomes in the house of Allen Linzey, of Daventry in Northamptonshire, to be a place for the use of such as do not conform to the Church of England, who are of the persuasion commonly called Presbyterian, to meet and assemble in order to their public worship and devotion. And all and singular our officers and ministers, ecclesiastical, civil, and military, whom it may concern, are to take due notice hereof; and they, and every one of them, are hereby strictly charged and required to hinder any tumult or disturbance, and to protect them in their said meetings and assemblies.

By his Majesty's command,  
ARLINGTON.

This society ranks with the Independent or Congregational, and not the Presbyterian denomination, as named in this license. [189]

At what time a settled ministry was first enjoyed here is not exactly known; but the first pastor of the Church was Mr. Andrew Barnett, born at Uppington, in Shropshire, the youngest of ten children. His father, Mr. Humfrey Barnett, appears to have been celebrated as a preacher, and as a man of devoted consistent character. People in the country around would flock to hear him twice on the Lord's-day, which was a very unusual thing in those times. He refused to read the 'Book of Sports,' and preached against it; but was cited by the Bishop, and obliged to retire out of that diocese. He was accounted one of the first Puritans in Shropshire, principally on account of his serious preaching and his devoted life. This son, who became pastor of the Church at Daventry, was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge—was ejected from the rectory of Roddington, in Shropshire, in 1662. He did not suffer so much for his Nonconformity as many of his brethren; having some knowledge of medicine, his skill in diseases obtained him favour among the neighbouring gentry. But on one occasion, being invited privately to preach on the Lord's-day, a neighbouring justice came in while he was praying, and fined him for preaching. Mr. Barnett appealed to the quarter sessions, and pleaded that he had not preached, for he was only engaged in prayer; but his plea was overruled, for the King's Attorney declared that the defendant's praying was preaching; so that on this judgment he was cast, and his fine doubled. He had to pay £40. He was a man of considerable solidity of judgment, a useful preacher, and highly valued by those who best knew him. He published a funeral sermon for Queen Mary, from Psalm ii. 3, 4, dated Daventry, May 21, 1694; and entitled, 'The Helmet of Hope, Christ in us the hope of glory.' [190]

Thomas Flavell, the eldest son of John Flavell, the eminent Nonconformist divine, was the next pastor; but of his life and ministry we have no account.

John Mason appears to have succeeded Mr. Flavell for a short time. The father of Mr. Mason was rector of Water Stratford, in Buckinghamshire, where he died in 1724, having ministered there for 20 years. He was the author of the 'Select Remains' which form the golden little volume that Dr. Watts so highly recommended to the public. Mr. Mason did not remain at Daventry more than a year or two, when he removed to Spaldwich, in Huntingdonshire, where he died. He was the father of John Mason, author of the well-known treatise on 'Self-knowledge,' who was first minister at Dorking, in Surrey, and subsequently at Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire, where he preached to a considerable congregation. His diligence was attested by his labours as a pastor, tutor, and author. Several of his works are of a very useful character, though not rising to the highest order of excellence.

Mr. John Cambden was the next pastor. His ministry was only for a short time; but whether he died here, or removed, is not known. He published a 'Funeral Sermon upon the Death of Madam Mary Thornton, the pious relict of the late truly virtuous and honourable John Thornton, Esq., of Brock Hall, in Northamptonshire, who departed this life June 19, 1713. Preached at Daventry; with some account of her life.'

Mr. Jolly, their next minister, continued with them a rather longer time; but before the year 1720, he gave place to a successor in Mr. Daniel Mattock, who ministered for about 14 years. His preaching appears to have been so attractive and successful that it considerably raised the interest, and rendered it necessary to erect a larger Meeting House, which was done in the year 1722, and is the building which is now standing. In a letter of Dr. Doddridge's, dated December 22, 1726, he says—"Mr. Mattock goes on most triumphantly at Daventry, and makes the most illustrious figure of all Mr. Jennings's pupils in these parts." Mr. Mattock exerted himself to preach the Gospel in the neighbouring villages, as well as to the stated congregation at Daventry. [191]

There are two anecdotes related in reference to these village services, which illustrate the spirit in which they were regarded by different clergymen in the vicinity.

While Mr. Mattock was minister of Daventry, having several persons belonging to his congregation who came from villages in the vicinity, and being desirous of extending the knowledge of the Gospel as far as his time and strength would admit, he proposed to some of his country friends to get their houses registered for places of religious worship. This being done, Mr. Mattock went on a Lord's-day evening, for the first time, to one of the villages, and preached a lecture. The clergyman of the parish, hearing of this "rude intrusion," as he termed it, felt much exasperated, and determined to go and remonstrate against it. As he was going to the house where the service was held, he met, much to his annoyance, several of his parishioners coming from the lecture. In the height of his resentment he addressed first one, and then another, "What, have you been to the conventicle?" "What! have you been to hear the fanatic?" "Are you not ashamed of your conduct?" &c. Soon, however, he arrived at the house; and Mr. Mattock, being apprized of his coming, very politely accosted him, and offered him his chair, begging him to be seated—which genteel request he, with apparent reluctance, condescended to comply with. Being seated, the Rector begins by saying, "So, I find that you have been preaching here." "Yes, sir." "And pray, sir, what right have you to come into my parish, to invade my province? This parish is *mine*, and I am their *lawful* pastor. I wish therefore to know, by what authority you take [192]



this liberty." "Sir," replied Mr. Mattock, "I beg leave to inform you, if you do not already know, that I am qualified according to law as a Dissenting minister, and am therefore authorized to do as I have done." "Aye! who authorized you, sir, to invade my province?" "The legislature, sir, by the Act of Toleration. I do nothing by preaching here, but what is strictly legal." "Well, it is strange to me that the legislature should allow you this liberty." "I hope, sir," said Mr. Mattock, "that you do not find fault with the legislature of your country." "No, no, God forbid that I should; but I still wonder that it should grant you such an indulgence. But, sir, I have another question to ask you; pray what is your object in coming here? what do you propose to yourself in doing it?" "Sir, my only motive is the hope of doing good to my fellow creatures." "Good!" replied the Rector, with a contemptuous sneer: "I don't know what good *you* can expect to do, for *I* can do no good upon them. They are a parcel of fools. I can make a *fool* of the wisest of them, in a quarter of an hour." "Sir," says Mr. Mattock, "you give your neighbours a very bad character; but however, if they are bad as you represent them, they have the more need of instruction, that they may be convinced of their folly, and be made wise unto salvation; and if it pleases God to bless the instructions of his word, it will be so, and my desire will be accomplished." To this he made no reply, but casting his eyes round the house, says, "but can you imagine that God Almighty will condescend to notice any worship which is performed in such a place as this? Solomon thought that he could not make the holy Temple, which he dedicated to the worship of the Deity, fine enough for the purpose; therefore to suppose such condescension as you seem to expect in the Deity is to affront him." Mr. Mattock replied, "Sir, we know no holiness of places in Gospel times, but all places are alike holy where 'God is worshipped in spirit and in truth'; and we have every reason to hope for and expect the presence and blessing of Christ, who has said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.'" "But," asks the clergyman, "is this place secured for this purpose by law?" "Yes, sir, it is registered in the Bishop's court." "And do you intend to make a practice of coming here?" "I shall come, sir, when it is convenient to myself, and as long as the people give me encouragement by their attendance to do so."

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Upon this the Rector rose hastily and departed; but he sent his clerk the next morning to inquire of Mr. Mattock three things—

1. Whether he was qualified as a Dissenting minister to preach?
2. Whether the place he occupied as a place of worship was legally secured?
3. Whether he intended to continue coming there?

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To this Mr. Mattock replied, "I answered these three questions in the affirmative last night; but if your master was not satisfied, why did he not come himself, or send for me?" The honest clerk said "that his master could not do either, because *he was going out with the hounds.*" Admirable apology!

But there was another instance, which presented a pleasing contrast to this. Mr. Mattock, having preached in another village on the Lord's-day evening, was returning home the next morning, and the clergyman of the parish, having been to take a short ride, met Mr. Mattock; so, after the usual compliments were exchanged, the clergyman said, "So I perceive, sir, that you have been sowing some seed in my parish." "Yes, sir." "Well," replied the worthy Vicar, "I am glad of it; and may God grant that the seed which you sow, and that which I sow, may both spring up together, and do good to the souls of men."

At length, to the deep regret of the congregation, Mr. Mattock accepted an invitation to remove to Birmingham. This we suppose to have taken place about 1734.

In some extracts from the diary of Mrs. Savage, daughter of Philip Henry, we find the following notices of Mr. Mattock. Under date of December 8th, 1740:—"This morning good Mr. Mattock, of Birmingham, entertained us awhile with his good company. He said, my father was in many things like Abraham, which made me look over a small collection I made long ago from annotations on John 9th, that they that would prove themselves the children of Abraham must endeavour to follow his example, come at God's call, follow wherever he leads, and resign their dearest interests; be strangers and sojourners in the world; keep up the worship of God in their families; and above all, must always walk before God in uprightness."

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Again:—"March 12th, 1744 (Monday).—Sad tidings of the sudden illness and death of good Mr. Mattock, minister of the Old Meeting at Birmingham. A very useful person. Such good ministers the world can ill spare. A stroke of the palsy. Lord, what is man—the wisest, the best, the most healthful? What shall we say? what shall we do? Thou hast the ordering of all events. 'The righteous perish; we should lay it to heart.' It is affecting to see such taken away, and such left—poor worthless creatures as I yet left."

During two years, the congregation at Daventry was supplied by neighbouring ministers and probationary candidates.

The next pastor, Mr. James Floyd, was ordained May 6th, 1736. About ten years after this, at Midsummer, 1746, Mr., afterwards Dr., Caleb Ashworth was chosen his assistant, and in September of the same year co-pastor. In a few years after, Mr. Floyd wholly resigned in favour of his colleague; but continued to reside in the town till his death, which took place July 24th, 1759, in his 55th year. His successor preached his funeral sermon, and at the desire of the family and congregation published it, under the title of 'Hope, the Christian mourner's relief.'

Dr. Ashworth was born in Lancashire in 1719, educated for the ministry at Northampton under Dr. Doddridge, who recommended him in his will for his successor in the following terms:—"And I do hereby declare, that so far as I can judge no man living will be more fit for the office, since the removal of my dear friend and associate, Mr. Job Orton, than the Rev. Mr. Caleb Ashworth, of Daventry; and if it should so happen, as I think it very probably may, that the congregation should desire to put themselves under his ministerial care, I do hereby make my dying request to him that he would accept the united charge, and thereby perpetuate those schemes which he knows I am forming for the public service, the success of which is far dearer to me than my own life." Coward's trustees approved of the nomination, and Mr. Ashworth refusing to quit his pastoral charge at Daventry, the academy was removed thither in 1752. He was presented with an unsolicited diploma of D.D. from a Scotch University in 1759.

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On the 18th of July, 1775, he died of dropsy in the chest, and was buried in the Churchyard, where an altar stone is placed to his memory, on which is the following inscription:—

Here rest in hope,  
the remains of the Rev. CALEB ASHWORTH, D.D.;  
pastor of a congregation of Protestant Dissenters,  
and director of the academy in this town.

He died  
July 18, 1775, aged 54.  
With indefatigable application,  
with genuine well-regulated zeal,  
and with growing reputation and success,  
he exerted his eminent abilities  
and extensive acquaintance with sacred and human literature  
in the service of his great Master,  
and in promoting the important interests  
of learning, religion, and charity.

"Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when  
he cometh shall find so doing."

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Mr. Samuel Palmer, who had been a pupil of the Doctor's, published 'The Want of Labourers in the Gospel Harvest considered and improved'—a sermon preached at Hackney on occasion of the death of Dr. Ashworth. Several others, in different publications, have eulogized their tutor in the highest terms; one of them, in a memoir of a fellow student, observes—"Dr. Ashworth was a man who, though not distinguished by that acumen of genius and vigour of imagination which some have possessed, yet by strong sense, inflexible resolution, and indefatigable labour, acquired a store of theological learning not often exceeded, and through a long train of years discharged the office of divinity tutor with a respectability and success which have seldom been equalled."

Some of the Doctor's students becoming Unitarians, suspicion has been expressed as to the evangelical soundness of the views entertained by the tutor; but the evil appears to have been, that there was a sub-tutor who took the heretical side on disputed points, while the principal tutor, with all his love for truth, indulged his candour and kindness to excess. Dr. Priestley says "that Dr. Ashworth took the orthodox side of every question," and "that Dr. Ashworth was earnestly desirous to make me as orthodox as possible."

The Doctor was author of 'Reflections on the Fall of a Great Man—a Funeral Sermon on 2nd Sam. iii. 38, on the Death of Dr. Watts, 1749'; a funeral sermon for Mr. Floyd; also, a funeral sermon for Mr. Clark, of Birmingham, entitled 'The Regard Christian Congregations owe to their Deceased Ministers represented and urged, from Heb. xiii. 7'; 'A Collection of Psalm Tunes, with an Introduction to the Art of Singing;' also, 'A Hebrew Grammar, with complete Paradigms of the Verbs'; 'An Easy Introduction to Plane Trigonometry,' &c.

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Mr. Robins was the next pastor and tutor. After the death of Dr. Ashworth, it became a matter of great anxiety amongst the friends of the academy who should be appointed his successor. There was one to whom many eyes were turned; but great fears were entertained, lest the extreme diffidence and modesty of his spirit should prevent him from acceding to the earnest requests that were presented to him. This was the Rev. Thomas Robins, who was at this time minister at West Bromwich, in Staffordshire. He was born at Keysoe, near Bedford; studied for the ministry under Dr. Doddridge, at Northampton; first settled at Stretton, in Warwickshire, 1755. The present minister's house at Stretton was built for him. He came to West Bromwich in 1761, where he continued until his removal to Daventry, in 1775.

At this period Job Orton wrote—"The death of Dr. Ashworth, though it has been long expected, has been a very painful event to me. Mr. Robins preached his funeral sermon last Lord's-day to a great auditory, from these words: 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' Coward's trustees, all the neighbouring ministers, and many in this and other neighbourhoods, think that no person is more proper to fill up this vacancy than Mr. Robins, especially as he is exceedingly acceptable to the congregation at Daventry. He hath been strongly urged to take up the prophet's mantle, but he has an unconquerable diffidence of his own abilities; I wish the many applications he hath received from ministers of all sentiments and denominations may overcome it. If he absolutely refuse, I know not who will be thought of. I pray God to direct in this very important concern." In another letter he writes—"You have heard by this time, August 31st, 1775, that Mr. Robins has accepted the invitation to Daventry. I had a great deal of trouble in writing to him, and engaging

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all my friends and correspondents to apply to him, who all concurred in thinking him the most proper person. I do not know a single objection, and I cannot hear of anyone else that makes one. The divines and the laity, of all principles and persuasions in these parts, are agreed in their opinion of him, and everybody is well pleased that he has accepted the office. I look back with pleasure and thankfulness on the pains I have taken in this affair, and firmly believe I shall never have reason to repent it."

Mr. Robins printed 'An Abridgement of Matthew Henry's Work on the Lord's Supper,' which was the only work he could be prevailed on to print, excepting some memoirs of Mr. Thomas Strange, of Kilsby, "one of the wisest and best of men." Mr. Palmer, of Hackney, says, "This was done on my earnest solicitation; and those who are the best judges on such a subject, and who best knew Mr. Strange, will concur with me in pronouncing this so excellent a performance, as to render it a matter of deep regret that the same pen should have been employed in no other original composition."

Robert Hall has written, in his 'Memoir of the Rev. T. N. Toller'—

Among many other mental endowments, Mr. Robins was remarkable for delicacy of taste and elegance of diction; and perhaps my readers will excuse my observing, that the first perceptions of these qualities which the writer of these lines remembers to have possessed, arose from hearing him preach at Northampton, on a public occasion. It is to be lamented that he has left none of those productions behind him, which a correct and beautiful imagination, embodied in language of the most classic purity, rendered so impressive and delightful. The qualities of his heart corresponded to those of his genius; and though long before his death his bodily infirmities obliged him to relinquish a commanding station and retire into obscurity, he retained to the last such an ascendancy over the minds of his former pupils, and such an interest in their affections, as nothing but worth of the highest order can command.

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We may here correct an error into which Mr. Hall has fallen, in stating that Mr. Robins *was first assistant* to Dr. Ashworth. He did not come to reside at Daventry until the death of Dr. Ashworth, as his successor. But while the friends of Mr. Robins were delighting themselves in his ability and success, lo! in the midst of his days and his usefulness, he is compelled to resign all public services and retire into private life. After discharging his offices with increasing reputation and success for six years, his ministerial usefulness was suddenly destroyed, by imprudently preaching three times to a large congregation at Kettering one Sabbath whilst labouring under a severe cold, by which exertion he irrecoverably lost his voice; and being thus incapacitated for fulfilling the duties of the pulpit or the lecture-room, he relinquished his public engagements, and with great humility and contentment passed the remainder of his life in the secular employment of a bookseller and druggist. He died May 20th, 1810, and was buried in the Churchyard, where, on an upright stone, is inscribed a high eulogium, from the pen of his pupil and successor.

The Rev. T. N. Toller, of Kettering, who studied in the academy at Daventry, and spent the last year of his course under Mr. Robins, improved the death of his former tutor in a discourse delivered to his own people the next Sabbath morning, from 2 Kings ii. 12: "And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof! And he saw him no more."

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It is a high gratification to the writer, and he trusts it will prove such to the reader, that he has the opportunity of enriching these 'Memorials' with Mr. Toller's description of the character of Mr. Robins, as given in the closing part of this sermon, having transcribed it from the author's manuscript,<sup>[4]</sup> never before published.

I have been this last week to assist in depositing in the dust one of the most amiable and excellent of men. There was not one friend present, I believe, but felt the weight of his worth, when his remains were let down into the silent grave, not excepting the clergyman who buried him—who, in a room full of Dissenting ministers, bore the most explicit and honourable testimony to his name. But there was a sense in which the person who now addresses you might, perhaps, with more propriety than any individual there, adopt and apply the peculiar language of the distressed prophet, "My father, my father!" I felt, when I stood by his grave, that I had lost a father—that I was interring a father; for I always looked up to him, and venerated and loved him, as a parent; for truly he had been a father to me. I was his senior student: the last and most important year of my academical course I spent under his roof and tuition: he taught and treated me as a son. It was owing to his advice, under God, that I am this day standing in this pulpit; his decided opinion had more weight with me than that of everybody else. I did always implicitly confide in his judgment. I was sure of his prudence; could entirely trust his fidelity. On a hundred occasions have I experienced his tenderness and his kindness, and, blessed be God! never did I receive in all my intercourse a frown from him; while a hint, by way of reproof, from him, would have had more weight and gone further into my heart than a hundred stripes from another hand. And during all the thirty-four years which have elapsed since I left his roof, I have always secretly considered him as my principal, standing, stable friend, to whose judgment and kindness I could with most confidence look under any particular difficulty, exigency, or perplexity; so that you may suppose, under these circumstances, in connexion with the thought of having buried the greater part of the friends of my youth—you must suppose

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that, in attending such a funeral, I must have felt very peculiar sensations; that I was burying a friend indeed: I will not say the nearest and dearest by the ties of nature, for that is not true; but my most valuable, confidential, intellectual, religious, particular friend.

But not only were these sentiments excited by my own personal feeling; they were strengthened by the unanimous testimony of all who had any thorough intimacy with him—any comprehensive knowledge of his qualifications and character. I believe, never did any man go down to the grave followed by more genuine sentiments of respect from those that knew him, and were capable of appreciating his real worth.

There have been more brilliant, shining, striking, nay, useful characters than he (for during the last thirty years of his life Providence mysteriously laid him aside from a sphere of usefulness for which he was peculiarly adapted, and in which he gave universal satisfaction); but taking him altogether, considered as a whole, he was the most consistent, accurate character I ever knew in my life.

As a man, as a friend, a literary character, a person of general knowledge, an amiable, honourable, upright, uniform, devotional Christian, I never knew his equal. I can truly say, with an eminent London minister, "his was the completest character I ever knew." Nor, in this sense, do I think he has left his equal behind him; there was such a coincidence, such a collection, such an assemblage of excellences, which were always very striking to his friends. Some people have great excellences of one kind, and great corresponding faults of another; but there was such a balance of qualities of everything in him, as I have often been charmed with and admired. Oh, that I could say more! And many and many a time have I left his company with this reflection: "Surely this is the disciple that Jesus loves; for where can I look round and find a man in so many respects so much like himself?" And that mixture of reverence and love which I have always experienced in his company has put me in mind of what I could not but suppose I must feel, only in a far greater degree, if I were admitted into the presence and to the conversation of the blessed Redeemer.

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His fine sense, clearness of understanding, skill and dexterity in stating a subject or conducting an argument; the extent of his knowledge upon most subjects that could be called important or useful ones; and all this connected with the sweetness of his temper, the humility of his manner and deportment, the liveliness and affability of his address, what I may call the ingenuity as well as Christianity of his character;—for I have often heard it remarked, and often observed it myself, that were an absent person censured or slandered, if there was anything to be said in his favour Mr. Robins would find out what was to be said, and would make you see that it was not a blind and suppositious notion that dictated it, but that there was reason in what he said. Nevertheless, he could be angry at sin, and yet sin not. He could reprove folly with a frown that a man must *be all a fool* if he did not feel. It has been said, that some of his more distant relations, that were rather wild in their conduct, though they could not but love him, were more afraid of him than of any other man upon earth: such is the force of the frown of goodness. I this week heard a person say, that a frown from him would have gone deeper than from any man in the world.

Realizing, my friends, such traits as these, which I am sure nobody that knew him could or would contradict, in connexion with the richness and fulness of his piety, the evangelical and scriptural consistency of his sentiments, the depth of his love to the Saviour, his deep conviction of the truth of the Gospel and dependence upon it (for he died as a poor sinner, wholly resting there; and again, and again, and again said, What a poor miserable creature I should be without the Gospel!)—if he had been literally the very chief of sinners, he could not have seemed to depend less upon anything he was or had done in a meritorious sense; he would not even bear to hear any hints about his former qualifications as a minister, or his honourable conduct as a Christian, which all that knew him, knew his great Master would include under the final "Well done, good and faithful servant," and place among the "works of faith and labours of love," and never forget them:—if, I say, you realize all this, in connexion with his respectability, integrity, and punctuality as a tradesman since he became one, and his universal influence and weight in the town where he resided (a situation by no means advantageous to him in this respect as a Dissenter), can you wonder that one is charmed with such a character? Would it have been right that I should have passed it by in silent contemplation for my own edification only?

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When he was capable of exercising his ministerial function, there was a peculiar sweetness and gracefulness in his attitude and delivery in the pulpit; great seriousness of air and manner, and a wonderful copiousness and variety and readiness, in his prayers; a vein of the most humble yet elevated piety running through the whole—an evangelical savour, clothed always with the utmost propriety and sometimes unaffected elegance of expression. Since he was laid aside from pulpit labours, if we could prevail upon him to pray at our ministers' meetings in private, it was the richest feast of the day; and in connexion with his disabled circumstances as to public work, he would sometimes dissolve all into tears. I remember, at the close of these occasions, a very respectable minister, with his eyes bathed in tears, whispered to me, "This man prays like an angel."

In his sermons, which were well finished compositions of their kind, there was this peculiarity—that they were highly acceptable and edifying to all descriptions of serious sensible people, among the poor and the rich, the learned and the unlearned—poor people that had good sense as well as piety, and learned people that had piety as well as good sense: all, in a word, who had good sense to understand him, and piety to relish what he said, used to love to hear Mr. Robins. The last time he ever preached within these walls (on which occasion he attempted to exert himself more than usual, owing to the largeness of the place compared with his own), he appears to have got his bane. He strained the organs of speech so as to bring on the disease that laid him aside. He preached on that passage, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." I have often thought since, as redounding to the credit of this congregation, of the universal satisfaction which that sermon gave to all descriptions of well-disposed hearers—the plainest and most illiterate Christian, as well as those best informed. The case was this: though he was one of the finest of composers, yet he spake from the heart; and what he said went to the heart.

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Since he was laid aside, though his usefulness was greatly curtailed, yet he was far from being useless. Modesty prevented his ever publishing any of his own compositions; yet as a friend, as an adviser, as a companion, he has been eminently useful. A respectable minister at his funeral said, "he never, with one exception only, gained so much instruction from any man in private conversation as from Mr. Robins."

Though laid aside from the service of the sanctuary, he lived respected and beloved to his seventy-seventh year; and when attended to his grave, not only was he accompanied by a number of as sincere mourners as ever followed a corpse, but the nearest earthly relation he had, and whom he had patronized from infancy, was utterly incapable of joining the train—sat weeping over her Bible, and almost stupified with grief, saying, "he was all the world to her: and him she had lost." Here is the cutting thought suggested in the text, that went nearer to the surviving prophet than any other—"his master was taken from his head," "and he saw him no more." This thought I felt when I stood close by his grave: "I shall see him no more. Here I take my final leave. I have received my last instruction. I shall hear his voice and behold his countenance no more." But while I was weeping over this clause, those words in the burial service went down with an emphasis to my heart, never felt by any grave before—words too promiscuously applied, too often; but their special appropriateness to him struck us all—"As much as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great goodness to take to himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." "Ah!" thought I, "you may say it in all its emphasis over this grave. I will not go away saying, with the prophet, 'I shall see him no more'; blessed be God for the hope that I shall see him again! Yea, thy brother, thy father, thy minister, thy tutor, thy friend, shall rise again. May I but be honoured, O my Judge! with a place at thy right hand, and with such an addition to my happiness as to be joined in everlasting bonds of friendship with him I so much loved and honoured on earth, to improve and enjoy together to all eternity. Amen."

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Mr. Thomas Belsham, who had been assistant tutor here in metaphysics, mathematics, and natural history, till 1778, when he settled at Worcester, succeeded Mr. Robins in 1781, and returned to Daventry, at the solicitation of the congregation and the trustees, in the double capacity of pastor and principal or theological tutor. He continued here until 1789, when, having fully embraced Unitarian sentiments, his continuance in the office of tutor being directly contrary to the will of the founder of the academy, he apprized the trustees of the change, and resigned the situation. After this the academy returned again to Northampton.

Mr. Thomas Willis Paterson was the next pastor. He had recently completed his course of study here; but in 1796 he accepted an invitation from the congregations at Bardon Park and Ashby-de-la-Zouch, in Leicestershire, when he went to reside at Donnington-on-the-Heath, where he died in August, 1812.

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Mr. John Morrell, afterwards LL.D., was chosen to succeed him, but removed in about two years, and became minister of a Unitarian Chapel at Brighton, in Sussex.

Mr. George Watson was invited to the pastoral office in October, 1799. He was a native of Kettering; and, becoming early decided for the Saviour, he devoted himself to the work of the ministry. He became a member of the Church at Kettering, under the ministry of Mr. Boyce. In the records of that Church we find this statement:—

*Sept. 3rd, 1772.*—At our Church-meeting, George Watson, son of Mr. Wm. Watson, our clerk, who had before dedicated himself to the work of the ministry and entered upon a course of preparatory studies for it, having in writing given an account of the dealings of God with his soul, was admitted to full communion with us.

He pursued his studies in the academy at Daventry; was first settled at Howick, in Lancashire; afterwards became assistant preacher to the Rev. Thomas Taylor, of Carter Lane, London, from whence he was invited to this congregation, over which he presided until 1816, when he resigned and went to reside at Birmingham, where he died, August 1st, 1817, in the 66th year of his age. He published 'Liberality to the Poor and Sick recommended, in a Sermon preached at Harwich

for the benefit of the Manchester Infirmary, 1792'; 'A brief Memoir of the Rev. Thomas Robins, late of Daventry; with a Sketch of the Sermon preached May 26th, 1810, on occasion of his Death; and some Biographical additions.' The congregation was unsettled after this for two years, when Mr. John Whittenbury succeeded Mr. Watson in the pastoral office, and was ordained here February 8th, 1818. During his ministry two new galleries were added to the Meeting House.

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Mr. Whittenbury, we learn, entered the academy at Rotherham in the year 1808, then under the able tuition of the late Dr. Williams. Having passed through the usual course of study, he was first ordained at Darlington, July 28th, 1814, where he laboured with great assiduity, and, although amidst many discouragements, not without some tokens of the divine blessing. He at length accepted an invitation to become the pastor of the Church at Daventry, and continued his labours here for eight years. He subsequently removed to a destitute congregation at Newport, Salop; from thence he went to Liverpool, in 1838, to endeavour to revive an interest that had fallen into decay. Failing in the accomplishment of this object, he then devoted his time and energies to promote the interests of the various religious societies connected with the town, particularly "the Town Mission," "the Seaman's Friend Society," and "Bethel Union," by the committees of which he was held in great esteem. He died January 3rd, 1845, aged 55 years.

Mr. J. Davis, the present minister, succeeded Mr. Whittenbury, becoming the pastor of this Church in the year 1826.

"In 1728, the congregation purchased a house in Sheaf Street for the residence of the minister, which was rebuilt by subscription at the time Dr. Ashworth erected the adjoining house for the academy. The Meeting House, which stands in the minister's yard, is approached from the street through a gateway, and is a substantial stone building, 42 feet long by 42 feet wide." It has now three galleries.

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During the ministry of the present pastor, new school-rooms have been erected.

The present number of communicants is 94. There are 190 children in the Sabbath-schools.

There are some endowments connected with this place; one, of £12 per annum, towards the support of a Charity-school for boys and girls.

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## CHAPTER IX.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCHES IN WELLINGBOROUGH.

#### SECTION 1.—THE CHURCH AT CHEESE LANE.

Where the events relating to the early history of a community have not been put upon record about the time they occurred, or where the records, when made, have been subsequently neglected and lost, it becomes scarcely possible to discover its origin, or to obtain any correct information relating to its progress.

This is the case, we regret to state, with the Independent Church, Cheese Lane, Wellingborough; it appears to be scarcely possible now to discover the date of its origin, or the circumstances under which it was formed.

In Wellingborough and its vicinity there were ministers of Christ, 190 years ago, who belonged to that noble band of worthies who renounced their worldly prospects in connexion with the Church by law established, rather than violate the dictates of conscience, on the passing of the Act of Uniformity in the year 1662.

Before the days of the ejected ministers, there resided at the village of Wilby, little more than two miles from Wellingborough, Mr. Andrew Perne, A.M., a worthy Puritan minister. He was born in 1596; was chosen Fellow of Katherine Hall, Cambridge, where he probably received his education. Having finished his studies at the University, he became rector of Wilby, in Northamptonshire, where he continued a laborious, faithful, and successful preacher, 27 years. He often preached before the Parliament, and several of his sermons were published, one of which is entitled, 'Gospel Courage; or, a Christian Resolution for God and his Truth. In a Sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons, at Margerett's, Westminster, at a public Fast, the 21st of May, 1643.' Being called up to London, he gained a high reputation, and was offered considerable preferments; but he refused them all, resolving to return to his charge at Wilby. He appears to have been a man of considerable eminence and great usefulness. His awakening sermons, and exemplary life and conversation, produced a signal and happy reformation; his people revered and loved him as a father. "He was full of spiritual warmth," says Mr. Ainsworth, one of the ejected ministers, who preached and published his funeral sermon, "filled with a holy indignation against sin, active in his work, and never more in his element than when he was in the pulpit." "As his life was holy, so his death was happy." He blessed God that he was not afraid to die; nay, he earnestly desired to be gone, and often cried out, during his last

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sickness, "When will that hour come? One assault more, and this earthen vessel will be broken, and I shall be with God."

His remains were interred in the chancel of Wilby Church, where at the foot of the altar is the following monumental inscription to his memory:—

Here lieth interred MR. ANDREW PERNE,  
a faithful servant of Jesus Christ;  
a zealous owner ever of God's cause in perilous times;  
a powerful and successful preacher of the Gospel;  
a great blessing to this town and country,  
where he lived twenty-seven years.  
He departed, December 13, 1654.

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The influence of the ministry and character of Mr. Perne would no doubt extend to the town of Wellingborough, and might be one means of producing that regard for the principles of the Gospel and the purity of the Church that actuated the early Nonconformists, who had many of them to suffer much for the principles which they maintained, and the course they conscientiously pursued.

A Mr. Thomas Andrews, of the University of Cambridge, was ejected from the vicarage of Wellingborough. The living was given to him by the Lord or Lady Brooke. While he continued in it, he was generally respected by the ministers of his neighbourhood, twelve of whom took their turn at his weekly lecture on a Wednesday.

His frugality, while he continued the incumbent, saved him some hundreds of pounds, so that he was better provided for after his ejection than many of his brethren. When cast out of his living, he repaired to Meers Ashby, where he preached at a Mr. Preston's, in the night. He often preached also at Lady Tyrrell's. He was a man of great courage, agreeable behaviour, and much beloved by his neighbours.

There was also a Mr. Alsop, ejected from the living of Wilby, near Wellingborough, who came and resided here after his ejection, and exercised his ministry as the times would permit. It is recorded that he was bound over to the sessions for preaching at Oakham, and that he lay six months in Northampton Gaol for praying with a sick person.

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Mr. Rowlet, ejected from Sudbury, in this county, appears to have united with Mr. Alsop in his labours. In the time of King Charles's Indulgence, there was a meeting every Lord's-day at Wellingborough, upheld by Mr. Alsop and Mr. Rowlet, and the latter continued preaching here until removed by death. His constitution was feeble, for Mr. Alsop said of him, "If this man had but a body to his soul, he would be incomparable." He is represented by such as attended on his ministry and knew him well, as a most agreeable preacher, who used to charm his hearers. He died of consumption.

Mr. Henry Wills, who had been rector of Loddington, in this county, is said to have preached privately (probably in some retired place, or in the silent hours of the night) to the people of Wellingborough, where his memory was exceedingly precious for a long time, especially for two things—the extraordinary suitableness of his compositions to the minds of the weakest, notwithstanding the fulness and depth of his matter, and the great piety and refreshing savour which seasoned his common conversation. It is related concerning him, that "he was an able scholar, a considerable mathematician, of great skill in the law, an eminent preacher, and of a most agreeable carriage."

How early an Independent Church was first formed here, from which this in Cheese Lane descended, or when a stated pastor was first settled over it, we have not discovered.

It is stated, that this Church first met for divine worship in a Meeting House situated in a yard at the back of some premises in Silver Street. In 1746, it was such an old building, and in such a dilapidated state, that it was found to be necessary to erect a new place of worship; when the present Meeting House was raised at the bottom of the lane where the cheese fair was kept, and hence called Cheese Lane Meeting. At that time, Mr. King, who was a friend and correspondent of Dr. Doddridge's, had been for many years pastor of the Church.

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The earliest notice we find of Mr. King as minister at Wellingborough is in the controversy with Mr. Davis, of Rowell, in 1692, in which Mr. King took a part. We find his name also as minister at Wellingborough, among those who were present at the ordination of Mr. Tingey, at Northampton, in the year 1709.

The next notice we have found of Mr. King as minister here is in a letter from Doddridge addressed to him, dated December 29th, 1723, in which the writer engages to visit Mr. King and to preach for him on a week evening, observing, "It is with the utmost readiness and pleasure I embrace the opportunity of serving you which you propose in your obliging letter, especially as it gives me an opportunity of cultivating that friendship with which you are pleased to honour me, and which I look upon as a very particular happiness."

When the dreadful fire that took place in 1738 had laid waste a considerable part of the town, destroying 205 dwelling-houses besides 806 out-buildings, a fast-day was kept and some special public religious services were observed, and Dr. Doddridge was invited to preach on the occasion. He improved the event in a very serious, suitable, faithful sermon, from Amos iv. 11,



which was published at the request of the people, with a dedication to those inhabitants of Wellingborough at whose request the sermon was published. We expect this sermon was preached in the Old Meeting House, in which the congregation at Cheese Lane formerly worshipped. In the dedication the Doctor observes— [215]

I have laboured as much as possible to write from the life. The ruins of your town, the distress of your families, and the mixture of hope and fear attending the present situation of your affairs, have been as it were before my eyes and on my heart in almost every sentence; and I have frequently mingled these meditations with earnest prayers to God that he would so lead me into the secret recesses of your souls, that what you before heard and will now read may be like a nail fastened in a sure place.

Mr. King, it is stated, was succeeded by Mr. David Bradbury, who left Wellingborough about the year 1764, and was succeeded by Mr. French, who kept a very respectable boarding-school while residing here. He had studied under Dr. Doddridge, at Northampton. He afterwards removed to London. Mr. Orton was the next minister; but in early life he died of consumption, about the year 1776. Then succeeded to Mr. Orton Mr. Thomas, who had been a student at the academy at Daventry, first under Dr. Ashworth and then under Mr. Robins. He was ordained about the same time as the late Mr. Toller was settled at Kettering, they having closed their academical course nearly together. Mr. Thomas resigned his charge about 1786, after having been pastor about eight years, and went to Enfield. He was succeeded by Mr. Robert Jacomb. He had been in a very unsettled state of health in London, where he was assistant to the Rev. Hugh Worthington, at Salter's Hall; and being called to experience here a very heavy domestic trial, in the almost sudden death of his wife, when they had been married but a short time, his depression of spirits became so great that he left, though very reluctantly, and went to Bath. [216]

The successor to Mr. Jacomb was Mr. Henry Summers. In reference to this change we find the following statement:—

In consequence of the removal of the Rev. R. Jacomb from Wellingborough in 1791, the Church and congregation usually meeting for divine worship in Cheese Lane became destitute of a pastor and teacher. In this situation it became necessary for the society to look out for a successor; and in March, 1792, Mr. Henry Summers, who was assistant to the Rev. Robert Winter, of Hammersmith, after sufficient trial was made, received a unanimous invitation to the pastoral office, of which he soon after declared his acceptance. But short was his time of service: soon was he called to close his labours on earth. He died of fever, when he had sustained the pastoral office scarcely four years in this place.

In the early part of the year 1796 we find it recorded "that it pleased divine providence to bereave this Church and congregation of their pastor, the Rev. Henry Summers, who, after a short illness, departed this life January 27th, 1796." His funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. John Wood, of Rowell. From the time of his death until Midsummer, the congregation was supplied partly by the neighbouring ministers, who voluntarily offered their services for the benefit of his widow, and partly by the students at the academy at Northampton. By the general consent of the whole society, at length an application was made to Mr. Daniel Washbourn, then a student at Northampton, to supply them during the academical vacation, with which he complied. After ministering to them for several weeks with increasing acceptance and satisfaction, the Church and congregation determined to invite him to become their pastor, and accordingly sent him a pressing and affectionate invitation, signed by 131 persons, which, after fervent prayer and mature deliberation, he accepted. [217]

On Thursday, November 3rd, of the same year, the ordination service took place. The following is the account preserved of that interesting occasion:—

A very numerous auditory assembled; and from the testimony of ministers and people, it may be asserted with the strictest truth, the services of the day were particularly solemn, suitable, and instructive. Mr. Richard Winter, of Hanover Street, London, commenced with a short prayer and reading some suitable portions of Scripture (Ps. xcvi., and the two first chapters of Paul's Epistle to Titus); Mr. Edwards engaged in the general prayer; Mr. Worthington, of Salter's Hall, London, delivered an introductory discourse, in which he stated with ability and conciseness the grounds and advantages of such a service among Protestant Dissenters. He then proposed four questions to Mr. Washbourn, which were answered by him, and engaged in the ordination prayer—a prayer peculiarly solemn and pathetic. The charge, from Gal. i. 10, last clause, was delivered by Mr. Horsey, of Northampton; and Mr. Toller, of Kettering, preached the sermon to the people, from 1 Thess. v. 12, 13: both these discourses were admirably adapted to the occasion. Mr. Chadwick, of Oundle, concluded with an excellent prayer. Hymns were read by Mr. Luccock.

After the dinner, it was unanimously proposed and requested that the ordination service be published; which was agreed to by the gentlemen concerned. [5]

There was a service in the evening, which Mr. Wood, of Rowell, introduced with prayer; Mr. Winter preached a very suitable sermon, from 2 Cor. iii. 5; and at the request of several of the ministers, Mr. Washbourn concluded the solemnities of the day with prayer. The kind providence of God appears to smile on this connexion, formed and [218]



ratified between minister and people; both rejoice in the pleasing prospect of usefulness, harmony, and love. May the great Head of the Church continue the special tokens of his presence and regard amongst us! Amen.

Thus wrote the pastor, under the first impressions of a happy settlement over this people; and for nearly sixteen years he continued his labours among them. During the far larger portion of that time they appear to have been years of comfort and usefulness; but, as another instance added to the vast numbers which show the uncertainty attending the most pleasing connexions and prospects in this fallen state, at length such circumstances arose as separated the pastor from his flock. Some disagreements arising between the influential members of the Church and congregation, they went on to such a length as to issue in a separation—the building of Salem Chapel, and the formation of the Church assembling there. This was so painful to Mr. Washbourn, that he sent in his resignation, in which he expressed himself in the following words:—"While I desire to entertain no sentiments of hostility towards those who have thought proper to desert my ministry and to form themselves into a separate community, I cannot but consider that they are responsible for my being removed from this part of the Lord's vineyard, where my labours were honoured with the divine blessing." Mr. Washbourn removed to Hammersmith, and never came to Wellingborough again. While filling this situation it is observed, "that he enjoyed to a high degree the respect of the surrounding ministers, particularly that of the late Mr. Toller, of Kettering, whose friendship and popularity he frequently referred to with peculiar delight."

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Mr. Washbourn was minister at Hammersmith for twenty-two years; and here we find it remarked, "that his preaching—solid, judicious, and deeply spiritual—was very soon highly estimated by his new charge, the greater part of whom at that time were families of considerable standing in society, as well as of high respectability and influence in the Church. Not a few were brought to Christ who had seen the meridian of life unvisited by mercy, and who survived to bless his memory and to render it blessed." But we find that "it pleased the great Head of the Church, who retains the prerogative of determining the trials of his servants, greatly to obstruct the usefulness of the latter part of his life, and to render it the scene of peculiar affliction, by the rapid progress of a constitutional malady—overwhelming depression. The most remarkable feature in this visitation was its periodical character. Six weeks of unutterable gloom, during which he was bereft of every ray of spiritual consolation, and an equal term of unusual enjoyment in religion and in social intercourse, maintained an almost unvarying succession throughout the two or three last years of his earthly pilgrimage. But he has frequently said to his colleague, 'I know, my dear sir, it is all physical. I know it—I have proved it; and I know God sees it needful for me, or he would not permit it.'"

He died on Monday, the 10th day of November, 1834, in the 64th year of his age; and it is said "that few public men, moving in a comparatively quiet and unobtrusive sphere, have gone down to the grave accompanied by such deep expressions of unequivocal regard, from all classes in the circle where they lived and laboured, as did this devoted minister of Christ."

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Soon after Mr. Washbourn had left Wellingborough, Mr. Robert Jacomb, the former pastor of the Church, came on a visit; and seeing the uncomfortable state in which the people were, he kindly consented to prolong his stay, and preached to them with his former acceptance. An invitation was given him to resume his labours, which he accepted; and after an interval of twenty years he again became the pastor of the Church. His services were continued until repeated attacks of disease, and the increasing infirmities of age, obliged him to resign his charge in the year 1826. He continued to reside in Wellingborough until his death, which took place in the year 1832.

Mr. Jacomb, we have heard, was a descendant from the early Nonconformist ministers of that name. He always appeared to conduct himself with the ease, affability, and politeness of the gentleman, and with the spirit of the Christian. His temper was amiable, and it was his constant aim to promote the spirit of piety and of peace among his people. In the spirit of devotion, and with a sincere concern for the highest welfare of his flock, he conducted the services of the sanctuary. He was highly esteemed to the close of his days.

Mr. James Robertson was the next pastor, commencing his ministry here in October, 1826. He continued his services until a distressing mental malady, from which he never recovered, laid him aside from his public work and cut him off from the society of his friends. Mr. Robertson was a native of Newcastle-upon-Tyne; became a student of Wymondley College; was pastor for some years of the Independent Church at Stretton-under-Fosse, commencing his ministry there July 29th, 1809, and was ordained in August, 1810. The ministers officiating were Messrs. H. Knight, R. Hall, and T. N. Toller. "For upwards of four years before his death he was the subject of intense mental and physical suffering, which much beclouded his fine intellect; and the deep waters of tribulation went over his soul." "In him," it is justly said, "were united the elegant accomplishments of the classical scholar, and the graver acumen of the profound theologian; which, added to the unaffected fervour of his piety, the benevolence of his disposition, and the sterling integrity of his general character, embalmed his memory in the hearts of a large circle of friends, who deplore his loss." He died at Wellingborough June 23rd, 1842, and was interred in the burying ground belonging to the Meeting. His most intimate friend, Mr. Walford, of Uxbridge, who was classical tutor for some years at Homerton College, officiated at the funeral; and Mr. Toller, of Kettering, preached the funeral sermon the next Sabbath evening, from Zech. i. 5: "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?"

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A tablet was erected by his widow to his memory, and placed at the right side of the pulpit.

Mr. Robertson was secretary to the Northamptonshire Association, from the death of Mr. Edwards, of Northampton, until he was laid aside from active service. He was a frequent contributor to the *Eclectic Review*, and wrote many valuable articles of biblical criticism, besides others of a more general character. His attainments in learning were eminent; his intellectual power was considerable—his general information extensive; his skill in criticism was great; while he was a man of inflexible integrity, pre-eminently "without guile"—a sincere and steadfast friend, with much kindness of heart. His stern and unbending regard to principle sometimes occasioned a roughness of exterior, and occasionally appeared to assume an austere and unkind aspect. Some of his sermons discovered talent of a high order for composition, containing superior thoughts, clothed in powerful language.

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The following record we find respecting Mr. Robertson's affliction, and the views entertained by the people under it:—

In the month of January, 1838, it pleased God to visit with a painful mental affliction the Rev. James Robertson, the pastor of the Church, so as totally to disqualify him for conducting the services of the sanctuary, or holding any intercourse with the people of his charge. Several months after the commencement of his illness, the pulpit was generously supplied on Sabbath-day by neighbouring ministers. The friends, however, at length deeply feeling their destitute condition, and perceiving the congregation on the decline, were led anxiously to deliberate on the course which a due concern for their own spiritual improvement and the welfare of Zion required them to take; at the same time keeping in view their obligations to their honoured and afflicted pastor. After frequent consultations among themselves and with various ministers in the county, and much prayer, it was suggested, that as no symptoms of returning health appeared, the connexion ought to be dissolved. It was with great regret that the friends perceived that such a proposal must come from them, rather than from their pastor himself; but the state of his mind being such as to unfit him for the transaction of business, it became, on their part, a matter of necessity and painful duty. Accordingly, in the month of September, 1838, a letter to this effect, approved by the Church and congregation, was addressed to Mrs. Robertson, after which other correspondence took place, which it is unnecessary to detail, and the relation terminated.

In the beginning of the year 1839 the Rev. E. T. Prust, of Northampton, introduced to the notice of the friends the Rev. G. Taylor, who, in consequence of severe indisposition, had been obliged to resign a previous charge in the vicinity of Manchester, but whose health was so far restored as to enable him to resume his ministerial labours. He was accordingly invited to preach for a few Sabbaths in the month of April. At the expiration of this time, he was invited to the pastoral office; which, after proper consideration and advice, he accepted. A recognition service was held on Thursday, October 24th, the order of which was as follows:—"Reading and prayer, Rev. J. Renals; questions, Rev. E. T. Prust; designation prayer, Rev. T. Toller; address to Mr. Taylor, Rev. T. East, founded on John xii. 26, last clause; address to the people, Rev. J. Blackburn; concluding prayer, Rev. R. Davis.

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"In connexion with the above service, special united meetings were held at the three Chapels in the town: those for prayer, on Monday evening, Wednesday and Thursday morning. On Tuesday evening, Rev. Thos. Milner preached; on Wednesday evening, Rev. T. East; and on Thursday evening there was a united communion service. The whole of the services were well attended, and great interest was excited."

After a short but active, affectionate, and faithful ministerial course here, Mr. Taylor's health again began to decline, which soon brought his labours in the ministry to a final close. He was under the necessity of resigning his office. His letter of resignation was dated June 24th, 1845, having scarcely completed six years of pastoral labour in this place. He died at Birmingham in 1846, at forty-two years of age, in the faith and hope of the Gospel, leaving a widow and rising family especially to mourn his loss.

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Mr. Taylor was born in Birmingham, February 10th, 1804. His parents were eminent for their piety, and his father was for many years a deacon of the Church assembling in Ebenezer Chapel, under the pastoral care of Mr. Timothy East. He received an excellent classical education at the school of Mr. J. Hammond, Independent minister, at Handsworth, of whom he always spake with much respect. He was called in early life to the knowledge of the truth, under the powerful ministry of Mr. East. The grace which he had received soon made him a decided Christian, and pointed him out as one likely to be useful in public service. His thoughts were soon directed to the work of the ministry; he pursued a course of study at Highbury College, where his attainments were respectable, and where he gained the affectionate attachment of his fellow students. His first situation as a pastor was at New Windsor, near Manchester. Here he continued until, after eight years' service, he was obliged by the state of his health to resign his charge, and preached his farewell sermon from the words of the Apostle, "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you," &c., which was listened to with the deepest interest; and many sorrowed, "that they should see his face no more" as their beloved pastor. After an interval of two years, his health appeared to be sufficiently recovered for him to resume his stated labours, and he then accepted the invitation to become the pastor of this Church. Here he ministered with considerable success for a short period, the Church and congregation increasing; but the interest at first excited was not sustained until the close of his ministry, which might partly arise from the weakness of his constitution rendering him incapable of the continued

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mental and physical effort which the stated engagements of the pastor for a series of years demand. After about six years spent in this situation, symptoms of decline appeared. He sought relief by spending six months on the southern coast, but it proved in vain; his disorder increased. It became necessary for him to resign his second charge; and he retired to end his days amongst his friends in his native town, where he closed his course, in the possession of the peace and hope of the Gospel. Mr. Taylor was amiable, honourable, and affectionate; he had a strong principle of piety towards God, a deep vein of devotional feeling, a firm reliance on the merits of the Saviour. His great aim was to be useful in the conversion of sinners and advancing the kingdom of the Redeemer.

Some months after the death of Mr. Taylor, the Rev. J. Watson, then tutor of Newport Pagnell Academy, introduced to the notice of the Church the Rev. J. F. Poulter, of Queen's College, Cambridge. When Mr. Poulter had supplied the pulpit for some weeks with acceptance, he was invited to take the pastoral charge, which invitation he accepted, and was ordained Thursday, December 17th, 1846, when the Rev. J. Watson, of Newport, delivered the introductory discourse; Rev. T. Toller proposed the questions; Rev. E. T. Prust offered the ordination prayer; Rev. W. Forster, of Kentish Town, delivered the charge.

Mr. Poulter is the present minister of this Church and congregation. In the year 1850 new school-rooms were erected, at the cost of rather more than £300. The site was presented by Mr. W. Warren, and the design given by Mr. E. Sharman. At the opening services the Rev. H. Allom, of Union Chapel, Islington, preached; Rev. Samuel Martin, of Westminster, in the evening, from Proverbs xx. 11. [226]

Mr. John Gibbs, of Wellingborough, who died May 19th, 1813, left by will the sum of £100 in the hands of his executors, to be by them invested in the funds or other good security, the interest of which is to be paid annually on St. Thomas's-day, December 21st, to the minister of this place, independent of the salary paid him by the congregation.

## SECTION 2.—THE CHURCH AT WEST END.

To be able to discover very distinctly the origin of a Christian society of 160 years' standing, and from thence to trace the varied events of its history, is especially interesting to those minds that love to observe how the great Head of the Church carries on the affairs of his kingdom by the varied operations of providence and of grace, employing the agency of his servants, and showing the influence of Christian principle in promoting his great designs.

If the reader will look back to the memorials of the Church at Rowell, and will notice the itinerating labours of Mr. Davis, the third pastor, with the success that attended them, in connexion with the efforts of some of the brethren in that Church, he will there see how this Church at Wellingborough originated. There were a considerable number of persons who had derived benefit from the labours of Mr. Davis, residing in Wellingborough and its vicinity, who had become members of the Church at Rowell. After some time, it was thought that their number was sufficient to form a distinct Christian community, *i.e.*, an Independent Church, with its officers. They received a regular dismissal from the Church at Rowell for this purpose. The copy of that dismissal we have given in the account of that Church (page 57), from which they were dismissed; and we find the same preserved in the records of this Church—the one account furnishing a complete corroboration of the other. The first statement after this is— [227]

The 22nd day of the eighth month, 1691, was kept solemnly in fasting and prayer at Wellingborough by us whose names are hereafter written, for our embodying and enchurching together; when, after that the former part of the day was spent in prayer, direction, and exhortation, our dismissal from the Church of Christ at Rowell was then read by their messengers.

After this it is recorded—

Having covenanted each apart, and then in the name of Christ, in these words—"We do, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ our crowned King, his holy angels, his people, and all the people here present, give ourselves up to the Lord and to one another by the will of God, joyfully promising and engaging to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ and with his people in the observation of all Gospel ordinances, and in the discharge of all relative duties in the house of God, and as the presence of the Lord shall enable us"—We lifted up our hands thereunto, and afterwards subscribed our names.

We, having been dismissed from the Church of Christ which we did belong to, and having given up ourselves to the Lord and to one another by the will of God, and to this subscribed, in the presence of many witnesses, as becomes a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, having all the power amongst ourselves to manage all matters belonging to us as a Church of the Lord Jesus.

After this they proceed to choose two ruling elders, who covenanted with the people in the presence of the Lord to be faithful to the charges committed to them; the Church also covenanted to carry it towards them as a people to their officers. Then they chose Mr. Bettson, who had been approved by the Church at Rowell for the ministry of the word, to become their pastor; and on an appointed day they proceed to ordain him to this office, in a manner similar to that which had been adopted by the Church of which they had formerly made a part. They state— [228]

We proceeded to ordain our brother Bettson, in which our elders brother Henseman and brother Osborn laid their hands on brother Bettson and prayed, setting him before the Lord, testifying to the Lord that that was the man they had chosen to the office of a pastor; and after prayer, laid their hands on him again, and declared to the people that he was their pastor; and the ruling elders gave him authority, entering into covenant with him as to right them in their transactions. There were several pastors of other Churches present, as Mr. Bear, Mr. Greenwood, Mr. Davis, besides brethren of other Churches.

On the 14th day of the same month they say—

We then agreed, and solemnly passed this as a Church act, that we would not bear with any that were with us that whispered against any of the brethren, or backbited any, looking upon it as abusing that rule in the 18th chapter of Matthew; also very dishonourable to the Lord Jesus, and injurious to the Church; separating between chief friends, and giving occasion to the enemies to blaspheme.

The ministry of Mr. Bettson appears to have been evangelical, earnest, and successful, so that 174 members were added to the Church during his ministry, which continued for 33 years. During the early years of that ministry much comfort and usefulness is indicated; but the latter part of it appears to have been attended with some heavy trials. [229]

In the earliest part of their history they held numerous Church-meetings; had members belonging to the Church from many different places. Occasionally they held Church-meetings at Olney, 12 miles from Wellingborough, in which place and neighbourhood a number of the members resided, until at length they were formed into a Church in that place.

"Mr. Bettson," it is observed, "was a man possessed of much prudence, piety, and perseverance. His trials were many; for preceding the choice of an assistant, another minister came to the town to preach in opposition to Mr. Bettson. Many hearers left, and the interest was greatly reduced."

From their Church records, it appears that they performed the marriage ceremony among themselves. The covenant of marriage is thus expressed:—

I, J. N., take thee, M. M., to be my wedded wife, and solemnly promise, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be a loving, tender, and faithful husband, until death.

I, M. M., take thee, J. N., to be my wedded husband, and solemnly promise, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be a loving, tender, faithful, and obedient wife, until death.

"The date of the first certificate of marriage is 1692, and the date of the last that was given 1714."

*Wellingborough, 22nd day of the 10th month.*

These are to certify all whom it may concern, that Samuel Bearly and Susannah Jeffs, both of Wellingborough, did enter into the estate of matrimony the day and year above written. As a testimony of firmly indenting and joining in a marriage covenant, they have hereto unchangeably put to their hands and seals, the day and year above written.

In the presence of the witnesses,

ROBERT BETTSON.  
JOHN FOXE.

SAMUEL BEARLY.  
SUSANNAH JEFFS.

It appears that the banns were published in the parish Church where the parties lived, according to the following account:— [230]

Preceding marriage, Mr. Bere received a note from the place where the parties lived, according to the following testimony:—

"These are to certify all whom it may concern, of the banns of matrimony between Brize, of the parish of Clifton, in the county of Bucks, on the one part, and Ann Rollins, of this parish, in the county of Northampton, on the other part, were published three several times in the parish of Wollaston, without any let or contradiction, as the Rubrick directs, by me.

"J. MARIS, Vicar of Wollaston.

"*Wollaston, July 27, 1702.*"

When a Christian society is in circumstances of peculiar difficulty and discouragement, it is important that their state should engage the sympathies and draw forth the counsels of other Christian societies, as a means of encouragement and assistance under the struggles to which they are called. Acting on this principle, this Church, under its trials, applied for advice to other Churches, and received the following letter from the Church at Rowell, expressive of their sympathy and their counsels:

DEAR BRETHREN IN THE LORD,—Our messengers, sent upon your desire to assist you in your

faults, informed us that you wanted advice respecting your duty towards those members who wilfully left their places amongst you, broke their solemn covenant with you, and entered into a separate covenant with excommunicated persons, to carry on a separate cause with them. Our messengers further informed us of the unanimous advice given by the messengers of several Churches, that you should proceed against them as covenant-breakers; making use of Christian endeavours, evangelical admonitions, for their recovery, if the Lord pleases to bless to the same end; and in case of obstinacy to cut them off. Of this advice we heartily approve as a Church of Christ; and desire that the Spirit of the Lord may be with you in it, and enable you to go comfortably through it, and give you success in it. We pity you under your great and sore trials, and, as helping you, prayed for you, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God. We pity any who have been deluded from their duty under specious pretences, and desire that the God of all grace would give them speedily to renounce them. However, the Lord give unto you (the weak handed) to be found in the way of your duty, for therein is peace. Abstain from your own wisdom; let your weapons be spiritual and mighty through God, to whose care we remit you, and remain your sympathizing brethren,

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M. MAURICE.  
THOS. REYNALS.  
WILLM. FULLEN.

Sometimes a change in the ministry, when an interest is brought into such a state that it can hardly stand its ground, has a favourable effect; and may, under the divine blessing, be the means of bringing about a pleasing change. Thus it proved in the history of this Church. Mr. Bettson's age increasing and energies declining, they agreed to invite a co-pastor. A Mr. Grant, another member of the Church at Rowell, was chosen to this office. Finding his ministry acceptable, they wrote to the Church at Rowell, requesting his dismissal to them, that he might be ordained as joint pastor with Mr. Bettson. The Church granted their desire, and in their letter of dismissal we find the following passages:—

It affecteth us greatly that the Lord seemeth to smile upon his precious cause amongst you, so that we hope the night of your affliction is far spent, and the day of much more abounding joy and consolation is at hand. "Weeping endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

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We are glad that any of our dear brethren and sisters, who in the dark and cloudy day have been turned aside from their duty, are brought to their covenanted places in the Church. We have no reason to doubt but the Spirit of God will in a gracious manner bring others. When He is pleased to plead, who can resist? And we hope the same Spirit will enable you to carry it in all meekness of wisdom toward them, leaving the issue to God.

We bless God that the ministry of our beloved brother William Grant has been made so useful amongst you, and that the Spirit of God doth so fit it for edification and conversion. We pray that such fruits may abound more and more; and in order thereunto, upon your request and his desire, the Church has ordered us, in their names, to sign his dismissal to your fellowship.

We should be very glad of the continuance of his fellowship with us, and his labours amongst us; but seeing our dear Lord calleth him to work amongst you, and inclineth his heart thereto, we submit, and think it our duty to rejoice in your mercy.

In reference to the ordination of Mr. Grant, we are informed that "letters were ordered to be written in the name of the Church to the several Churches therein named, for their messengers to come over and behold our order, and assist us in the ordination of brother William Grant." Thursday, September 21st, 1723, was appointed for this purpose.

This being the day set apart for brother William Grant's ordination, the Church assembled for it, in order to carry on the solemn work, which was conducted as follows:

After some time spent in prayer, the Church appointed brother William Curtis to be their mouth to propose the matter to the Church, and also to brother Grant. The matter being proposed to the Church, they gave their consent, by standing up and lifting up their hands; no objection being made by any of them. By their mouth it was proposed to brother William Grant, whether or no he did willingly give up himself to the Lord and his Church, to serve the Lord and them in the work and office of a pastor; which call of God and his people he testified that he willingly obeyed and accepted. That being done, the messengers of the several Churches then present, as a testimony of their joy and communion, gave the right hands of fellowship. Then brother Hanneswell prayed, and Mr. Maurice preached, and brother Curtis concluded the meeting with prayer; and in the evening brother Grant preached; and so we concluded the day.

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Mr. Grant's ministry proved so acceptable, that it soon became necessary to enlarge the Old Meeting, which was done in the year 1726.

A circumstance which appears to have been rather unusual in the life of a plain country pastor

120 years ago, took place in the history of Mr. Grant, followed by some interesting results. "On June 11th, 1732, the Church gave consent for Mr. Grant to go to London." This was probably his first visit to the metropolis. What was the special occasion of such an important step being taken does not appear; but it was on this visit that it is supposed the following well-authenticated events took place. "Mr. Grant was introduced to the study of a learned brother, for whom he was to preach. This and the other book was pointed out as of great importance, and discovering great erudition in the author. Mr. Grant said, 'Sir, I have had no literary advantages; therefore such works are lost to me.' 'I am very sorry, then, that you are to preach to my people, who have always been accustomed to such ministers as have had a very liberal education. But, Mr. Grant, if you should be confused in your sermon, I beg you will soon close the subject.' Lady C—, seeing Mr. Grant's homely dress, felt much timidity about him, and no small aversion to hear him: but at the close of the service Lady C— and the minister were ready to testify their approbation; and from this time such was her Ladyship's partiality to Mr. Grant, that he frequently went to London in the week to preach a lecture, and returned for the Sabbath; and her Ladyship often came to Wellingborough to spend the Lord's-day."

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From this time Mr. Grant had a happy change in his temporal circumstances; for, connected with the liberal aid of her Ladyship, another event took place which terminated in his favour. One of his hearers had £200 left her, but found great difficulty in obtaining her right. Mr. Grant interfered, and obtained it for her. Such was her gratitude, that she left him £100 at her death.

During the first part of Mr. Grant's ministry at Wellingborough, he had to struggle with great pecuniary difficulties; but he now found true what a poor woman said to him on first coming to Wellingborough—"Mr. Grant, I wonder what induced you to come to such a reduced and poor people; how do you think you can be supported?" Then, as the effect of an instantaneous impression, she said, "The Lord says, 'The silver and the gold is mine'; and you, sir, shall have your share." Mr. Grant was in very good circumstances at the close of his life.

In 1734 they determined to build a new Meeting House. They counted the cost of such a building, erected in a plain manner, as they thought would then comfortably contain their congregation, and found it to be about £200. They built the walls, and put up part of the roof; but found themselves, being still poor and weak, under the necessity of asking the assistance of friends. This was obtained, so that the whole expense was shortly cleared.

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Mr. Grant's ministry extended over the lengthened period of forty-eight years, during which 259 members were added to the Church. It was on September 9th, 1770, that he preached for the last time, being very ill, and for some time before this having been carried to the pulpit. On March 22nd, 1771, after a long and painful illness, borne with Christian patience and fortitude, Mr. Grant's death took place, closing a devoted and successful ministry.

It is observed, that "Mr. Grant was very lively in the pulpit. His work appeared so much like the work of heaven, that it often very much surprised his hearers." "His charity was such, that he would deprive himself of some comforts for the benefit of the poor." A friend said to him, "I wonder, Mr. Grant, that you do not keep a better fire this cold weather." He replied, "other people want fires as well as myself." He was a firm Dissenter, and had a great aversion to all saints' days, &c. His people frequently pressed him to preach on Christmas-day: at last he complied with reluctancy, and chose these words—"Ye are of your father the devil, and his works will ye do."

When the dreadful fire took place at Wellingborough in 1738, such was the distress of the inhabitants that party names were forgotten; and the town requested the Rev. Mr. Grant and the Rev. Mr. Homes, the clergyman, to combine in collecting for the poor sufferers. When Mr. Homes saw the great influence that Mr. Grant had, and the unlimited respect paid to him, he determined he would go with nobody else, even on this charitable occasion. Mr. Homes retained a great respect for him to the close of his days, and would frequently say, "He was an honest and great man."

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In the closing years of his life, Mr. Grant was deprived of sight. An aged woman came to him on one occasion, when two of his friends were leading him to the pulpit, and said, "Sir, how do you do? for I cannot see you." He rejoined, "nor can I see you; but let us rejoice: there will be no blind people in heaven."

The following outline of a sermon is preserved from one of Mr. Grant's manuscripts (Psalm lxxix. 8). After a long introduction, he gives the following divisions:—

I. That God, as he is the God of Zion and the God of his Church, does sometimes remember against his own people their former iniquities, or the Church was mistaken here. "Oh, remember not against us," said they, "our former iniquities." Either God did remember against the Church their former iniquities, or I say the Church was mistaken; for the Church apprehends it so by her prayer. At this time she very plainly believes God did remember against her her former iniquities, and was now dealing with her by laying his rod upon her; therefore under it she cries, "Remember not against us our former iniquities; let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us, for we are brought very low."

II. When a professing people, or particular persons, are under chastisements and the severe rebukes of their God, to plead his tender mercies is the best argument. "Let thy tender mercies," says the Church, "speedily prevent us;" that is, prevent our ruin, or we

should be destroyed—we should be brought to nothing as a Church if thou sufferest the enemy to go forward in destroying them that are useful, cutting them off as they have done in times past, and the bodies of the saints should be still continued to be given as meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of heaven, as in verse 2—then we should be brought to ruin: but, "Oh let thy," &c.

III. We see from the words of our text, that the people of God may plead in their petitions their low estates for God's help; this may come in by way of petition in prayer. Our miseries and God's mercies are very proper pleas at the throne of grace. The poor publican made use of both in his prayer: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

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IV. Something by way of use, as (1.) Does God remember the sins of his people by way of chastisement? Let us take heed how we sin against him. (2.) Learn from hence, when God is chastising you, and laying his rod upon you, to turn to him that smites you, when he calls you by his rebukes. Many turn from God. (3.) We learn from hence, as the Church prays that God would not remember against her former iniquities, so we should do.

The following letter is inserted because it presents some pleasing indications of the spirit that prevailed in Mr. Grant and his people.

The Church of Christ at Wellingborough, under the pastoral care of William Grant, to those Christian brethren and sisters who have lately asked their dismissal from the Church of Christ at Lutterworth, under the pastoral care of John Dowley, sendeth greeting, wishing grace and peace, &c.

DEAR BRETHREN,—We, seeking the glory of our dear Lord Jesus, and the peace and prosperity of his cause in general, have been willing to concern ourselves in your affair so far as to seek the Lord about it, and then to weigh and consider well the case, which we have now done at no less than four sundry times; and our conclusion is, that we cannot receive you upon such a dismissal: for, instead of a recommendation, you have an accusation, that you could not come to a temper; and then a conclusion, that your separation is groundless. How far this accusation and conclusion are just we cannot be proper judges, who live at so great a distance, and have no opportunity of conversing with the members of the Church, that so we might thoroughly know both sides; for, until then, we cannot see how we can judge righteously in the affair.

All that we can further do in the case is, to mourn over it before the Lord. The breaches and hurts of Zion are many. Oh (have we not all reason to cry) that the Lord would arise in his glory, and build up her walls, and heal all her breaches! We earnestly desire that the Lord may appear for his cause in Lutterworth, that you may have Christ's Gospel and his law powerfully and plainly preached amongst you, that all that fear God in those parts may unitedly feed together in the ways of the Lord, and your children may be converted, and the seed of strangers also. Thus we subscribe ourselves your brethren in the best bonds.

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Owned in our Church-meeting, November 27th, 1741, and signed by us in the name of the Church.

WM. GRANT.

The original letter, in the handwriting of Mr. Grant, is in the possession of T. Grundy, Esq., Northampton.

When Mr. Grant's infirmities greatly increased, both he and his people were anxious to obtain an assistant before his departure. Prayer was presented fervently on this behalf, that they might have a pastor come after God's own heart. The fears of the people were great, on account of their attachment to the ministry of Mr. Grant, that no one would be so acceptable as to keep them together; as they considered few so acceptable in the pulpit as Mr. Grant. After several disappointments in probationers for the office, there remained this ground of hope—unity of spirit and prayer were given and continued.

After a time they received information of Mr. John Carver, who was pastor of a small Church in the village of Kirtling, Cambridgeshire, as one that was very likely to suit them. He came and preached to them two Sabbaths. General satisfaction prevailed in the Church and congregation; without one dissenting voice they desired him to come and remain among them. Mr. Carver accepted their call, and removed with his family to Wellingborough, October 30th, 1770. The ordination took place June 20th in the following year, which appears to have been conducted according to the more general practice of the Churches. Mr. Smith, of Oundle, read the hymns; Mr. Hayton began in prayer; Mr. Bond, of Toft, delivered the introductory discourse, and asked the usual questions; Mr. Simmons, of Bedford, gave the exhortation to the people, from Col. ii. 5, 6; Mr. Ashpiner, of Poole, in Dorset, prayed; Mr. Gregson, of Rowell, gave the charge, from Rom. i. 16; Mr. Walker, of Olney, concluded the service. "And, blessed be the Lord!" it is added, "it was a very solemn day. Every part of it was conducted with great order and satisfaction."

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Then we have the covenant of the Church renewed; and another covenant after revolt, partly given in the following terms:—

We, the members of the Church of the living God assembling at Wellingborough, having

greatly revolted from our dear Lord, in a deep sense of both former and later miscarriages against his love, blood, honour, crown, and dignity, as King of Souls and Churches, &c.

This seems to be imperfect, as it breaks off abruptly here.

During Mr. Carver's ministry, we find three who became members of the Church, that afterwards became pastors of Christian societies—viz.: Mr. Perry, the first pastor of the Church at Wollaston; Mr. Hennell, its second pastor; and Mr. Hillyard, the first pastor of the Church at Brigstock, and afterwards for many years minister at Olney.

In the year 1791 the present Meeting House was built. We are informed "that there was much conversation previously on the subject; and at length the congregation agreed to do it, if the expense could be defrayed among themselves, without dependence on others." This was a noble spirit. A subscription was opened among them, and found to be of sufficient amount to warrant their proceeding in the business. While the building was going forward they conducted a part of their service in Cheese Lane Meeting, by the kind permission of the stated congregation there. On the 11th of September, 1791, they met for the first time in their new place of worship. "The satisfaction arising from having a commodious large place of worship for ourselves and our posterity, without assistance from anyone, was great indeed." [240]

The following account of Mr. Carver's life, character, and ministry, was drawn up by the late Mr. Bull, of Newport, the friend of Newton and Cowper.

The Rev. John Carver was born A.D. 1733, at Southill, in Bedfordshire, and was several years a member of the Independent Church in that place, of which Church his father was a deacon. That piety and those talents which shone with increasing lustre to the close of his life, discovered themselves at a very early period; but unaffected modesty and conscientious motives prevented his entering into the ministry till he had completed his thirtieth year. He began by privately exercising his gifts before the Church, and afterwards established an evening lecture among his poor neighbours, to whom he preached after the labours of the day were closed. He continued these exercises, and some occasional services, a considerable time before he relinquished his secular employment and devoted himself entirely to the service of the Church. At length, however, he accepted the unanimous and urgent invitation of a small but affectionate congregation at Kirtling, near Newmarket, in Cambridgeshire. With this people he remained until his removal to Wellingborough, where he continued his ministry with great respectability and usefulness near twenty-seven years, his life and his labours ending on January 31st, 1797. [241]

Mr. Carver had not the advantage of an academical education; but his understanding, naturally vigorous, was cultivated by reading and reflection. In conversation he was habitually serious without gloom, and cheerful without levity. He possessed to an uncommon degree the happy talent of giving a devotional turn to almost every subject. Far from assuming any consequential airs, he alone seemed insensible to what every one else perceived, that he was the life and soul of the company. While the advanced Christian felt himself edified by the depth and solidity of his remarks, the young, to whom he paid a particular attention, were charmed by his affectionate address, the simplicity of his language, and the aptness of his illustrations.

Though he did not pretend to an acquaintance with the original languages, his biblical knowledge was truly respectable. A sound judgment, a correct taste, and extraordinary diligence in reading and studying the word of God, joined with a proper use of our best commentators, enabled him to appear to great advantage as an interpreter of Scripture.

In preaching, he never addressed the passions, but in subservience to reason and truth. In explaining and defending the doctrines and precepts of Christianity he was calm, perspicuous, and often very ingenious. He was a firm but not dogmatizing advocate for the sentiments usually styled Calvinistical. In the practical and applicatory parts of his discourse he was peculiarly striking. His numerous hearers will doubtless long remember with what solemnity of voice and manner, with what pointed energy of expression, he warned the young, the thoughtless, and the dissipated; with how much skill and tenderness he administered the consolations of the Gospel to those who laboured under spiritual discouragements. On these occasions, not only his voice and gesture, but his countenance, and not unfrequently his tears, expressed the interest he felt in their eternal welfare. He greatly excelled in prayer. Often was his large congregation visibly affected by the seriousness and importunity of his addresses at a throne of grace. [242]

In private life he was truly exemplary. As a husband and a father, his prudence, gentleness, and love, the evenness of his temper and regularity of his conduct, commanded the veneration and promoted the happiness of his family. Under the pressure of great, not to say unparalleled afflictions, he was resigned; when troubles came in upon him as a mighty flood, his heart was still fixed, trusting in the Lord. Those who have witnessed his deportment on the most trying occasions have confessed their astonishment, and felt themselves constrained to say, "Verily this is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes."



One part of his character we must not omit. He was an eminently peaceable man. To obtain and preserve peace he would sacrifice everything, a good conscience only excepted. The happy fruits of this disposition, and the beneficial effects of such an example, will, we trust, continue to be enjoyed many years by those who have had opportunity of observing his great anxiety and unwearied exertions for the sake of peace.

In his last illness, though his disorder was of a very painful and distressing nature, yet neither the extremity of his sufferings on the one hand, nor their long continuance on the other, did ever extort from his lips a single expression of impatience or distrust. His understanding was unimpaired and his faith unshaken to the last moment; and he expired in the act of repeating that triumphant song, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

After the death of Mr. Carver, the congregation was unsettled for some time, and was dependent on supplies through the next two or three years. At length Mr. Bell was invited to become their pastor. But his ministry proved of short continuance. It is said, "that he was possessed of good talents; but was very high in doctrine, denied the Gospel call to sinners as sinners—that he manifested too great a degree of levity, having much jocular wit." "He came to Wellingborough like a burning light, and went out like a candle in the estimation of many. There were, most probably, faults on both sides; but some sad effects resulted, it is considered, from his sentiments and his levity." He continued only two or three years.

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Mr. Renals was the next pastor of this Church. His ordination took place January 7, 1804. On that occasion, "Mr. Hennell, of Wollaston, formerly a deacon of the Church, engaged in supplicating the divine presence and blessing; Mr. Whitehead, of Creaton, delivered the introductory discourse, asked the usual questions, and received Mr. Renals' confession of faith; Mr. Bull, of Newport, offered up the ordination prayer, with imposition of hands; the charge succeeded, by Mr. Grundy, of Lutterworth, from I Tim. iv. 6; Mr. Gill, of Harborough, addressed the people, from Phil. ii. 29; Mr. Washbourn, fellow labourer with Mr. Renals in the same town, concluded with prayer.

The congregation assembled again in the evening, when, after prayer by Mr. Hillyard, of Bedford, Mr. Toller, of Kettering, preached from Psalm xxii. 30, and Mr. Phillips, of Chedworth, Gloucestershire, closed the service with prayer." In connexion with this account it is stated, "that a very large concourse of people, and thirty ministers, were the agreeable witnesses of this important and happy settlement; and it is with the sincerest pleasure we add, that the most complete union subsists between both the Independent ministers of this town, and that the spirit of brotherly love prevails among the people. May it be perpetual!"

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Mr. Renals' ministry extended over 43 years in this situation, so that he was one of a remarkable list of four pastors of this Church, whose united services here make up 150 years. During the pastorate of Mr. Renals, 113 members were added to the Church; he resigned his charge in the year 1847.

Numerous changes had taken place in the congregation during Mr. Renals' labours among them; there was a considerable decline in the number of hearers in many of the latter years of his ministry, and the Church became reduced to thirty members; this would be partly owing to another Independent Church being formed in the town, and partly to unpleasant circumstances that arose among them. But Mr. Renals had some sincere and attached friends to the close of his life. He was born in the village of Rempstone, in Nottinghamshire, April, 1769. His mother was a pious woman of the Baptist persuasion, from whose counsels and prayers he derived spiritual advantage. When he arrived at mature age, he resided some time in Leicester, where he frequently heard and much admired that eminent clergyman, the Rev. Thomas Robinson, of St. Mary's, well known for his clear evangelical views, and for the zealous and devoted manner in which he preached the Gospel in that town for many years. Mr. Renals afterwards settling in Nottingham, became a member of the Church at Castle Gate Meeting, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Richard Alliott, by whom he was introduced to Rotherham College, which he entered in the autumn of 1798. Being then nearly thirty years of age, and not having had the advantages of preparatory training, the tutors wisely deviated from their usual course, and directed his attention chiefly to theological studies. He first preached for a time at Hinchley, in Leicestershire, going thither in 1802, but removed to Wellingborough in the closing part of the next year. He had a vigorous constitution; preached three times every Lord's-day; was a warm advocate for maintaining the afternoon service, in opposition to the modern plan of morning and evening only. He frequently preached on a week evening, in some of the villages in the vicinity of Wellingborough. He was a man of genuine piety, decided attachment to the principles of the Gospel, sterling integrity, and considerable activity. If his mind was not strictly logical, his spirit was devotional; if his temper was not always amiable, his heart was sincere; if prudence did not guide in every effort, the aim, we believe, was always upright; if there was not excessive candour, there was much genuine kindness. Advancing years presented a softening, meliorating, ripening influence. He would labour in the cause of God, until entirely prevented by his last affliction. While he cordially welcomed his successor in the ministry, and offered a fervent prayer at his ordination for him and for the people over whom he had so long presided, "he continued preaching most Sabbaths at the village of Finedon, whither he was preparing to go when his last affliction compelled him to desist and relinquish the attempt." After a few weeks of considerable suffering, borne with exemplary patience and fortitude, enjoying perfect peace and a hope full of immortality, he died, being nearly 80 years of age.

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Mr. Cornelius Curtis Tyte, from the academy of Rotherham, was unanimously invited as successor to Mr. Renals. He was ordained in October, 1847, when Mr. Bellamy, of Sheffield, now of Buckingham, delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Renals offered the ordination prayer; and Dr. Stowell, Mr. Tyte's tutor, delivered the charge, from Col. iv. 17. In the evening, Mr. Toller, of Kettering, preached to the people from Acts ii. 42. Since this time 21 members have been added to the Church. The present number of communicants is 37. There are 100 children in the Sabbath-schools; in actual attendance, between 80 and 90.

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Occasional services are conducted in one village in the vicinity of Wellingborough, the village of Finedon. The happy union of the present pastor and his people, and the harmony that subsists between them and the other ministers and congregations generally in the town, present, we trust, a cheering prospect for the future, that "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they may be greatly edified and multiplied."

### SECTION 3.—THE CHURCH AT SALEM CHAPEL.

The Independent Church at Salem Chapel, Wellingborough, was originally formed by those who separated from the Church at Cheese Lane Meeting, in the same town, in the year 1812. However much this separation might be regretted at the time, after the lapse of forty years it would be unwise to attempt to enter into the grounds of that separation. The unpleasant feelings at first produced have, we trust, long ere this entirely subsided, and the pastors and the people can now go forward in harmonious co-operation for the promotion of the same great cause to which they are devoted.

It was on the evening of the Lord's-day, September 21st, 1812, that the Church was formed here, in the presence of the Rev. Joseph Whitehead, of Creaton, and the Rev. Shadrach Jackson, of Old. They united in a Church covenant, which they have thus expressed:—

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We hope that by grace we have been brought to see our last state and condition; to behold the remedy prepared in the Gospel, Christ Jesus the Lord; to flee to him as such; to put our trust in him for life and salvation: and we do hereby resign up ourselves to Christ, in Church fellowship and communion, resolving and promising in his strength to devote ourselves entirely to him; to believe his promises, live by faith upon them, obey his precepts, hearken to the voice of his providence, and serve him according to all the laws, statutes, and ordinances of his house; taking the written word for our rule, and aiming at the glory of God in all things.

We do further covenant and agree to walk together in Christian fellowship; regularly and constantly to attend all the ordinances of God's house; and that we will watch over one another in love, seeking each other's happiness and welfare, by sympathizing with the afflicted, comforting the mourner, strengthening the weak, confirming the wavering, reclaiming the backslider, and by every possible means do all that we can to promote each other's peace, comfort, and edification in Christ Jesus our Lord; while we study the peace and prosperity of the whole Church, that God may be in the midst of her, and abundantly bless her.

Thus Christians of old "first gave up themselves to the Lord, and then to each other by the will of God."

The first pastor of the Church was the Rev. Pollard Davis, whose ordination took place June 1st, 1813, when we find Mr. Gill, of Harborough, Mr. Whitehead, of Creaton, Mr. Bull, of Newport, Mr. Fuller, of Kettering, Mr. Chater, of Kibworth, engaged in the services of the day.

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Mr. Davis's ministry continued until January 24th, 1821, when he resigned his charge. He appears to have admitted 23 members to the Church.

Rev. C. T. Sevier was the next pastor, who entered on his charge in the year 1822, and continued for about 12 years, removing from Wellingborough in the year 1834.

Rev. J. Bevan was the immediate successor of Mr. Sevier, entering on his pastoral labours September 20th, 1835. The ministry of Mr. Bevan was of short continuance at Wellingborough; receiving an invitation to become the pastor of a Church at Liverpool, he soon resigned his charge here. He was succeeded by the Rev. Robert Davis, who, having received a unanimous invitation to become their pastor, entered on his stated services February 18th, 1838. The number of members in the Church when Mr. Davis became pastor appears to have been 79, and at the close of his ministry they numbered 107. Mr. Davis removed from Wellingborough to Turvey, in Bedfordshire.

In July, 1846, the present minister, the Rev. Thomas Thomas, who was educated at Homerton College, after supplying the congregation about six months, was ordained to the pastoral office. On that occasion, the Rev. J. A. Morris, of London, delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Toller, of Kettering, offered the ordination prayer; Dr. Pye Smith (Mr. Thomas's tutor) delivered the charge; Mr. Robinson, of Kettering, preached to the people. The attendance was large, and the services of an interesting character.

Since Mr. Thomas commenced his ministry, new school-rooms have been erected for the accommodation of the Sabbath-schools. The cost of them was £300. They were opened on Tuesday, September 18th, 1849, when the Rev. Dr. Reed, of London, and the Rev. J. Toller, of

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Kettering, preached. There are 184 children in the Sabbath-schools. The present number of communicants is 100.

The villages supplied with regular services in the vicinity of Wellingborough are Doddington and Wilby, and occasionally Orlingbury. As this Church is of comparatively recent formation, and as all those that have sustained the pastoral office over it are, we believe, still living, the account we can present is necessarily short.

The present pastor and his flock will rejoice in the tokens of divine favour they have received; and will go forward, we trust, with the cheering hope of continued and yet more abundant supplies of divine blessings, so that peace and prosperity may now be increasingly and permanently experienced in this department of Zion.

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## CHAPTER X.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT OUNDLE.

In attempting to trace the principles of Nonconformity to their earliest manifestations in the town of Oundle, after the reformation from Popery, we find two Puritan divines ministering here in the course of the sixteenth century. These were men who could not conform to all the rites and ceremonies of the Church as by law established, and who had to suffer much for their refusal to comply with its requirements.

The first of these was Eusebius Paget, who was born at Cranford, in this county, and educated in Christ's College, Oxford. During his abode at Oxford he broke his right arm, and was lame of it ever after. When he removed from the University he became vicar of Oundle and rector of Langton, but was exceedingly harassed on account of his Nonconformity.

On January 29th, 1573, he was cited by Scambler, Bishop of Peterborough, who first suspended him for three weeks, and then deprived him of his living, worth £100 per annum. Several others were suspended and deprived at the same time, because they could not with a good conscience subscribe to certain promises and engagements proposed to them by the Bishop. And this Dr. Edward Scambler, successively Bishop of Peterborough and Norwich, was the first pastor of a Protestant congregation in London in the reign of Queen Mary; but was compelled, on account of the severity of the persecution, to relinquish the situation. He was a learned man; very zealous against the Papists; and was probably driven into a state of exile. But surely he forgot his former circumstances, when he became a zealous persecutor of his brethren in the days of Elizabeth; not remembering that they were as conscientious in their objections to what they considered to be the remains of Popery in a reformed Church, and in their endeavours to obtain a purer mode of discipline and worship, as he had been in his efforts against what he formerly disapproved. After this Mr. Paget was preferred to the rectory of Kilkhampton, in Cornwall.

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When Mr. Paget and his brethren were deprived, they presented a supplication to the Queen and the Parliament for their restoration to their beloved ministry, but to no purpose; they must subscribe, or be buried in silence.

Further suffering awaited Mr. Paget: his unfeeling persecutors, not content with cutting him off from his ministry and his living, ordered him to be taken into custody and sent up to London. He was therefore apprehended, with Mr. John Oxenbridge, another leading person in the Association in Northamptonshire and Warwickshire, and they were both carried prisoners to the metropolis, by an order from Archbishop Grindal. It does not however appear how long they were kept in custody, nor what further persecution they suffered. Mr. Paget filled different situations in the ministry afterwards, and was repeatedly subjected to ecclesiastical censures. He died in London, May, 1617. Wood says of him, "He was many years a constant and faithful preacher of God's word"; and Fuller styles him "a golden sophister, a painful preacher, and author of an excellent history of the Bible." He had a son, Ephraim Paget, who was born in Northamptonshire, probably at Oundle, in 1575, who became a Puritan minister.

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It was probably not very long after Mr. Paget was thus driven from Oundle, that Hugh Clark, A.M. was settled in the ministry here. He was born at Burton-upon-Trent, August 15th, 1563, and educated first in Jesus College, Cambridge, then in the University of Oxford. It is stated, "that when he came to Oundle he found the people in a state of the most deplorable ignorance and profaneness, living in the constant profanation of the Lord's-day by Whitsun ales, morris-dancing, and other ungodly sports. For a considerable time he laboured to convince them of their sins and to reclaim them from their evil ways, but without any prospect of success. Though God visited several of the ringleaders by successive remarkable judgments, they still persisted in their profane sports. They seem to have made a covenant with death, and to have been at agreement with hell. At length, however, there was a pleasing alteration. They began to take serious heed to the ministry of the word; their lives became reformed, and many were called to a saving knowledge of the Gospel."

During Mr. Clark's abode in this place he experienced several remarkable providential deliverances, among which was the following: Having in his 'Sermon on the Sabbath-day'

announced the just judgment of God against certain particular sins to which the young people were much addicted, the next morning a lusty young man came to his house wishing to see him. Mr. Clark, having invited him into his chamber, and knowing his vicious character, sharply reproved him, and warned him of his awful danger; and God wrought so effectually upon his heart by this pointed and faithful dealing, that the man, falling down on his knees and crying for pardon, pulled out a dagger, by which he had determined to murder him. "I came hither," said the man, "with a full resolution to stab you; but God has prevented me. This was occasioned by your terrifying sermon yesterday; but if you please to forgive me, I shall never attempt any such thing again." Mr. Clark freely pardoned the offence, and after giving him suitable advice, dismissed him. [253]

In the year 1590 Mr. Clarke removed from Oundle to Wollaston, in Warwickshire, where he was chosen to the pastoral office by the people, and received the presentation to the living from Sir Roger Wigston. He was once indicted for high treason, because he had prayed that "God would forgive the Queen her sins"; but was acquitted. He was a constant, zealous, and laborious preacher, a person of great learning and piety, useful in his ministry, and an acute and powerful disputant. His death occurred November 6th, 1634, in the 72nd year of his age. Three of his descendants were numbered amongst the ejected ministers in the year 1662.

At the time of the restoration of Charles II., it appears that Mr. Richard Resbury was vicar of Oundle, and that he became one of the Nonconformist ministers, resigning his living six weeks before Bartholomew-day. Here he afterwards preached in his own hired house, practised medicine with some success, and was advised with by persons of all ranks. We are informed that he was a man of brisk parts, and very facetious; but had the general reputation of a solid divine, and made a considerable figure in this county. He was particularly honoured for what he wrote in opposition to Mr. John Goodwin, on the Arminian controversy. In addition to what he published on this subject, he wrote 'The Tabernacle of God with Man; or, the visible Church Reformed: A Discourse of the Nature and Discipline of the visible Church.' [254]

Robert Wild, D.D., who was ejected from the living of Ayno, in this county, after his ejection came to reside at Oundle. He was a native of St. Ives, in Huntingdonshire; educated at St. John's College, Cambridge. He published 'The Arraignment of a Sinner at the Bar of Divine Justice: an Assize Sermon, preached at Oxford, 1655, and dedicated to John Cartwright, Esq., of Ayno.' Several other works appeared as the production of his pen. He was noted for his facetiousness, but was very serious in serious things. As an illustration of this, it is related that Mr. Job Orton received the following statement from an ancient Christian in Northamptonshire:—

Mr. Baxter, being much displeased at some instances of his facetiousness which he had heard of, called on him, in his way from Kidderminster to London, to reprove him, as the times were very dark; and he appears to have thought that there was something especially unsuitable in this to such days of trial. When he came to Ayno, he found the Doctor just gone to Church, it being observed by him and his people as a fast-day. Mr. Baxter goes to the Church, seats himself in one corner, and becomes so deeply interested, and so well satisfied, that when the service was over he came to the Doctor, thanked him for his service, and desired that he would reprove and rebuke him sharply, as he deserved it. Being desired to explain himself, Mr. Baxter said, "for my great uncharitableness and folly in regarding reports," &c.; and then told him why he had called upon him. [255]

After Dr. Wild came to reside at Oundle, it pleased God to visit Mr. Resbury, the ejected vicar, with the palsy; and the Doctor wrote letters to all parts of the country in order to raise him some money to take him to Bath, for his relief. A Mr. Stancliff wrote of him, "that he was excellently qualified unto his ministerial work; none more melted and melting in prayer, nor more serious and fervent in preaching Christ and his Gospel." He died at Oundle, in the year 1679. A little before his death he preached on Rev. xiv. 12: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus;" when he said, "it is but a short time, and I shall be in paradise."

There was also in these days a Mr. Strickland Negus, ejected from Chester, in this county, who was one of the Thursday lecturers at Oundle. It appears to have been the custom of the Puritan ministers of this county, while in the Church, to have week-day lectures preached at their different churches by their brethren alternately. Of Mr. Negus it is said, that "he was a truly good man, and a useful preacher."

Mr. Edward Cauthorn, ejected from Tansover, was one of the lecturers at Oundle, where he had a good estate, and whither he came to reside after his ejection; and here he died in 1665 or 1666. "He was a man of great meekness, and a very able preacher."

Whether these Nonconformist ministers went so far as to form a Church here on Congregational principles, we are not informed; but their example and their services appear to have been the means of a regular congregation being gathered in these early days of Nonconformity; and probably the spirit of persecution might not now discover itself so much here as in some other parts of the country, which might be one reason why several of those who were cast out of the Church resorted to this place. [256]

That there was a stated congregation, and probably a Church formed, appears to be manifest by the next fact in relation to these things that we find recorded; which is, that Mr. Shepherd, who had been minister at Tillbrook, in Bedfordshire, on quitting his living a few years after the

passing of the Act of Uniformity, became pastor to a Dissenting congregation at Oundle. This is the minister of whom it is stated, in our account of the Church at Kettering, "that he had the true spirit of his office, his preaching being very awful and affecting, and his life very holy." About 1697 he removed to Kettering, where, a few months after, he died.

There is a tradition generally credited in Oundle, that the Meeting House was built immediately after the passing of "the Toleration Act," in 1790 or 1791. The founder was Joseph Hewson, a draper in the town, who erected the building on his own freehold, for the use of himself and other Nonconformists in the neighbourhood, who, as in other places, were but too happy to emerge from the state of depression into which they had been cast, to a state of comparative liberty: but in 1724, David Hewson, of Market Harborough, also a draper, son and heir of the founder, sold the property to the society for the nominal sum of £40; and in the month of August, the same year, the first trust deed was made, settling the building for ever as a place of religious worship, and conveying the fee of the freehold to twelve trustees. It was in the deed denominated a place for a Presbyterian congregation, but now the Church is formed on the principles of the Independents. After Mr. Shepherd's removal from Oundle, there appears to have been a Mr. Atkinson pastor of the Church, for on the sacramental cups is this inscription: "The Rev. Mr. Atkinson being our present pastor, 1713."

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The next pastor was Mr. Joseph King, who probably might be first assistant and afterwards successor to Mr. Atkinson, as there were three of Mr. King's children buried in Oundle Churchyard, the first in 1712, the other two in 1714. Mr. King died in 1720. A tombstone was erected to his memory in the Churchyard, on which is a Latin inscription. The following is a translation:—

JOSEPH KING died 29th Jany.,  
A.D. 1719/20, aged 46.

Thy spirit upright, and thy heart sincere;  
True piety engaged thy fervent love;  
Instructed from above  
To feed the flock committed to thy care;  
And with the eloquent they will thy name revere.  
Happy to have fulfilled thy sacred toil, the end arrives,  
And here thou liest.  
Blest man! thy name for ages shall survive.  
The monument that marks thy dust shall fall,  
Decays the marble tomb,  
The sepulchre comes down:  
The fame which goodness gives shall long survive them all.

Mr. King was the father of Mr. Samuel King, who was minister at Welford for forty years. This son was born in 1815, and was little more than four years of age when his father died. He was regarded as given in answer to maternal prayer; for his mother, Mrs. Hannah King, a woman of a devoted spirit, earnestly desired to have a son that might become a minister of the Gospel. She long survived her husband; lived to realize her highest desire on this behalf; and had the happiness of closing her days, in a good old age, in the house of her son, when he was minister of the Independent Church at Welford. On an upright stone in the Churchyard of that village there is the following inscription, probably expressive of the affectionate remembrance of her son:—

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In memory of Mrs. HANNAH KING, relict of the  
Rev. Joseph King, of Oundle, who departed this  
life the 25th day of April, 1763, aged 81 years.

Farewell, bright soul, a long farewell,  
Till we shall meet again above,  
In the sweet groves where pleasures dwell,  
And trees of life bear fruits of love.

Sweet soul, we leave thee to thy rest;  
Enjoy thy Jesus and thy God,  
Till we, from bonds of clay released,  
Spring out, and climb th' heav'nly road.

The next pastor of the Church at Oundle was Mr. Daniel Goodrich; his name was inserted in the first trust deed of the Meeting House, in 1724. In the account which Doddridge gives of his ordination at Northampton, in 1730, he mentions Mr. Goodrich, of Oundle, as commencing the service by prayer and reading the Scriptures. In the memoirs of Mr. Sanderson, one of the pastors of the Church at Rowell, we find a short letter from Mr. Goodrich, dated December 26th, 1740, which pleasingly indicates the spirit of piety, and the attachment of the writer to evangelical principles.

I thank you for your long expected favour, and am glad to find that you hang upon the covenant; it is the great prop and support of our souls. Pleasant frames, and to live by sense, are what we are fond of; but faith and patience must have their perfect work here—these shall have nothing to do above. Then the redeemed of the Lord shall live by sight, in full fruition—see face to face, and know as they are known; no clouds shall

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come between their beloved and them; no corruptions from within, no thorns and briars from without; and a brother shall not then be as a thorn hedge; but as God is love, we shall be like him, swallowed up in love to God and to one another. A little while, and thus it shall be. The wilderness is but a short passage, though difficult and troublesome. Our lights are but to burn here for a little while. The Lord grant, that we may so shine that our heavenly Father may be glorified.

I beg the Lord may fit you for your work, and crown your labours with success, &c., &c.

D. GOODRICH.

At the ordination of Mr. Boyce over the Church at Kettering, Mr. Goodrich was engaged in asking the questions and offering the ordination prayer. He died February 25th, 1765, aged 66 years.

In the report of Homerton College, the name of Jeremiah Longfield is given, as a student who settled at Oundle. Though the exact date does not appear, it seems to have been soon after the death of Mr. Goodrich.

The next in succession appears to have been Mr. Wm. Ward, who was ordained at Oundle, and continued there for about four years, when he removed to Dudley.

After Mr. Ward, Mr. Wright, from Ringwood, was the pastor for twelve years. He died at Boston, and was buried in the Chapel at Oundle, where also his wife and two daughters were interred.

Mr. R. Forsyth was pastor for two years, and then Mr. Reynold Hogg, who was afterwards minister at Kimbolton and Thrapstone, and treasurer of the Baptist Missionary Society.

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Mr. Isaac Cooke was pastor for two years, when he removed to Narborough.

Mr. Joseph Chadwick became the pastor of this Church in the year 1790, and continued his ministry here for forty years. Mr. Chadwick was a native of Trull, near Taunton, in Somersetshire, where he was born in 1751. He has been heard to say, that his father was a man of no energy, and that whatever advantage he might gain from parental instruction, or example, or aid, was derived from his mother. We have heard, that he was a descendant from the early Nonconformists, and he evidently took a great interest in the memorials of their trials and sufferings. Of this he gave a singular proof at a meeting of the County Association, held at Ashley, when he delivered a sermon from Heb. x. 34, "And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance;" at the close of his discourse reading some memoranda of the sufferings and losses, the fines exacted, the goods sold, &c., of our Nonconformist forefathers. There was a person of the same name, a Mr. Joseph Chadwick, ejected from the living of Winesford, in Somersetshire, of whom Mr. Chadwick was great-grandson. He was also a descendant of Mr. Thorn, ejected from Weymouth, Dorset.

In his youth he was apprenticed to a peruke-maker and hair-dresser, at Taunton. During the course of his apprenticeship, his general conduct and marked piety, and ardent thirst for knowledge, as indicated by his love of reading, attracted the attention of John Toller, Esq., an attorney at Taunton, and the grandfather of the late Rev. T. N. Toller, of Kettering. That gentleman, it is thought, bought out the latter part of Mr. Chadwick's apprenticeship, and sent him to study under the Rev. Mr. Kirkup, of South Petherton, who had been the preceptor of the late Mr. Toller's early years. With Mr. Kirkup Mr. Chadwick continued two years, and made remarkable progress in his studies, especially in the classics. At the expiration of his residence with Mr. Kirkup, he was sent, under Mr. Toller's patronage, to the Western College, as his name stands in the list of their students. He was first settled at Wellington, Somersetshire; from whence, after a few years, he removed to Sherborne, in Dorsetshire, and came from thence to Oundle. He was a man of considerable learning, and an indefatigable reader of the most solid works in theology and in general literature. He resigned his charge at Midsummer, 1831. He died May 7, 1841, in the 90th year of his age. Mr. Toller, of Kettering, preached his funeral sermon.

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Mr. Ebenezer Prant, from Highbury College, succeeded Mr. Chadwick. He resigned his charge in 1835, and is now one of the Secretaries to the London Missionary Society.

Mr. Abraham Calovius Simpson, LL.D., of the Glasgow University, was the next pastor, serving this Church and congregation in the ministry of the Gospel from 1836 to 1841, when he resigned his charge.

The present pastor, Mr. Alfred Newth—who studied at Homerton College, and had been previously settled at Ripley, near Christ Church, Hants—came to Oundle in the year 1842, as the successor of Dr. Simpson. The present number of communicants is about 70. There are 120 children in the Sabbath-schools.

Occasional services are conducted in two villages in the vicinity of Oundle, viz., Tansor and Glapthorne.

## MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT WEEDON BECK.

In the village of Weedon, about eight miles from Northampton, where there is a royal military dépôt with barracks for 1500 men, storehouses and magazines capable of stowing 200,000 small arms, there stands an Independent Chapel for preaching the Gospel of peace, and maintaining the cause of Christ by the voluntary aid of his followers. It is a respectable village Chapel, capable of seating about 500 hearers; it has a grave-yard in the front, and commodious school-rooms behind.

At the time of the Restoration, a Mr. George Martin was vicar of Weedon. Such was his loyalty, that he lost an arm for the King in Sir George Booth's rising. But, as one that "exercised himself to have a conscience void of offence both towards God and man"—first fearing God, then honouring the king—when the Act of Uniformity passed, he renounced his connexion with the Church rather than violate his conscience. Such was the spirit of the times, that in 1667 he was in Warwick Gaol for some months, for preaching the Gospel. Some time after his ejection he exercised his ministry amongst a small number of worthy people at Stony Stratford, who had a great value for his memory a considerable time after. "He was," we are informed, "a serious, holy, good-tempered, and courageous man." [263]

It is probable that the cause of Nonconformity in Weedon owes its origin to the vicar's separation from the Church. Such an event would excite the attention of the people, and promote inquiry among them; and they would be led to seek those ministrations without the Church of which they were deprived within her pale by the oppressive enactments of the day. There had been a number from Weedon and the neighbourhood who had gone to the Church at Norton to hear Mr. Robert Allen, another of the ejected ministers, who was a very popular preacher, whose Church was crowded with hearers from the places around.

"A congregation was jointly formed here and at Floor prior to 1668, in which year the first trust deed is dated."

The earliest known minister of this society was Mr. Peyto. This person was engaged in the ordination service of Mr. J. Heywood, at Potterspury, in 1740. He was succeeded by Mr. Thomas Howe, a native of Northampton, and one of the Daventry students. "He removed before 1770 to Yarmouth, in Norfolk, where he continued until his death. He published several pamphlets and sermons."

This is the second pastor, as recorded in Baker's history of this county. But in the early history of the Church at West End, Wellingborough, we find the following notice of a Mr. Saywell, who appears to have been minister at Floor and Weedon: "We ordered a letter to the Church at Floor, with our judgment that Mr. Saywell was a member and an officer there, and ought to abide till his ministry was fulfilled. We ordered another to the Church at Weedon, to satisfy them with it, and to encourage them to wait with patience." This person must have been about the second pastor that was placed over them. [264]

Mr. Samuel Braybrook, another Daventry student, is recorded as succeeding Mr. Howe, and as afterwards settling at Rendham, in Suffolk.

Then we find the names of Mr. John Offord and Mr. Phares; and then Mr. William Severn, concerning whom we are informed "that he was a native of Nottingham; at an early age became a popular preacher among the Methodists; was for two years a travelling associate with their celebrated founder, John Wesley. But his sentiments undergoing a change, he went to study divinity at Edinburgh, on leaving which University he accepted an invitation to this society, from whence he removed to Welford in 1782, afterwards to Hinckley, in Leicestershire, where he embraced Unitarianism. He died at Hull, in June, 1813, in his fifty-ninth year."

After this, we have the name of Mr. Renfrew; and after him, Mr. Evan Johns, who removed to Welford; then Mr. T. Spencer, who was appointed in 1790, and resigned in a few years after.

Mr. Joseph Gronow was chosen to succeed Mr. Spencer. He was ordained April 27th, 1797, when the Rev. Messrs. Chipperfield, Wood, Horsey, Bicknell, Toller, and Denny engaged in the several parts of the service.

"Mr. Gronow's ministry was very acceptable and useful. He died Dec. 9th, 1817. He lost a beloved wife a few months before his own death. During four months' severe illness, probably brought on by the loss of his wife and the removal of a highly esteemed friend, he manifested a truly Christian spirit. He had been pastor of the Church more than 21 years, and the means of greatly improving the state of the society. Few ministers have been more generally beloved by those who knew them, or have lived more in the affections of their people. In the time of his illness preparations were making for his going to Bath, with the hope that the waters might, under the blessing of God, restore his health; but when all the arrangements were nearly completed, and the funds necessary for such a journey provided, through the liberality of benevolent individuals, it pleased God to remove him. The affliction which he suffered during the last fortnight of his life was most painful; but the closing scene was remarkably peaceful. His remains were interred the following Monday, with every token of respect, under the pulpit where he had so often preached the Gospel of Christ. Many of his brethren attended the funeral, six of whom supported the pall. His death was improved by Mr. H. Knight, of Yelvertoft, from Acts xx. 38, to a most numerous and deeply affected congregation." [265]

On a neat mural tablet of white marble, at the right hand of the pulpit, is the following inscription:—

This Stone  
has been raised by an affectionate congregation  
to the memory of their beloved pastor,  
the REV. JOSEPH GRONOW,  
who for more than twenty-one years  
continued diligently, faithfully, and successfully  
to discharge the duties of his office.  
His affection, simplicity, sympathy, and sincerity  
conciliated the respect of all who knew him,  
and peculiarly endeared him to his flock.  
With great calmness, and with a blessed hope  
of a glorious immortality,  
he closed his mortal course, December the 9th, 1817,  
aged 49.  
"Though dead, he yet speaks to his people,"  
for whose salvation he always manifested the greatest solicitude.

Mr. Gronow was about the middle stature, plain in appearance; as a preacher, serious, affectionate, fervent. Plainness and simplicity marked his language and the plan of his sermons, while they were full of evangelical truth, setting forth experimental and practical piety. He preached as one concerned for the honour of his great Master and the good of immortal souls. Mr. Gronow had been assistant for a short time to Mr. Maurice, of Stretton-under-Fosse, before he came to Weedon. He was succeeded by Mr. James Pinkerton, who had been a student at the Newport Academy, and was ordained here May 6th, 1819, and was pastor of this Church for thirteen years. In the year 1831 he resigned, and removed to Totteridge, near London; but he had not filled this situation more than two years, we believe, before he was summoned from the scenes of time and the services of the Church on earth. Mr. Pinkerton was of a very amiable and pious spirit, devoted to his Master's work. His sermons appeared to be well prepared, full of important and appropriate thought, discovering some energy of mind, and delivered with animation of manner. He frequently preached at the meetings of the County Association, and was always heard with interest. [266]

At the close of 1831, the present pastor, Mr. Isaac Evans, came on probation, and was ordained July 24th, 1832. During the ministry of Mr. Evans a new school-room has been erected, at the cost of £120, which was opened in the year 1847. The Sabbath-school is conducted here, containing about 125 children.

The present number of communicants is 80. One service is conducted at Floor every Sabbath, where the congregation is considered as a branch of the Church at Weedon. The present Chapel there was built in the year 1810. [267]

Some alterations and improvements have recently been made in the Chapel at Weedon, at a cost of £115, which will, we trust, add to the comfort of the place and the accommodation of the congregation. All would be accompanied with the fervent and united desire of the pastor and his flock that abundant tokens of the blessing of the great Head of the Church may attend all their efforts.

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## CHAPTER XII.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT LONG BUCKBY.

The populous village of Long Buckby, containing more than 2600 inhabitants, has a neat and commodious Independent Chapel, capable of seating about 700 hearers, with convenient school-rooms, and a respectable dwelling-house for the minister. Previous to the erection of the present building there was an old Chapel, which had stood for many years in another situation; but it is much to be regretted in this case, as in some others, that no accounts have been preserved of the origin or early history of this Church.

Before the year 1662, when Mr. Richard Allen, who became one of the ejected ministers, preached in the parish Church of Norton, a short distance from this village, amongst other places mentioned from which hearers came to attend on his ministry, there were some from Long Buckby; but whether it was very soon after the ejection of their favourite preacher that they sought the ministrations of the Nonconformists in this place we have no account. The earliest notice we find of an Independent minister at Long Buckby is in the account of the ordination of Mr. Tingey, at Northampton, in 1709, when a Mr. Jackson, minister at Long Buckby, was present. In the account which Mr. Sanders, one of the pastors of the Church at Kettering, gives of his ordination, as preserved in the records of that Church, which took place November 23, 1721, he states—"Mr. Cartwright, of Buckby, began with prayer, and prayed well." This proves to us that there was a Mr. Cartwright, a Dissenting minister, at Buckby, 131 years ago. Again, we find his [269]



signature attached to the certificate of Mr. Hextal's ordination at Creaton in 1738, which shows us that his ministry extended over some considerable period in this place. He was also engaged in the ordination of Mr. J. Heywood, at Potterspur, in 1740.

As a further memorial of him, we have discovered a very old upright gravestone in the Churchyard of Long Buckby, erected to his memory. With some considerable difficulty we deciphered the inscription, which states concisely his age, the time of his death, and the character he bore.

In memory  
of the Rev. Mr. THOMAS CARTWRIGHT,  
who died April 13th, 1744, aged 57;  
having by a diligent, faithful, and humble discharge  
of the various duties of the Christian and  
ministerial life,  
obtained a good report of all men,  
and of the truth itself;  
being most highly esteemed of those  
by whom he was most intimately known.

Mr. Cartwright left a widow, who survived him thirty-nine years.

The next pastor of this Church was a Mr. Walker, but of his life or ministry we find no records preserved.

Mr. Richard Denny became pastor of this Church in 1763, and continued his labours for nearly forty years. During his ministry the present Meeting House was built, in 1771; and in one part of that ministry a remarkable revival of religion took place, followed by permanent results of the most important kind. He was the last surviving student of Dr. Doddridge, for whom he retained to his last day the strongest affection. He survived until the year 1813, when he died at the age of nearly 90 years, having been disabled from regular public service for almost twenty years. [270]

Mr. Denny was born at Barby, a small village in Northamptonshire. Having pious parents, he was from a child the subject of religious impressions. Serving an apprenticeship at Lutterworth, the preaching of the Gospel he heard there deepened and ripened these impressions, so that he was led at an early age to make a solemn dedication of himself to God as his Creator and Redeemer.

He was recommended to an eligible mercantile situation in the metropolis; but a peculiar coincidence of circumstances rendered his application unsuccessful, and, as he had long felt a great desire to devote himself to the work of the ministry, and that desire having been confirmed by his attendance while in London on the labours of Mr. Whitefield, the sacred flame of holy zeal was so enkindled in his breast, that from an ardent concern to honour his Saviour in the conversion of sinners, he now consecrated himself to this work. Being introduced to the notice of Dr. Doddridge, he kindly and cordially received him under his tuition. Though there was a great disparity between him and his tutor in talents and acquirements, yet there was a great resemblance in Christian affection, holy zeal, and ardent piety; and such was his regard to the "dear Doctor," as he generally styled him, that he often mentioned his name and his excellencies with the tear glistening in his eye. [271]

He was placed in two situations as minister after leaving the academy before he came to reside at Long Buckby; but here was the scene of the largest portion of his ministerial life, his labour, and his success; and at one particular time, as we have hinted, he was honoured with what was considered as remarkable success. He had been repeatedly complaining of the want of a blessing on his labours, and was greatly discouraged; but he wrestled hard, to use his own expression, by fervent and constant prayer, for a blessing to attend his efforts, and his great Master heard the voice of his supplication. There was an extraordinary revival in the congregation at large; many were awakened to the most serious concern about their everlasting interests; and in the course of two or three years about forty members were added to the Church.

After he had resigned his charge, in consequence of advancing years, he set an attractive example of piety and holy consistency; his lively and spiritual conversation was rendered useful to many. In his intercourse with Christian friends he manifested the supporting and cheering influence of religion under the infirmities of age, affording the most pleasing evidence of its reality and power. He was so remarkable for his kind and affectionate disposition, that he was often compared to the apostle John. He could converse on divine subjects to the last, when his frame was enfeebled and his mental powers weakened. Dr. Watts' Hymns were his constant companions; and those sentiments in them which appear almost too seraphic for common minds, exactly suited the element in which he lived. In his last hours he said, "I shall soon see the blessed, blessed Redeemer, and the dear Doctor Doddridge." When he could no longer speak, he intimated a wish that his finger might be placed on a particular verse in Watts' Hymns. This is the language in which he wished to express the sentiments and feelings of his soul, when his lips could no longer move— [272]

"Dearest of all the names above,  
My Jesus and my God,  
Who can resist thy heavenly love,  
Or trifle with thy blood?"

He died April 13th, 1813, and his remains were interred in the Meeting House he had been the

means of erecting, and near the pulpit he had so long and so usefully filled. Six neighbouring ministers attended his funeral, and one of them, Mr. Gronow, of Weedon, delivered an affecting and suitable address on the occasion. The following Sabbath the funeral sermon was preached by his successor, Mr. D. Griffiths, to a very crowded audience, from Rev. xiv. 13: "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

The immediate successor of Mr. Denny was Mr. Mosely, who came from Atherstone to Buckby, continued here about eight years, and then removed to Hanley, in Staffordshire. It was during the ministry of Mr. Mosely that the present dwelling-house was built for the minister.

Mr. Daniel Griffiths was the next pastor of the Church; he commenced his stated ministry at Buckby March 27th, 1803, and was ordained the 17th of November following, when Mr. Anthony, of Bedford, began the service by prayer and reading the Scriptures; Mr. Horsey, of Northampton, delivered the introductory discourse, asked the questions, and received the confession of faith; Mr. Denny, the former pastor, offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Toller, of Kettering, gave the charge, from 1st Tim. iv. 13-16; Mr. Gill, of Harborough, addressed the people, from Deut. i. 38; Mr. Knight and Mr. Morrell were engaged in the devotional parts of the service; and Mr. Cox, of Clipstone, preached in the evening, from Matt. vi. 33. [273]

The ministry of Mr. Griffiths was continued in this place for thirty-nine years. In the year 1819, the congregation having much increased, the Chapel was considerably enlarged, and a fourth gallery erected, at an expense of more than £300, which was cheerfully defrayed by the people. At the re-opening of the Chapel in September, the late Mr. Toller, of Kettering, preached, and it is supposed to have been the last time that he officiated out of his own pulpit. Mr. Robertson, then of Stretton, in Warwickshire, "preached," observes Mr. Griffiths, "a noble sermon in the evening, from 'All souls are mine.'"

In the year 1825 a new and commodious school-room was erected, by means of a legacy of £50 left by Mr. David Ashby for that purpose; the remainder of the cost being defrayed by the relatives of Mr. Ashby.

Mr. Griffiths resigned his charge on the 19th of December, 1841. He still survives, and, with the remaining strength of declining life, is able to preach once on the Sabbath to assist his son, who is minister at Cannock, in Staffordshire. [274]

After the resignation of Mr. Griffiths, the congregation was supplied for some time chiefly by the students from Spring Hill College; but at length an invitation was given to Mr. Apperly, from Blackburn Academy, who entered on his pastoral duties on the 2nd of October, 1842.

The ministry of Mr. Apperly continued for about ten years. We regret to state that the congregation did not remain in a united or prosperous state; and on the 4th of July, 1852, Mr. Apperly resigned and emigrated to Australia. His friends, as a token of their regard, made him a present of thirty guineas before his departure.

The present number of communicants is near 50. There are 100 children in the Sabbath-schools.

The interest of £230, and the rent of a small close of land, amounting in the whole to about £17 per annum, belong to the place towards the support of the minister for the time being.

A village containing the population there is in Long Buckby, with everything convenient for the worship of God, the ministry of the word, and the instruction of the young, in the commodious Chapel and school-rooms, presents an interesting sphere of labour; and we hope to hear that this cause again revives and extends, under the labours of a devoted and successful pastor.

Mr. F. Evans, of Ulverston, Lancashire, has accepted an invitation to the pastoral office, and was to commence his stated labours here October 31st, 1852.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT POTTERS PURY.

The Independent Church in this place has existed about 160 years; not tracing its origin quite to the earliest days of Nonconformity, but commencing about thirty years after the passing of the "Bartholomew Act." It was not by the immediate operation of that Act, leading an ejected minister to raise a congregation of Nonconformists here, as in many other places, but by its gradual influence, that it led on to the formation of this Church.

At the time of the passing of the Act referred to, in 1662, the village was favoured with the ministry of Mr. Joseph Newell, who was sufficiently conscientious not hastily to submit to the requirements of this Act, for he suffered himself to be ejected from his living, though he subsequently conformed; but the minister by whose labour this Church was formed was the Rev. Michael Harrison, who preached in the parish Church of Caversfield, Bucks, and resided in the

vicarage there, where he had performed the duties of a faithful minister of Christ for a number of years. He became dissatisfied with the terms of conformity; maintained familiar intercourse with evangelical Dissenters; and at length became fully prepared to recede from the Church.

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Dr. Calamy, who was then studying at Oxford, says: "There were at this time monthly fasts appointed by authority, and generally observed very regularly, to implore the divine blessing in order to the success of our forces. At one of these fasts I was at Bicester, and assisted old Mr. Cornish, who was indisposed, at his Meeting House, in the morning; and afterwards walked over to Caversfield, about a mile distant, the Dissenters in a body bearing me company. There I preached in the public Church in the afternoon, and had a crowded Church from the country round. Mr. M. Harrison preached in the Church, of which Mr. Beard was patron; and he lived in the house adjoining. But Mr. Harrison was now from home, in Northamptonshire, where he was gathering a congregation of Dissenters about Potterspurty, designing to quit the Church and settle among them."

Mr. Harrison's efforts were successful; he soon gathered around him some friends, removed to reside amongst them, formed a Congregational Church, and purchased a property, on which he fitted up a place of worship.

When Mr. Harrison removed to Pury, a Mr. John Warr, who formerly lived in the neighbourhood of Caversfield, came with him to enjoy the benefit of his ministry. And connected with this circumstance is another, which will show something of the spirit of the times. "When Mr. Harrison came to Pury, he brought a pulpit with him, which he deemed it necessary to conceal; therefore, to prevent it being known, Mr. Warr, being a shoemaker, contrived to fill it with shoe-pegs, and brought it among his own goods in a waggon from Bicester."

Some property his wife possessed, in the county of Chester, it is supposed was sold, to enable Mr. Harrison to purchase the premises on which his dwelling-house and the Meeting House were fitted up. When the barn which formed the humble Meeting House was prepared, at the request of the people Dr. Calamy preached at the opening, and had a numerous auditory. It should here be observed, that the disinterestedness and sincerity of Mr. Harrison were strikingly evinced by his willingness not only to relinquish his clerical stipend, but to hazard his own private property amongst a people who had never been accustomed to make voluntary efforts for the support of the Gospel ministry. He trusted, however, to the great principles for which he made these sacrifices, and to the faithfulness of their glorious Author; and he did not trust in vain. After labouring here about nineteen years, Mr. Harrison removed in the year 1709, and became the minister of an Independent Church at St. Ives, in the county of Huntingdon, where he continued to labour for many years, and died in January, 1726, leaving two daughters to lament their loss.

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The property at Pury now passed into other hands; for Mr. Harrison, on leaving, sold it to a gentleman in the neighbourhood of London; reserving, however, to the people the pulpit and other fittings of the Meeting House. The congregation for some time rented the place; but subsequently purchased the whole property, and vested it in the hands of trustees.

The immediate successors of Mr. Harrison did not continue long at Potterspurty, and of their labours little is known.

The first of these was the Rev. Mr. Bennett, who, declining to take the pastoral office, soon removed, and was followed by the Rev. Isaac Robinson, who sustained the pastoral office about four years. In 1714, the Rev. Wm. Bushnell was the pastor, and continued to preach here till Michaelmas, 1729, when he left, and removed to Andover, in Herefordshire; and from thence, in 1732, to Nailsworth. He was succeeded at Pury by the Rev. Samuel Taylor.

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The minister of whom we have the fullest account, and whose ministry appears to have been most extensively and permanently useful in this Church, though attended with some eccentricities that diminished its value, was the Rev. John Heywood, who came from Lincoln to this place in 1739. "After preaching here for about twelve months, he was ordained September 25th, 1740; on which occasion Mr. Petto, of Floor, began the service with prayer; Mr. Cartwright, of Long Buckby, prayed before sermon; Mr. Hunt, of Hackney, preached the sermon to the people; Mr. Clark, of St. Alban's, offered the ordination prayer, accompanied with imposition of hands; Dr. Doddridge gave the charge; and Mr. Drake, of Yardley Hastings, concluded with prayer."

When Mr. Heywood passed his examination previous to his ordination, he was required to maintain the following thesis in Latin—"The Scriptures a rule of faith." The manuscript, carefully and curiously written, together with the hymn which he composed to be sung at the ordination, remains to the present day, as a proof of his learning and a specimen of his talents. The ordination hymn, and about forty others which he composed for the use of his congregation, were afterwards published, dedicated to Dr. Doddridge, with whom Mr. Heywood was on intimate terms, and to whom he expresses himself as under very great obligations.

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At the time of this settlement the Church appears to have consisted of fifty-seven members, of whom fifteen had been admitted by Mr. Harrison, one by Mr. Robinson, twenty-four by Mr. Bushnell, and nineteen by Mr. Taylor.

The following Church covenant was drawn up by Mr. Heywood, which is agreed to by all who join the Church:—

1. We avouch the Lord this day to be our God, and ourselves to be his people, in the truth and sincerity of our hearts.
2. We call heaven and earth, angels and men, to witness this day that we recognize our baptismal covenant, and give up ourselves to God the Father, Son, and Spirit, as our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten.
3. We do bind ourselves, in the presence of God, to walk together in his ways; to attend upon his word and ordinances of his grace; resolving to cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to him alone, for pardon and salvation.
4. We do sincerely promise, through divine assistance, to make the glory of God our aim and end; to watch against everything that would offend God, grieve his Holy Spirit, and bring a reproach upon the good way of God.
5. We solemnly promise to walk with all our fellow Christians with all humility and tenderness; to love one another, even as Christ has loved us, and given himself for us; to avoid jealousies, suspicions, backbitings, censurings, provokings, secret risings of spirit against them; to bear and forbear, to give and forgive, as our dear Lord has taught us.
6. At all times we desire, by the help of divine grace, to watch against everything that would offend our fellow Christians, and promise to be willing to submit to the advice and council of our minister and fellow Christians.
7. We promise to behave with all possible loyalty and allegiance to his sacred Majesty King George, and to pray for him and all his royal family, that God may bless them, and confound all the designs and blast the counsels of all his enemies, both at home and abroad. [280]
8. We promise to cultivate the duties of the closet, and to promote family prayer, that God may dwell with us and bless us, and all that are dear to us. We also promise to abound in the strict sanctification of the Lord's-day, and to bring all we can under the droppings of God's sanctuary. And all this we promise, not in our own strength and power, but in the name and strength of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whose blood we desire this covenant may be sprinkled.

Such was the active spirit and ardent zeal of Mr. Heywood, that he engaged in an extensive range of itinerant labour, not only in the villages in which his predecessors had preached, but in many and more remote places, where, but for his abundant efforts, the Gospel would have been unknown. He kept a journal of all the places in which he preached. Great prosperity in the Church appeared to be the result of these zealous and faithful labours. Mr. Heywood addressed a pastoral letter, on "the nature and importance of regeneration," to the Church and congregation, which are represented as residing in about twenty places around Potterspurty, the names of which are given. In this wide sphere of pastoral labour, Mr. Heywood used to travel for many years on an old grey horse, which often stumbled, and sometimes fell; but he, nothing injured or dismayed, would prosecute his journey with his waistcoat open, and the long ends of his neckcloth streaming in the wind, while his tall lank figure, his slovenly appearance, and his too often despised employment, caused him to be regarded by many as among the most eccentric of men. This impression was doubtless increased by the colloquial style of his village discourses, in which he often condescended to employ the most common provincial expressions. The excellent Mr. Robins, in his memoir of Mr. Strange, of Kilsby, speaks of Mr. Heywood as "that singular gentleman, much more famed for his zeal than for the prudence or propriety of his conduct." [281]

But he made suitable preparation for his more stated labours, and preserved his taste for classical and polite literature; a great many sermons, beautifully written in a peculiar kind of long hand, prove the former, while his association with noblemen of patriotic and classical minds in the neighbourhood proves the latter. His Grace the Duke of Grafton not only condescended to visit him, but gave him free access to his library at Wakefield, as he did also his immediate successor. The Duke was in principle a Dissenter, and in sentiment a Unitarian. Though his Grace differed widely from both Mr. Heywood and his successor, he was very kind to them both; he once, at least, attended at the Meeting at Pury, and till the time of his death subscribed £10 a year to the support of the cause. His subscription was continued some time after his death, but withdrawn at the decease of the Rev. Isaac Gardner.

But Earl Temple, the noble proprietor of Stowe, formed a much closer intimacy with Mr. Heywood; his classic wit, sound learning, and inflexible patriotism, induced his Lordship to spend much time in the company of this worthy pastor. On the death of George II., he preached and printed a sermon on the occasion, which he dedicated to his noble friend. An amusing anecdote in connexion with this nobleman is related of Mr. Heywood, in the following words:—

Soon after the accession of George III., as was usual on such occasions, the Dissenting body went up to the throne with an address of congratulation. Mr. Heywood, who was known to them, went up with them; but when he came into the Royal Palace at St. James's, he happened to see there his friend Earl Temple, with whom he immediately entered into conversation. Nothing could equal the vexation of the London ministers, when they saw Mr. Heywood enter the room at Dr. Williams's library, where they were assembled to go to the Royal Palace, nor their surprize at finding that he was the only [282]

one of their number who had a friend at Court; for their plain-looking country brother had no sooner entered than he was recognized by Earl Temple. While Mr. Heywood was conversing with the noble Earl, the ministers were admitted to his Majesty's presence, kissed hands, and were in the act of returning, which being perceived by Earl Temple, he suggested to Mr. Heywood the danger of losing the opportunity he came to enjoy. Mr. Heywood instantly turned round, and passing by his brethren who were returning, called out to the King, as he retired from the throne, "Stop, please your Majesty, stop! I have come all the way from Potterspurty to kiss your Majesty's hand, and I hope I shall be allowed the honour." The King, with all that excellency of disposition for which he was remarkable, turned round and presented his hand. Mr. Heywood gave it two or three hearty kisses, adding, "God bless your Majesty! and I hope you will make a good King."

Scenes and associations like these, however, formed but parentheses in the history of this devoted man, whose general occupation in the instruction of the young, village preaching, and pastoral visits, secured him more satisfaction, and doubtless more honour too, than the noblest friendships earth could have supplied. Scarcely a Church-meeting was held without some addition to the society through his useful labours. It appears that during the many years he was pastor, there was not more than one person suspended from Church fellowship for improper conduct.

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Mr. Heywood was unfortunate in his marriage relation, and for twenty-eight years endured all the painful consequences of not taking heed to "marry in the Lord"; his home was uncomfortable, his work as a minister of the Gospel often impeded, and its difficulties increased. The violence of disposition, equalled only by the selfishness, of his wife, formed quite a contrast to the amiableness and liberality of his own. The effects of this unsuitable union were partly apparent in his neglected person and comfortless appearance; but what his spirits suffered from it was known only to God, to whom it was presented in the many prayers he offered up on her account. These prayers were ultimately answered, and in the year 1768 he had the great happiness to receive her into the Church of which he was pastor.

Other domestic afflictions came upon him; particularly the loss of a beloved and only son, who, having evinced true piety from his earliest years, was devoted to the ministry, and studying with Dr. Ashworth, at Daventry; when on the 3rd of May, 1762, he was drowned while bathing, in the eighteenth year of his age. The pressure of these afflictions, together with the effects of unremitting labour and frequent exposure to wet and cold in his village excursions, began to show themselves in his constitution, and his health and strength declined. His dread, however, of being an idle servant, induced him to continue his efforts to the utmost extent. At length he was obliged to relinquish all public engagements but those of his own pulpit, for which he soon became unequal; but when he could no longer ascend the desk or walk to the Meeting House, he insisted on being carried there, and, seated in one of the aisles, like the beloved Apostle he continued to exhort his people to come to Christ. His great affection and solicitude for children and young persons was always displayed; and when confined to his bed in his last sickness, this anxiety did not forsake him, for he would have the young people of his charge assembled in interesting groups around his bed-side, and, after addressing them with much Christian feeling, he desired them to kneel down that he might lay his hands upon them, with fervent petitions for the divine blessing to rest upon them. At length, while surrounded by a few of his chosen friends, to whom he bore a peaceful testimony of the grace of Christ, he fell asleep in the Lord on the 1st of January, 1778. His venerable friend, the Rev. William Bull, of Newport, preached his funeral sermon.

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Whilst this excellent man displayed at times an eccentric manner, and there might be something imprudent connected with his zeal, yet his excellent temper, disinterested labours, sound learning, and true piety, secured for him the respect and veneration of many; and the formation of several flourishing congregations, and the conversion of many souls, prove that he did not labour in vain.

As might have been expected, when Mr. Heywood's village labours decreased, the Church and congregation became much reduced, and it required the services of a young and devoted man to revive the declining interest.

Mr. John Goode, a student at Newport Academy, had assisted Mr. Heywood before his death, and he was invited to become the pastor, and was ordained October 24th, 1782, when his tutor, Mr. Bull, gave him the charge, from 1st Kings xx. 11: "Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast as he that putteth it off." The declining congregation was greatly revived; for though Mr. Goode did not attempt to fill the whole sphere of labour which his predecessor occupied, yet he preached in all the principal places. A decisive proof of his success remains in the present Meeting, and the pastoral house adjoining. The old Meeting House, which had originally been a barn or out-building belonging to what was called "Padder's Farm," and in which the congregation had assembled from its first establishment, was now pulled down with the old house adjoining, in which Mr. Harrison and his successors had resided. The present Meeting House and Parsonage were erected on the site, and the former was opened for public worship by Mr. Bull on the 9th of August, 1780.

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Mr. Goode was born at Buckingham, March 26th, 1754. He served a regular apprenticeship to an apothecary there. During his early days, Buckingham Church was favoured with the ministry of the excellent Rev. David Simpson, afterwards of Macclesfield, well known as the author of the

'Plea for Religion and the Holy Scriptures.' Mr. Goode and his brother, afterwards the Rev. William Goode, the successor of the celebrated Romaine, at Blackfriars, were brought to the knowledge of the truth under the ministry of Mr. Simpson. When brought earnestly to attend to his own salvation, he had a lively and anxious solicitude after the salvation of others. He was in the habit of rising early, and, accompanied by a few young friends, going to preach in some of the neighbouring cottages, and then returning to his daily duties at the time of commencing business. He also frequently met a few friends in the evening at a private house for prayer, and the exhortations he then delivered appear to have been made useful to many, who lived to exemplify the power of religion. It is a pleasing fact, which deserves to be recorded in connexion with this little social meeting, that the great Head of the Church was at this time training up three of its members to occupy important stations of usefulness in distinct portions of his vineyard—the subject of this account, his brother (afterwards the clergyman of Blackfriars), and the Rev. James Hinton, for many years the highly-esteemed and useful pastor of the Baptist Church in the city of Oxford. [286]

Mr. Goode determined on devoting himself to the work of the ministry, entered the academy at Newport, and from thence came to Pury, where he continued for fourteen years. The Duke of Grafton favoured Mr. Goode with many marks of kind attention and friendship. An epistolary correspondence which passed between them at different times is still preserved, which, while it illustrates the liberal and condescending respect of the nobleman, exhibits the consistent though gentlemanly demeanour of the Christian pastor, availing himself of any opportunity that offered to do good. At length Mr. Goode removed to London: the Church at White Row, deprived by death of a popular and excellent minister, the Rev. Mr. Trotman, invited Mr. Goode to become their pastor. This removal was very unfavourable to the Church and congregation at Pury; a sad state of trials and difficulties was soon experienced. At White Row Mr. Goode continued to labour for thirty years, during a considerable portion of which he had a large congregation, and was the instrument of conversion and edification to many. In the latter part of his ministry, in consequence of removals and deaths, it was much reduced; but in the year 1819 there were 150 members in communion. [287]

After the removal of Mr. Goode, the members of this Church who resided at Towcester, deeming it more expedient to form themselves into a separate Church than continue their attendance at Pury, five miles distant, were dismissed from this connexion for this purpose, which was the commencement of the Independent Church in that town.

The Rev. George Vowell, of Homerton Academy, was invited as a candidate for the pastoral office after Mr. Goode's removal, and entered upon his labours here. He had not long resided at Pury before he was married to Miss Hall, the only child of Mr. Abraham Hall, a gentleman of considerable reputation and property, in Aldermanbury, London; but not many weeks after this, symptoms of a rapid decline made their appearance, and terminated his short but honourable life, November 20th, 1795, aged 23 years.

The Rev. Stephen Morrell preached here for some months, and afterwards settled at Kilsby.

Early in 1795, Rev. William Whitefoot preached for several Sabbaths; but as his doctrinal sentiments were not approved by all the congregation, he withdrew to Hanslope, and with him the members of the Church who resided there seceded, and in that village a separate cause was attempted.

During the two following years, the Rev. Messrs. Savage, May, and Saunders preached as candidates, but no permanent arrangements were concluded. In September, 1798, the Rev. E. White was invited as a candidate for the pastoral charge; and in March, 1799, the Church, which had by this time fallen into a very low state, was re-organized under his direction, there being only eight of the members then remaining united together out of forty-seven which had belonged to the Church under Mr. Goode's ministry; five others were admitted at the time of the re-organization. Mr. White continued to preach at Pury till October, 1800, when he finally declined accepting a call to the pastoral office, and removed to Hertford, where he was ordained in April, 1801. He ultimately went to Chester, and died there May 5th, 1811. [288]

During the time the Church and congregation were in this low condition no person took a more lively interest in their affairs than the Rev. Samuel Greathead, of Newport; he not only frequently preached to them and administered the Lord's Supper, but suggested to them such plans as were likely, through the blessing of God, to revive the interests of religion among them. In 1805 he recommended to them the Rev. Isaac Gardner, then preaching at Newport, in Essex, as a person likely to suit them as a pastor. Mr. Gardner came to reside among them, and it was hoped that the time had come for God again to favour this part of his Zion; but Mr. Gardner's age rendered him incapable of the exertions required, and during the sixteen years he remained at Pury his infirmities were such as to render him more fit for a station of comparative ease than for one requiring all the zeal and activity of youth. During the ministry of Mr. Gardner another Church was formed at Stony Stratford, which drew off some of the best subscribers, and left but few to uphold the mother Church; but about this time a Mr. Smith, one of the friends to this Church, left £100, the interest to be paid to the minister for the time being for ever.

Mr. Gardner died on the 21st of October, 1821, in the 67th year of his age. A small neat tablet, by the side of the pulpit, marks the spot where his remains are deposited. [289]

Again the Church was supplied from the Newport Academy, and the Rev. James Slye, one of the students, was invited to become the pastor. He succeeded Mr. Gardner in 1823, and was

ordained on the fifteenth day of June, 1825, on which occasion the Rev. James Pinkerton, of Weedon, began with reading the Scriptures and prayer; the Rev. E. Barling, of Buckingham, delivered the introductory discourse, and asked the usual questions; the Rev. D. W. Aston, of Buckingham, offered the ordination prayer; the Rev. T. P. Bull, of Newport, gave the charge, from Phil. i. 17; the Rev. William Chapman, of Greenwich, preached to the people, from 2nd Cor. v. 18; and the Rev. T. Adkins, of Southampton, concluded with prayer.

Mr. Slye's settlement was attended with a happy revival in the congregation; two new galleries were soon after erected for the accommodation of the children of the Sabbath-school; and in 1826, the room in which the evening lecture had been carried on (Yardley Gabion) being found too small to contain the increased attendance, a new Chapel was erected, in which service is regularly conducted on the Sabbath evening. Mr. Slye still fills the office of pastor here, and continues his acceptable and useful services amongst this people. The report of the North Bucks Association, to which this Church belongs, states "that at Potterspurty the attendance is still good, and there is reason to believe the word is not preached without effect. The Sabbath-school continues in an encouraging state. This place has been visited during the past year by a deputation from the Missionary Society, and the sum of £16. 16s. 3d. has been transmitted to the funds of that institution. Grafton and Alderton are supplied from this Church as formerly, at both of which places the attendance is good. The present number of Church members is 65. There are 130 children in the Sabbath-school. In 1846, two new school-rooms were erected. Services are conducted in three villages in the vicinity."

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Thus this Church has been preserved to the present time, through changing circumstances and many difficulties; yet the name of the Redeemer is still honoured among them, and vital Christianity promoted.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT YARDLEY HASTINGS.

The name of this village is familiar to many of the lovers of poetry from Cowper's celebrated lines on "Yardley Oak," standing in "Yardley Chase," about a mile and a half from the village.

A stranger paying a visit to Yardley might have his attention excited by the appearance of a large and beautiful stone building, as an Independent Chapel, with a respectable minister's house on the south side of the Chapel, and spacious school-rooms on the north. The whole of the buildings, standing on an elevation and being enclosed by a wall and ornamental iron railing, add much to the appearance of the village.

It would be highly gratifying to any friend to Dissenting Churches to be able to tell from what small beginnings this rose, who commenced an Independent interest here, what difficulties were overcome, what trials were borne, and with what success the efforts were crowned. But in these respects disappointment meets us. Those who first laboured here, and laid the foundation of this Church, were more anxious, we presume, to have their services approved and recorded on high, than to secure a record of them to be handed down to their successors in the Church below. We think it would have been wiser if they had left us some written memorials of the labours in which they engaged, and of the blessing that attended them, not for our gratification merely, but for our encouragement and improvement.

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The earliest trust deed of a Meeting House at Yardley is dated 1719, and it speaks of the building as having been recently erected. The first notice that we have been able to find of a stated minister in this place occurs in the certificate of Doddridge's ordination at Northampton, in 1730. One of the signatures to that document is Mr. J. Drake, of Yardley. The same name occurs in a certificate which we have seen, preserved in the handwriting of Doddridge, of the ordination of the Rev. W. Hextal, at Creaton, in 1738. Mr. Drake was also present at the ordination of Mr. Haywood, of Potterspurty, in the year 1740, and he also officiated in the ordination service and signed the certificate of the late Rev. W. Bull, of Newport, in October, 1766. Thus we learn that he was for a considerable number of years minister of this place. It was also stated by the late Mr. Bull, that during the latter years of his life he resided at Olney, was pastor of the Independent Church there, and was accustomed to preach one part of the Sabbath at Yardley, and the other part at Olney.

About the year 1782, the Church at Yardley, being destitute of a minister, requested Mr. Thomas Raban, of Olney, to render them his assistance. After supplying them with acceptance for some time, he was invited to become their pastor, and was ordained in 1783. There are some interesting particulars preserved of the character and labours of Mr. Raban, which we shall briefly present to the reader. He was born at Turvey, in the county of Bedford—the village that was for years distinguished by the ministry of Legh Richmond, and by the results of his ministry leading to the formation of an Independent Church in that place. Mr. Raban was apprenticed at Olney, where he first heard the truths of the Gospel from Mr. Moses Brown, author of 'Sunday Thoughts,' then the vicar of Olney. When about ten years of age, he was deeply convinced of sin, and guided to the Saviour of sinners. He became a stated hearer and an affectionate friend of Mr.

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Brown's, and joined in communion with the Church. He had occasional opportunities of hearing Mr. Whitefield, and to his dying day he retained the savour of the truths which that eminent servant of Christ delivered. Speaking of Mr. Whitefield, he would say, "I once had the honour of having him hang on my arm; and, to be sure, I thought myself the happiest of men:" at another time—"I attended him as a guide to a village where he was going to preach, to my unspeakable gratification." He sometimes also attended Mr. Hervey's ministry, and would speak of his sermons with renewed satisfaction and delight to the end of his life. About the year 1778, in conjunction with an intimate friend, he began to exhort at prayer-meetings attended by members of the establishment. They persevered in this practice for some time solely with the view of being serviceable to their fellow Christians in that neighbourhood; though the Lord, by this step, was preparing them for spheres of usefulness in another direction, and the great Bishop of Souls soon found employment for both of them. This friend of Mr. Raban's was Mr. Perry, who afterwards became minister at Wollaston.

When Mr. Raban had accepted the invitation to Yardley, he was much devoted to the spiritual interests of his flock; but having a numerous family, he continued at Olney, following his occupation as a mechanic or builder. This enabled him to serve his flock with scarcely any reward but their affections and their prayers. In addition to his labours at Yardley, he preached lectures in different places; and it is worthy of remark, that he was the first Dissenting minister who established a lecture at Woburn, Bedfordshire, where there is now a settled congregation. [294]

Several remarkable escapes from danger and death were experienced by Mr. Raban. On one occasion, being in an unfinished building two stories high, his foot slipped and he fell to the ground and pitched upon an axe, the edge of which stood upright; it cut his hat, but missed his head, and he sustained little or no injury. At another time, a large piece of timber, on which he had set his foot, heaved up and fell with him into a saw-pit, and an anvil of a hundred pounds' weight, connected with the wood, fell upon him; but it only bruised his leg, which was soon healed. There was another still more remarkable preservation which he had to record. As he was assisting in raising a beam in a mill, the rope slipped, when the beam, under which he stood, fell with him from a height of four stories; but though much injured by the fall, his life was wonderfully preserved. At another time, he was driving a team with a load of hay down a narrow lane, when, by attempting to get on the other side of the waggon, he was thrown under the wheel; but he had the presence of mind to call to the horses to stop, which they did in a moment, and thus he was once more saved from instantaneous death. Such deliverances must have deeply affected the heart of a good man, and have led him with some deep emotion to say, with the Psalmist, "who redeemeth our life from destruction." But within the last month of his existence, the truth of Cowper's beautiful lines were exemplified— [295]

"Safety consists not in escape  
From dangers of a frightful shape;  
An earthquake may be bid to spare  
The man that's strangled by a hair."

On Lord's-day, May 9th, he was engaged in preaching at Woburn. After service, when leaving a friend's house, his foot slipped over a pebble—he fell, and found his right leg was broken; and that was the means of bringing him to the end of his life, on the 31st of the same month.

"In his person," it is said, "Mr. Raban was tall, being full six feet high, of an athletic habit, and of regular features. His perceptions were quick, his memory strong, his spirit ardent and undaunted, mingled with a good degree of patience and perseverance; in fine, he enjoyed the union of those good qualities which rendered his life highly serviceable and honourable in the situation where infinite wisdom had placed him."

The Rev. William Bull, of Newport, preached his funeral sermon, at Yardley, from 2 Chron. xxxii. 33 ("And all Judah and Jerusalem did him honour at his death"), in which he gave the following account of Mr. Raban's character and ministry:—

It may appear needless for me to dwell upon the character of your deceased pastor, to persons who have known him so many years; but I believe very few, except his own family, were so intimately acquainted with him, either as a man, a Christian, or a minister. He had long been accustomed to open his mind freely to me; and I have remarked, that those who best knew him esteemed him most; so I am conscious the more I saw of his heart the stronger affection I felt for him. Few persons have filled up a greater variety of relations in life than our departed friend. Early habituated to business, his increasing family and peculiar circumstances led him into complicated scenes of worldly engagements, all of which, to the best of my knowledge, he discharged with unblemished integrity and uncommon disinterestedness. In such a situation, I believe, no man ever lived wholly without censure, much less a real Christian, and least of all a minister of the Gospel. Envy is sure to attack such a character on one side or the other. Failings, from which the best of men are never exempt, are often in such cases dwelt upon with pleasure, if not magnified with diligence. However, I can truly say, that scarcely any man I know had fewer or smaller faults than my late dear friend. Whatever they were, they may now properly be buried with him, while his good works, in which he abounded to the glory of God and the good of men, have followed him to another world. His disposition as a man was peaceable, loving, and friendly. His weeping family bear testimony to his peculiar tenderness and love, both as a husband and parent. It is my duty to unite with his friends in speaking of [296]



that kindness and disinterestedness with which he administered every service in his power to all who enjoyed his familiar friendship. I do not doubt but the town of Olney will miss and lament him, and so will this Church and congregation; and I am sure several ministers of the Gospel will feel the wound deeply.

His hope of salvation was firmly grounded on the Lord Jesus Christ; his views of the Gospel were evangelical and clear; his experience deep and lively; and his desires after real holiness of heart and life were steadfast and influential. While from the first of his separation from the Established Church he was conscientious and firm in his dissent, no person was ever more removed from bigotry towards any party. He was friendly and affectionate to pious people, and useful to the encouragement of ministers whose judgment in trivial matters differed from his own. Seldom has the loss of one individual been so deeply and affectionately felt as his will be, on this account. An earnest desire to be useful to those about him strongly marked all his actions, whether it respected their temporal or their spiritual concerns. It is no wonder, therefore, that he took peculiar delight in preaching that free grace which he himself had tasted and enjoyed. To this his congregation can bear a decided testimony; and I hope, my dear friends, you will prove your love to the Gospel which so long has been freely preached to you, by your exertions for its continuance now your worthy pastor is no more. "Remember him who has had the rule over you, whose faith follow, considering the end of his conversation." He is gone to give an account of his ministry; and very soon you must follow him, to give your account of the use and abuse you have made of his labours of love. How happy are those who went before him to glory! and how happy will it be for you, if you follow after!

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As to his family, prudence tenderness and love say, Be sparing. I commit them all to the support of his Lord and their Lord, to his God and their God. His dying prayer for his son in the ministry was, that he might be kept in a humble and faithful attachment to the truths of the Gospel; and to this I add my hearty Amen!

Upon the whole, there might be some things in his example for us to avoid; but I am sure there were many for us to imitate. His happy spirit is now doubtless before the throne, enjoying the friendship of his companion and fellow labourer, Mr. Perry. Now their labours are ended, in the enjoyment of that "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

"There, on a green and flowery mount,  
Their weary spirits sit,  
And with transporting joy recount  
The labours of their feet."

The next minister who was placed over this people was Mr. John Hoppus, who accepted an invitation to the pastoral office, and was ordained in May, 1804. Mr. Hoppus was born in London, 1761; and becoming early acquainted with real religion, he joined the Church under the care of the Rev. W. Bennett, Moorfields, availing himself also, on suitable occasions, of the pulpit instructions of the Rev. Messrs. Newton and Romaine; and the Rev. Rowland Hill greatly attracted his admiration, on account of his fervent and zealous address. He sympathized with that school of Christians which sprung from the labours of Whitefield, whose letters, detailing his labours in Britain and America, were always perused by Mr. Hoppus with delight. The very name of their author was sufficient to animate him to earnest conversation, when oppressed by bodily affliction and declining years. Indeed, such was his admiration of the zealous spirit of Whitefield, as recorded in his history, that to feel and to express the same sentiment in the hearing of Mr. Hoppus was one of the readiest avenues to his friendship. While engaged in business, he became connected with the London Itinerant Society, preaching in many places in the vicinity of the metropolis; and his labours proved very acceptable and useful. The following remarkable instance is deserving of notice: "When he was preaching on one occasion at Lewisham, a lady who through domestic trouble was resolved on suicide, and was on her way to commit the deed, passed the door of the place where Mr. Hoppus was at that moment speaking of the sin of Judas, who "went out, and hanged himself." Hearing the preacher's voice, she entered, was much struck with his earnest manner, and applied the subject to her own case. She told him, in a subsequent interview, that he had been the means of saving both body and soul."

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Mr. Hoppus at length resigned his business, to devote himself entirely to the work of the ministry. He removed to Newport Pagnell, to avail himself of the advantages of the academical institution there, under the care of the Rev. W. Bull. While there, he was highly esteemed by his worthy tutor, his fellow students, and many of the good people in the town and neighbourhood.

He had several invitations to the pastoral office, but declined the others to accept the one he received from Yardley, though the cause was then in so low a state that the Church consisted of only nine members, and the congregation of about forty hearers. But it was soon found necessary to erect a gallery, and remodel the interior of the Chapel; and as there was no house suitable for the minister, a commodious one was erected adjoining the Chapel, by the liberal permission of the Marquis of Northampton, the ground landlord.

Mr. Hoppus was a devoted village pastor; he paid great attention to the young, and a weekly meeting was held at his house on Saturday evenings, for the catechetical instruction and the encouragement of those young persons who appeared religiously disposed. He excelled in

pastoral visitation; was much in the habit of introducing religious conversation in families, and in the work-rooms of the lacemakers. He endeavoured to extend the knowledge of the Gospel to the villages around him. For many years he preached on stated evenings in the week at Denton, Easton, and Grendon, as well as at Yardley, beside visiting other places. Sometimes he conducted services in the open air. He had a very happy method of dropping a word of religious advice to persons whom he accidentally saw at their worldly calling: in this he was very useful, not only in conciliating the minds of some, but often of implanting deep and permanent impressions.

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In the year 1813, in the midst of great pastoral success, a fire broke out, which destroyed many houses in the village; and the Chapel also was destroyed, which had stood nearly a century. This grievous trial would have overwhelmed a mind of less energy and enterprise, as the people at Yardley were totally unable to defray the expense of a new building. Mr. Hoppus, however, immediately set about the arduous task of appealing to Christian benevolence, and after many months of unwearied labour raised a sufficient sum in the adjacent counties and the metropolis to erect a Chapel of twice the size of the other place. A gallery was afterwards added, to accommodate a still increasing congregation.

But during a pastorate of thirty years, he had to share in some of the trials of the faithful minister. He often lamented that his hands were not more strengthened by the conversion to God of such as might have proved influential in discountenancing vice and immorality by an exemplary life, in consequence of their better circumstances. In some cases his fidelity gave offence.

After having been accustomed, till his seventy-second year, to preach three times on the Sabbath, increasing infirmities induced him to resign the pastoral office. The last time he preached at Yardley was on May 4th, 1834; and he administered the Lord's Supper to his late charge only a few weeks before his death.

In the latter years of his life Mr. Hoppus often appeared to enjoy much happiness in religion, and when unable to sleep would speak much and fervently of the great truths of the Gospel, and the glorious anticipations of believers. He would repeat many Scripture passages and hymns from which he derived comfort and edification. It was often evident to those around him that his mind was maturing for the great and blissful change that awaited him. He had recovered from an attack of indisposition, and still appeared to retain a portion of the vigour of his naturally fine constitution. On the 30th of August, 1837, he had taken some exercise in his garden, and in the evening had prayed in his family as usual; but he had not long retired to rest before he was heard to breathe deeply twice, apparently in sleep. His appearance indicated what proved to be the event. Medical aid was called in, but the vital spark had fled. Thus, in his seventy-seventh year, did this servant of God obtain what he had for years desired might be granted him in death, "an easy dismissal."

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Mr. Hoppus was interred in the burial-ground of the Chapel. The funeral sermon was preached, according to the long expressed wish of the deceased, by his esteemed friend, the Rev. T. P. Bull, from a text chosen by himself—1 Cor. xv. 58.

Mr. Hoppus's labours were eminently disinterested. "I have stated," said Mr. Bull, in his sermon, "that he was in business seven years; and, successful as he was, when his industry, perseverance, and talents for business are considered, if he had continued in it he might have accumulated much wealth. But it was not his object to seek that which has been the ruin of so many; and at Yardley you have seen, my friends, that he 'sought not yours, but you.' As to his life, it is unnecessary to say anything, for you all know his consistency. His views of the Gospel were clear. His religion was that of the heart: it was sterling, rational, and practical, and influenced his life and conduct. He 'travailed in birth for souls.' When he came to Yardley, the place of worship was small, the Church was small, and there was no minister's house. He enlarged the Chapel, built the house; and when the Chapel was burned down, he accomplished the laborious task of collecting, and built this commodious place." "What he did for the cause of Christ at Yardley will remain as his monument to future times."

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These particulars are taken from an account written by Mr. Hoppus's only daughter. His only son is Professor Hoppus, of the London University.

After Mr. Hoppus had resigned the pastoral office, the Rev. J. Bunn succeeded him, commencing his stated labours in January, 1834. He removed to Abergavenny, in Wales, in 1838. During the ministry of Mr. Bunn, two new galleries were added to the Chapel.

The Rev. James Spong, of Newport Pagnell Academy, succeeded Mr. Bunn, becoming pastor in October, 1838. He resigned about the end of 1840.

The Rev. William Todman, the present pastor, took the oversight of the Church and congregation and commenced his labours on the 5th of June, 1842. During the ten years that have elapsed since then, the large and convenient school-rooms have been built adjoining the Chapel, at a cost of nearly £400. In the daily Infant-school there are upwards of 80 children, and in the Sabbath-school 260. Many additions have been made to the Church, and the congregations never were better than at the present time. The number of communicants is about 116. Occasional services are conducted in the villages in the vicinity of Yardley.

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The state of this interest shows what may be done, under the divine blessing, to sustain and advance a Christian society on voluntary principles, in a situation of not the most promising character, by men of a devoted spirit, concerned to promote the glory of the Saviour and the

## CHAPTER XV.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT KILSBY AND CRICK.

The Independent congregation in these places owes its origin, there is reason to conclude, to the labours of ministers ejected by the Act of Uniformity. Mr. Worth, who had been vicar of Kilsby, and Mr. Stephen Fowler, who had been rector of Crick, were useful here, after their ejection. Concerning the former, Palmer states "that he preached for a while, as a Nonconformist, at Daventry and Chipping Norton"; on other authority it is stated that "he also continued to labour at Kilsby." Of the latter we are informed, that "after leaving the Church at Crick, he came to reside at Kilsby; and that, after attending the services of the Church in the day, he repeated a sermon in his own house, in the evening of the Sabbath, to such as chose to attend." The labours of these two devoted ministers of Christ were rendered useful to several families in the village, so that they became attached to the preaching of the Gospel and to the mode of conducting religious worship as it was practised among the Nonconformists.

Of Mr. Worth it is stated that "he had three sons, ministers among the Dissenters"; of Mr. Fowler, that "his rectory at Crick was very valuable, but it proved no temptation to him to conform against his conscience." He was a very popular preacher, and indefatigable in his labours. He died through an excess of hard study and too frequent preaching, as he went to Newbury upon the removal of Mr. John Woodbridge, who was ejected there. We are informed that "he was eminent for the holiness of his life, his zeal and constancy in his work at all times, his great moderation, and many other excellent qualities." [305]

There was also a Mr. Richard Thorpe, ejected from Barby, a village about a mile from Kilsby. Such was his high attainment in the exercise of prayer, that none of the ministers in those parts were thought to excel him. The youth of the village stood in great awe of him, so as to be kept from profaning the Sabbath, as had been too common there. He was so much taken up with spiritual things, that he left all his worldly concerns to the care of a faithful servant. After his ejection, he preached in his own house on Thursdays without molestation.

The separation of these eminent men from the Established Church, and their labours in this vicinity, were the means of bringing some to be decided Nonconformists; but their number for many years was too small to constitute a separate Church, for the support of a pastor, so that they travelled on the Sabbath to attend the Dissenting ministry at Long Buckby and Daventry, and invited the ministers of these places to preach a week-day lecture at Kilsby, in a house licensed for this purpose. Their numbers gradually increased; the room became too small for them; they purchased another house, and fitted it up as a place to be appropriated to religious worship. This was in the year 1738. When this was done, the ministers of Daventry and Buckby engaged to preach to them alternately on the Sabbath morning. The number of hearers still increased, so that early in the year 1750 they built a gallery for the further accommodation of the people. [306]

At this time they had attained to such a degree of strength as to indulge the thought of having a stated pastor over them. In the latter part of this year, with the hearty concurrence of the ministers by whom the lecture had been preached, they invited Mr. Thomas Strange to minister amongst them, with a view to a settlement. After a suitable trial, the following invitation to the pastoral office was presented to him:—

*Kilsby, June 1st, 1752.*

DEAR AND REVEREND SIR,—We, a Church of Protestant Dissenters in and near this place, have through a remarkable kind providence enjoyed the benefit of your labours for upwards of twelve months to our entire satisfaction, and we hope, through the blessing of God, to our advantage. And, sir, as your religious sentiments, piety, zeal, and ministerial ability afford an encouraging prospect of your usefulness, it appears to us very desirable that you would now, sir, enter into the relation of a pastor to us, in which request you may depend upon our unanimity, and our endeavour to make your situation comfortable and useful, by our constant prayers and all other means proper to us as private Christians, who are, sir, your cordial friends and most humble servants. (Signed by thirty-two names.)

This invitation Mr. Strange accepted; and though the numbers, the place of worship, and the accommodations he found were unusually defective, yet he went with the noble resolution of exerting all his powers for the increase and improvement of his humble charge; and his exertions were uncommonly great, prudent, and successful.

Mr. Strange was born at Evenley, in the county of Northampton. When he was about six years of age his father was removed by death; but the father had discerned in his son, at that early age, such a thoughtful spirit as led him to express a wish that he might in after life become a Christian [307]

minister. As he grew up, to obtain good books was his greatest aim; and when he had obtained a new one, he would scarcely allow himself time for his meals. He would conduct family worship at sixteen years of age, with great seriousness and propriety. On the family removing to Shelston, near Buckingham, he formed an intimate acquaintance with Mr. Boughton, afterwards a fellow student with him, and subsequently minister at Buckingham. These two friends, in the ardour of their youthful zeal, walked ten miles on the Lord's-day to hear Mr. Haywood, of Potterspurty, and became members of his Church. Mr. Strange felt a great desire to be devoted to the work of the ministry, but could see no prospect of attaining that desire. But his mother mentioned the subject to Mr. Hayward; he introduced it to Dr. Doddridge, who, with his usual generosity and zeal, kindly engaged to procure for such a youth all necessary supplies during his academical course. He entered the academy at Northampton in 1745, and continued there for six years, and then entered on his ministry at Kilsby, where he pursued his labours as a Christian pastor till near the end of his days.

The following is a copy of Mr. Strange's certificate of ordination:—

*Kilsby, September 11th, 1753.*

These are to certify whom it may concern, that we whose names are hereunto subscribed, pastors of Churches, having received satisfaction concerning the Rev. Mr. Thomas Strange, as to the regularity of his education, the soundness of his judgment, the seriousness of his temper, and his other qualifications for public service in the ministry, have this day proceeded to set him apart to that work by prayer and imposition of hands, and cordially unite in recommending him to any Church who may need his assistance.

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R. GILBERT.  
JAMES FLOYD, Daventry.  
JOHN DOWLEY, Lutterworth.  
GEORGE HAMPTON, Banbury.  
JOHN HEYWOOD, Potterspurty.  
SAMUEL KING, Welford.  
CALEB ASHWORTH, Daventry.

An unhappy peculiarity in the elocution and gesture of Mr. Strange in the pulpit prevented the popularity to which his other excellencies entitled him; but these defects became so annihilated to his stated hearers by nobler impressions, that they were surprised when strangers were disgusted by them. He generally preached twice at Kilsby and once at Crick on the Lord's-day, and conducted a fourth service either at Barby or Hillmorton, having also to walk about eight miles. The congregations increased under him, so that in two years after his settlement they were obliged to erect two new galleries in the house at Kilsby. In the year 1763 they found it necessary to build a new place of worship. Towards this object they subscribed liberally, for their circumstances, raising amongst themselves £170; and by means of an appeal to other congregations, their plan of building a place at a cost of £400 was accomplished. A plain, commodious, and substantial Meeting House was erected. A few years after, finding the private room in which the meetings at Crick were held very strait and inconvenient, out of an estate settled by Mr. Henfrey on the Dissenting Society Mr. Strange erected a small but decent place of worship there, and about the same time purchased a cottage at Hillmorton, and fitted it up for the same purpose.

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The people purchased the premises adjoining the Chapel for a dwelling-house for their minister, which, by Mr. Strange's skill and industry, were greatly improved. He was one of the most useful and one of the most noble-hearted of village pastors; he catechised the young people of his charge, he visited the afflicted and tried, he kept a Day-school for the benefit of the rising generation, the profits of which he devoted to pious and charitable purposes. As his own family grew up, he admitted six boarders to his house, at twelve guineas per annum and one guinea entrance. Frugality, neatness, and hospitality, were never more perfectly united than in his dwelling. A salary of £40, with the interest of £300, and some occasional benefactions, would hardly admit of a hired servant; Mrs. Strange, therefore, and her daughters, managed the whole business of the family (washing and brewing not excepted), with admirable ease and regularity. Whoever entered, or at whatever hour, no déshabillé, either in the house or inhabitants, no confusion or bustle, was perceived, nor any want of decent accommodation or cordial welcome. No time, no money was wasted; and by this means, little as they possessed of either, they always had some of each to spare at the call of indigence, friendship, or civility. No worthy supplicant or proper visitor left the house complaining; yea, the most concealed wants or distresses of their neighbours seldom escaped the kind vigilance of its inhabitants, or were suffered to remain without some endeavour to alleviate them. Yet, with all this kindness, Mr. Strange found every year a surplus to add to the little stock reserved for his family. He has often been heard to say, "that though when single he could scarcely make both ends meet, since his marriage he had been able to save a few shillings." A higher compliment to Mrs. Strange he could not easily have paid. Indeed, that management must have been truly astonishing, which out of his income, and with his liberality, could lay by, in no long course of years, several hundred pounds for his widow and his four children. The authors of the 'History of Dissenters' say, "let it not be supposed that this was the fruit of niggardly penury; the man was liberal, and had the spirit of a prince."

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He took time by the forelock. On a Monday, though his Sabbath was a laborious day in travelling and preaching, it was his custom to rise an hour or two before the family, to draw out the

schemes of his intended discourses on the ensuing Sabbath, as a directory to his thoughts, reading, and conversation through the week.

When he was getting near to his sixtieth year, his strength greatly declined, and he felt that his end was drawing nigh. In his last affliction he said to some of his brethren who accidentally met at his house, "I have always valued and preached the doctrine of grace, but nothing gives me so much concern, on a review of my ministry, as that I have no more insisted upon and pressed the fruits of grace." When all united in their testimony to the practical strain of his preaching, he added, "as death and eternity draw nigh, I see more than ever I did before the infinite importance of these fruits, and the comparative insignificance of all opinions without them." As to the person of Christ, he desired his flock might be assured that "he died in a firm belief that Jesus Christ was the true and proper Son of God, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; a doctrine," he added, "which I firmly believe, but do not attempt to explain." "I wish to die," he said on another occasion, "a broken-hearted sinner, renouncing everything of my own, and depending entirely for future happiness on the free grace of God, through the atonement and righteousness of Christ." His last words to his surrounding friends were, "Farewell, till the day of the Lord Jesus. The Lord have mercy, spiritual and eternal mercy, on every one of you, upon this congregation, and upon the whole Israel of God. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath a right to take away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" He died September 1st, 1784, aged sixty years.

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Thus lived and died the first pastor of the Independent Church at Kilsby.

Concerning his death, the historians before referred to, say—"the tears and groans of his flock attested the greatness of their loss: it would be, indeed, a less difficult task to find a suitable successor to the see of Canterbury, than to the village of Kilsby." Subsequent events indicate that there is considerable truth in this statement; for though sixty-eight years have passed since the death of Mr. Strange, and Kilsby has had in that period pastors of varied excellence and usefulness, not one has yet been found to live, and labour, and die amongst them after the manner of the first pastor.

The noble-spirited village pastor's wife is worthy of a short record, as we find the following notice of her death, written by the Rev. H. Knight, of Yelvertoft:—

December 12th, 1819, died at Yelvertoft, in the county of Northampton, aged 84, Dorothy, the widow of the late Rev. Thomas Strange, many years Protestant Dissenting minister at Kilsby. She was "an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile." To the last she manifested an ardent attachment to the Redeemer, and a great delight in the ordinances of religion. As her course was holy, so it pleased God that her end should be peaceful. Under the most severe affliction, which terminated her life, she was supported by those words—"The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" from which Mr. Knight preached her funeral sermon. Knowing in whom she believed, and longing to depart that she might be with Christ, she sweetly breathed her spirit into his hands. Her truly amiable spirit, unaffected piety, exemplary conduct, and Christian benevolence, endeared her to all who knew her. "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

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The records of this Church have not been to any extent preserved, so that the numbers that entered into communion during the ministry of Mr. Strange cannot be ascertained; and the names of the subsequent pastors, with the date of their ministry, constitute nearly all that can be now presented.

Mr. Jacob Harwood was ordained here in 1786. He removed to the neighbourhood of Leeds. Mr. H. Gritten was pastor in 1790. Mr. Thomas Gardiner was the next minister, and he left in 1794. Mr. Morrell came in November of that year, and left at Midsummer, 1799. Mr. Thomas Spencer came at Michaelmas in that year, and left in 1805. Mr. Thomas Jones almost immediately succeeded, and removed in 1811. Mr. Morgan followed Mr. Jones, and continued until 1824. Two or three ministers occupied the pulpit successively until 1827. On the 28th of June in that year Mr. Thomas Porter was ordained. Mr. Porter was from the academy at Hackney: at his ordination, Mr. Pinkerton, of Weedon, prayed and read the Scriptures; Mr. Griffiths, of Buckby, delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Hobson, of Welford, offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Collison, Mr. Porter's tutor, delivered the charge; Mr. Scott, of Rowell, preached to the people.

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Mr. Porter resigned his charge at Kilsby, Nov. 10th, 1839, and removed to Godalming, in Surrey.

Mr. James Rees Jones accepted the pastoral charge, and was ordained June 18th, 1840. He removed to Bolton, in Lancashire, in 1851.

#### CRICK.

The connexion between the congregations at Kilsby and Crick continued until the removal of Mr. Morgan, in the year 1824, when fifteen members resident in Crick separated themselves from the Church at Kilsby; and early in 1825 Mr. Bicknell, formerly of Welford, became their pastor. During his ministry, which continued for fourteen years, twenty-three members were added to the Church. He resigned, in consequence of age and infirmity, in 1838.

Mr. Cuzens, the next pastor, commenced his ministry in July of the same year, and left in October, 1841. He admitted eight members to the Church.

Mr. Hall, who succeeded Mr. Cuzens, came in January, 1842, and resigned in September, 1850, removing to Rugeley, in Staffordshire. Twenty-eight members were admitted during the ministry of Mr. Hall.

Mr. Thomas Islip, late of Stamford, ministered here from May, 1851, to January, 1852; since that time, supplies have been obtained. The present number of members is 37. There are 35 children in the Sabbath-school.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT BRIGSTOCK.

In the village of Brigstock, which contains upwards of 1200 inhabitants, an Independent Church was formed about seventy-four years ago. There was a small band of decided Christians, attached to the principles of Nonconformity, who in the year 1778 united together in the faith of the Gospel, to sustain a Christian ministry and to have the ordinances of Christ administered unto them. This took place with the encouragement and advice of some ministers of Christ in their vicinity, who had occasionally preached unto them, and knew the circumstances in which they were placed; but there are some interesting memorials preserved of events which preceded, and which manifestly prepared the way, under the blessing of the great Head of the Church, for the formation of a regular Christian society in this place.

It is stated on satisfactory evidence, that during the time of the Plague in London, a godly tradesman of the name of Leigh retired to this village; and it appears that the piety of this Christian and his family, with the attention they paid to the means of grace among the Nonconformists of the neighbourhood, at Kettering, or at Rowell, with whom they for many years became identified, was gradually the means of awakening the attention of others to the subject of true religion and to the cause of Nonconformity. This presents us with a pleasing example of the useful influence that may be exerted by a Christian household, in exciting attention to the means of grace and the principles of the Gospel in a benighted neighbourhood. As their numbers increased, they attended at different places around them, as it might suit their convenience or their taste, those places being from eight to thirteen miles distant; some of them becoming decided Christians, they united in Christian fellowship with those Churches where they generally attended. Thus things continued until the days of Doddridge's ministry, when some stated services were commenced at Brigstock, of which the following account has been preserved:—

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Many in this place, several years ago, were very desirous of having the Gospel preached amongst them, as they are six miles from Oundle, eight from Kettering, nine from Rowell, and ten from Wellingborough,<sup>[6]</sup> and have bad roads all around us; consequently old people, and such as have large families, could seldom hear the word, these being the nearest places in which it was preached. Therefore they made their case known to the Rev. Mr. Doddridge, and by his means obtained an exhibition from the Independent Fund for the support of a monthly week-day lecture, which was preached for some time by the following ministers, viz.: Messrs. Doddridge, Saunders, Boyce, Hextal, Haywood, and Grant. A blessing attended the word; our numbers greatly increased; many joyfully received the Gospel, and became very desirous of hearing it, if possible, on a Lord's-day. They entered into a subscription for a lecture once a month on Lord's-day, which was the means of enlarging our interest still more. We continued in this state many years, till, having many that we hoped had received the grace of God, we began to think of embodying into a Church, and had it recommended to us by the ministers that used to attend our lecture, especially the Rev. Mr. Addington, who, being providentially cast amongst us for the first time about the year 1774, talked with us particularly upon this subject. What he said appeared to rest on many minds, and convinced us that it was our duty to attend on all the ordinances of Christ: we therefore sought direction and assistance from God in prayer; and after watching for some time the openings of providence, Mr. Hillyard, a member of the Church at Wellingborough, under the pastoral care of Mr. Carver, was recommended as a proper person to be our minister. We took opportunities of hearing him often; and it being always to our satisfaction, we applied to him to come amongst us. We first invited him for a quarter of a year, and when that was expired, for a year, fully approving his gifts and his general views of Christian doctrine and discipline. Thereupon, being desirous to honour Christ, as King and Head of the Church, and to testify our allegiance to him; in hope likewise of the fulfilment of his promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," we desire to give up ourselves and ours to the Lord, to be ruled by his laws and to attend all his ordinances, agreeable to our confession of faith and Church covenant. And after having given ourselves to the Lord, we also give ourselves to one another, by a declaration of God's dealings with us, in a meeting appointed for that purpose, and the mutual giving and receiving the right hand of fellowship.

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Witness our hands, the 4th of March, 1778. (Here follow the names of ten brethren.)

Then, in their Church covenant drawn up and subscribed June 9th of the same year, they say—

We, the professed disciples of Christ, whose names are hereunto subscribed, meeting together for the worship of God in Brigstock, having long enjoyed the means of grace through the favourable indulgence of God towards us, cannot think it will be for the glory of God to continue any longer as scattered individuals, like lambs in a large place, but judge it our duty, both from the openings of providence and from rules lying before us in God's word, to cleave to him with fuller purpose of heart than heretofore we have done, each one for ourselves, and, in the judgment of charity, each one hoping well for each other; and having given ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall never be forgotten, do here, in the presence of God, angels, and men as our witnesses, give each other the right hand of fellowship, binding ourselves by covenant and by oath to walk together according to that order which is, for distinction sake, called Congregational, according to the Abrahamic covenant, including believers and their children, which we find pointed out to us in the New Testament by our Lord Jesus Christ and his holy apostles. Having thus covenanted together under Christ our Sovereign Lord and Head, we look upon it our duty to him solemnly to engage, in his strength, to maintain those truths which are essential to real Christianity, against all opposers whatever, at the expense of our properties and our lives, if God in his providence should call and strengthen us so to do.

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(Then follow the articles of their faith.)

In reference to the commencement of Mr. Hillyard's ministry, who was the first pastor of this Church at Brigstock, we find the following records preserved by the Church at Wellingborough, of which he was a member:—

*March 2nd, 1775.*—The Church was informed that brother Hillyard had given an exhortation to some of the brethren, who should report to the Church their thoughts next meeting.

*May 5th.*—Brother Hillyard exercised his gift before the Church, when it was unanimously agreed that he should continue until the path of duty was more plain.

In 1776, *June 6th*, the Church met by appointment, and sent brother Hillyard to preach whithersoever the Lord is pleased to call him.

In 1778, *May 3rd*, a letter was read from Brigstock, saying that they had formed themselves into a Church, and requested that we would send messengers to behold their faith and order, on the 9th of June. That Church afterwards agreed, by the advice of ministers, to invite brother Hillyard to be ordained their pastor, and for this purpose requested his dismissal.

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He was ordained May 20th, and on this occasion Mr. Toller, of Kettering, Mr. Robins, and Mr. Toller, of London, preached.

Of Mr. Hillyard's early ministrations it is stated, "that they were distinguished by a glowing, holy, and enlightened zeal, accompanied with great modesty and diffidence. He was fully sensible of the disadvantages under which he laboured for want of a more liberal education, yet earnestly desirous of devoting all that he had attained, all that he possessed, to the good of souls and the furtherance of the Gospel. With much regret he was compelled to relinquish his station at Brigstock, on account of the inability of the people to meet the wants of his increasing family. He then settled for a few years at Kimbolton, in Huntingdonshire, until he fixed for the remainder of his life at Olney, in Buckinghamshire, where during forty years he experienced the great goodness of his God and Saviour. He fell asleep on the twelfth of July, 1828, in the eighty-third year of his age. His address was plain, powerful, and pointed. His ministry was abundantly blessed; his place of worship at Olney was enlarged four times."

An unsettled interval, attended with repeated changes, appears to have followed Mr. Hillyard's removal. A Mr. Griffin appears immediately to have succeeded Mr. Hillyard; then Mr. Maurice Phillips was placed here for a short time—he came in the year 1790, when this place became united with Weldon, under one pastor: Mr. Phillips afterwards became tutor of Rotherham College, in connexion with Dr. Williams. Mr. Morgan, from Dr. Williams' academy, was a candidate for one year (1796); Mr. William Bull, for nine months; Mr. Spencer also ministered unto them for one year (1798). About the year 1798 we read, "that Mr. Mitchel was universally approved of, and about being settled with us; but he removed to Leicester, and the hopes of the people were disappointed." It does not appear that any person was settled long as pastor for a number of years. This undoubtedly had a very unfavourable influence as to the numbers in Church fellowship, for the next pastor observes, when he first admitted four members to the Church, "for nearly twenty years there had been no addition to the little band, the result probably of being without a pastor." "The number of communicants at the time of my first dispensing the Lord's Supper was only five, and two of them were members of another religious community. The members of the Church were reduced to eight only, and for some reasons three did not unite with us at the table. O thou Spirit Divine, carry on the work of salvation, that many may first give themselves to the Lord, and then unto us for Christ's sake! 'By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small, but by thee, O Lord?'" Again he wrote—"With gratitude I now look back nine years, and with holy joy my heart exclaims, What has God wrought, through whose blessing the Church has

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increased to upwards of sixty members! This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

Thus wrote Mr. Robert Pickering, who was the next that was settled over them as a minister of Christ.

But during this unsettled interval, a new Meeting House was built. A statement of their case was drawn up, sanctioned by the names of a number of ministers, soliciting aid from the Churches towards this object, dated 1798. In this document they say— [320]

We now have stated supplies, in hopes that the great Head of the Church will send us a pastor that will go in and out before us, and feed our souls with spiritual food. Our numbers being increased to about two hundred, the place which has been rented about fifty years being very small, and we being only tenants at will and under a discharge to quit at Lady-day next, we have been under the necessity of purchasing a house, with ground to it sufficient for the purpose of erecting a new place for public worship, on which we have built a shell, the walls of stone, and covered with slate, to finish which in a plain comfortable manner will cost in the whole expense about £300. We are not able to raise more than £100 amongst ourselves, there being no individual belonging to the congregation of independent fortune; therefore we are obliged to make our case known, and to request the assistance of our friends of other congregations.

By the assistance rendered the building was completed, and the expense ultimately cleared.

It was in the year 1803 that Mr. Pickering, who had been a student at Rotherham College, was introduced to the notice of the congregation at Brigstock; and after ten months' probation, he was publicly ordained to the pastoral office.

Mr. Pickering was born at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, in the county of Leicester, March 12th, 1777. His entrance into a state of spiritual life he dates about the spring of 1794, when he says—

It pleased God to convert me to himself under a sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. Moseley, from Matt. vii. 21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father that is in heaven." I have not much recollection of what was said, but remember that such was the impression made upon my mind that I was much affected: on reaching home, I walked about the garden in much distress. When I reflected upon that heaven of which I had been hearing, I could not help exclaiming, "I shall never reach there." Alarmed at my dreadful state as a sinner, I began to seek after God by prayer and a more constant attendance at the Chapel, and eagerly sought every opportunity of pouring out my heart before him in the closet, the shop, or the field. Nor was it long before God was pleased to break in upon my soul with light and comfort. Soon after, I found great encouragement in a discourse from John vi. 37: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." My experience at that time was not the same as many of God's people. I had not that horror, darkness, and awful dread which some have passed through. No, blessed be Immanuel! he "drew me with the cords of a man, and with bonds of love." [321]

Mr. Pickering became a member of the Church at Atherstone, where he then resided; and soon after this he began to engage in occasional religious services for the benefit of others; and on the 29th of August, 1798, he entered the academy at Rotherham. On the completion of his studies he laboured for a year at Driffield, in Yorkshire; but difficulties arose, which rendered it unsuitable for him to remain. He was invited on probation by the people at Brigstock. "I selected," he says, "as the ground of my first address to the congregation of Brigstock, Rom. i. 16: 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.' To the speaker it was a merciful season, and a time of saving impression to a person who afterwards joined the Church of Christ. In the afternoon I preached at Weldon, and in the evening at Corby." These places combined in promoting the temporal support of the same minister, while they mutually reaped the benefit of his pious labours. For the first twenty years of his ministry Mr. Pickering preached stately at Brigstock and Weldon every Lord's-day, and once a month, in the evening, at Corby also. [322]

On the 21st of June, 1804, he was ordained to the pastoral office. "The religious services of the day," he observes, "were very impressive, and highly interesting. The brethren engaged were Messrs. Toller, Whitehead, Gronow, Bullock, Wood, Spencer, and Chadwick." "The day after my ordination, a deep sense of the important work and awful responsibility of the ministry induced me to cry to God for assistance, that he would cheer me with his presence and assist me on all occasions. The care of the Church was much upon my spirit, and the eternal welfare of souls before me. How weighty the charge! how weak the instrument! and how arduous the employment! Oh, to be spiritually minded, watchful, and useful! Lord, form my mind to bear all the trials and duties of my station, and thine shall be the praise!"

Mr. Pickering's labours were continued here for thirty-three years. He was the pious, affectionate, kind, amiable, and faithful pastor of the village Church. He had, on the whole, a peaceful and useful course; always plain and serious, evangelical and devout, in his engagements as a minister, while his daily temper and conduct recommended the Gospel he preached. He died suddenly, August 27th, 1836. He was interred in the front of the Chapel where he had so long preached. Mr. Green, of Uppingham, delivered the funeral oration; Mr. Renals, of Wellingborough, who had been a fellow student with Mr. Pickering, preached the funeral sermon, from John xi. 16: "Let us also go, that we may die with him." Mr. Renals prepared and published a [323]



memoir of his friend. On his last birth-day, Mr. Pickering wrote—

*March 12th, 1836.*

I am this day fifty-nine years of age. I was nineteen when I began to exhort my fellow sinners residing in villages to think of God; and two years after, the Christian Church procured admission for me at Rotherham College; so that I must have been engaged, more or less, about forty years in the work of the Lord. All these years I have found him a good Master—a friend near at hand, ever ready to help, and a constant refuge to my soul; still employing me in hoary age, and rendering my services somewhat useful in his cause.

When Mr. Pickering was settled, a new gallery was erected; and in the course of his ministry, in the year 1819, a large vestry, measuring 20 feet by 17 feet, with a school-room of equal size over it, and both opening into the Meeting House, were added, to accommodate the young and the poor. The Meeting House, the vestry, and school-room together, are calculated to accommodate 450 persons.

On the death of Mr. Pickering, the destitute and afflicted people applied to Rotherham, and Mr. Isaac Vaughan came on probation, respecting whose introduction to Brigstock the following is recorded:—

Isaac Vaughan, having been invited by the Church and congregation at Brigstock, and having visited the place, entered upon his labours the third Sabbath in July, 1837. His ordination took place on the 2nd of May, 1838, when a very large concourse of people assembled, and a goodly company of ministers, many of whom were called upon to take part in the services. Mr. Thomas Toller delivered a most beautiful introductory discourse; Mr. H. Stowell, Mr. Vaughan's tutor, gave an interesting and impressive charge; Mr. J. Green offered the ordination prayer; and Mr. E. T. Prust preached to the Church and congregation a very appropriate sermon. The services were peculiarly solemn and interesting, and the impression good.

In the spring of 1841, after four short years, Mr. Vaughan saw fit to remove to Olney (subsequently to the new Tabernacle, London), and the people were again as sheep without a shepherd, and were in an unsettled state for several years. Many supplied the vacant pulpit, among whom may be mentioned Mr. Hillyard, since of Pocklington, and Mr. Simpson, now of Shepton Mallett, both of whom stayed a considerable time, and were made useful during their temporary sojourn among the people. [324]

In January, 1845, the cause had become greatly weakened and the attendance reduced, so that the spirits of the people were much depressed, when their attention—which in 1842 had in vain been directed to the present minister, Mr. Thomas Lord, then pastor of the Independent Church at Wollaston—was again turned in that direction, and ultimately with success. He entered upon his labours on the 18th of the following May. The union was formed under hopeful circumstances, and has hitherto continued most cordial and harmonious.

"In the year 1847, being the jubilee of the erection of the place of worship, it was found needful," states the present minister, "to effect considerable repairs and improvements. The people came forward with a willing mind and a liberal spirit, and raised upwards of £40, which, with some other donations, was sufficient to prevent any remaining debt." "There is," he observes, "no record of members prior to the time of Mr. Pickering being settled, who, numbering himself one, entered all those that were in fellowship; and from that time a record has been kept. The whole number admitted, up to the present time, has been 201; of these many have fallen asleep. In the year 1824, seventeen were dismissed in peace and love, to form a separate Church of the same order at Weldon. A few have tired and fainted, and walk the ways of God no more; some have removed to a distance; while about sixty remain in communion. The average attendance on public worship through the year verges upon 300. The Sunday-schools contain about 110 children, the average attendance being about seventy each part of the day. These are attended to by about twenty teachers, who are most of them on the Lord's side. A separate service is maintained for the benefit of the children every Lord's-day, which is conducted by the minister, deacons, and others in rotation. Several who have been trained in the schools have become children of God, but stand connected with other Churches, where they have been called in the providence of God to reside. [325]

"There is no pecuniary endowment of any kind in connexion with the Church at Brigstock, but a good house erected for the residence of the minister, about thirteen years ago, upon which there has rested a debt, which is slowly decreasing, and constitutes the only difficulty which presses upon the people, who are, almost without a single exception, working people. There is no Day-school in connexion with the Chapel, which is a serious drawback; but the want is partially met by schoolroom and scholastic privileges which exist in the village, which, however, through high Church and Puseyistic influences, are not so efficient or acceptable as might be.

"On the whole, the Christian friends at Brigstock have much to be thankful for; and, in language employed at a late public meeting of the Church and congregation, minister, and other friends, they say—'In looking backward, we cry, "hitherto hath the Lord helped us"; and in looking forward, we "thank God and take courage." In looking inward, we feel that we are the subject of manifold deficiencies, and confess our need of a fresh baptism of heavenly and spiritual [326]

blessings; and looking upward, we cry, "O Lord, revive thy work" "O Lord, we beseech thee, send now prosperity." Amen."

## CHAPTER XVII.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT WELDON AND CORBY.

In the early part of the last century, there resided in the village of Little Weldon a freestone mason, Mr. Edward Nutt, who was a Protestant Dissenter of the Independent denomination. He usually attended divine worship at the Independent Meeting in Kettering, under the ministry of the excellent Mr. Thomas Saunders. After the death of Mr. Saunders, he travelled to Oundle on the Sabbath, to hear Mr. Goodrich; but, not satisfied with going himself to obtain improvement and enjoyment under the ministry of the Gospel, he was anxious to bring it home to the inhabitants of the village in which he resided, with the hope that it might be rendered useful to them. Therefore, at the quarter sessions at Northampton, July 17th, 1706, he had his dwelling-house and premises registered for the worship of God, and then he began to have occasional preaching there by the Dissenting ministers in the vicinity. The following copy of the license granted him has been preserved:—

#### *Northamptonshire.*

These are to certify, that Edward Nutt, of the said county, did certify to her Majesty's justices of the peace, assembled at their general quarter sessions of the peace, held for the county aforesaid, on Tuesday, the 16th day of July, that the dwelling-house of the said Edward Nutt, with its appurtenances, situated in Weldon aforesaid, in the said county of Northampton, is set apart and intended a place of meeting for Protestant Dissenters to meet for the exercise of their religious worship and service of God.

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Given under my hand, and the seal of my office, this 17th day of July, anno Domini 1706.

J. HORTON.

In his dwelling-house Mr. Nutt had occasional services conducted for several years; but about the year 1736 or 1738 he fitted up, in a very plain manner, a small barn, where the Meeting House now stands: it had a small window, a square pulpit, three stone steps to the pulpit, and the people sat on forms. Thus it continued, and here the services were held until the present Meeting House was built.

Mr. Nutt left by will to the Rev. D. Goodrich, of Oundle, and the Rev. Samuel King, of Welford, his dwelling-house, with its appurtenances, a close of pasture land, and one hundred pounds, which they were to receive at the death of his wife; and Mrs. Nutt made the same parties joint executors of her will, and residuary legatees. It was understood that this property was meant to be applied for the maintenance of some services in the village of Weldon by Dissenting ministers. The parties to whom it was left, well knowing that it was the desire of Mr. and Mrs. Nutt to have a sermon preached there once a month or oftener, by Dissenting ministers of the Independent denomination, consulted with some of the neighbouring ministers as to the best mode of securing the money for this purpose. It was ultimately determined to lay it out in the purchase of a piece of land in Titchmarsh field, the rents and profits of which continue to be received towards the support of the minister for the time being. The dwelling-house was found to expose the executors to some trouble in obtaining tenants and keeping it in repair, so that they determined on the sale of the house, with its appurtenances, for which they received £80. The half of this sum was expended in the enclosure of the land at Titchmarsh, and the other half was applied towards the building of the new Meeting House. Some years after, the dwelling-house was again purchased for the residence of the minister, when they had a settled pastor at Weldon.

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While Mr. Nutt was living, his business calling him very much from home, the services were irregular, being ordered so as to suit the convenience of Mr. Nutt and the ministers that he invited to preach: what little expense was incurred was borne by him. After his decease, the services were held with greater regularity; and after the death of Mrs. Nutt, the ministers that usually preached met annually at Weldon, in July, to fix the course of lecture for the next year, and audit the accounts for the last. The plan was, to have a sermon once a month, on Sabbath evenings, in the summer, and on Thursday at eleven o'clock A.M., in the winter; and there was seven shillings and sixpence a time allowed out of the estate and money left by Mr. and Mrs. Nutt; the surplus paid for a lecture on other Sabbath evenings, which was usually preached by Mr. Bacon, pastor of the Independent Church at Ashley. The preachers of the monthly lecture were generally the ministers of Oundle, Kettering, Bowell, Ashley, Harborough, Welford, and Uppingham, all of whom gave up to Mr. M. Phillips, the minister at Brigstock, when it was determined to connect Weldon with that place.

As the lectures could not be much oftener than once a month, on the Lord's-day evening; and being in the forenoon on the week-days, were very thinly attended, it was considered by the

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ministers, trustees, and others, that it would be better for the people at Weldon to become united with the Church at Brigstock, and so to get a regularly educated minister between them. At that time, a Mr. Griffin was minister at Brigstock; but being seventy-six years of age, he was willing to retire as soon as the people could obtain a successor. "Just at that time," writes Mr. Nathaniel Collis, of Kettering, who felt a lively interest in their concerns, "I had occasion to write to Dr. Williams, tutor to the academy, then at Oswestry, and took the opportunity of inquiring whether any young man was there suitable for such a situation, on which the Doctor recommended Mr. Maurice Phillips: he was a Welchman, and came at the Midsummer vacation, 1790. At first he was a poor speaker in English, but in a few months so improved as to become a very acceptable preacher; and he was a close student." Upon his coming, he regularly preached at Brigstock and Weldon, so that both places had preaching once every Sabbath, and sometimes an additional service in the evening; and he generally preached once a month at Corby, on a Sabbath evening. Under these arrangements, the attendance considerably increased at Weldon. They made some enlargement of the place of meeting; but the number of hearers still increasing, and the place being an old building, low, and inconvenient, they at length determined on building a new Meeting House. According to the plan that was formed, it was to be twenty feet wide, thirty-three feet long, sixteen feet high to the top of the side walls, and cove of the ceiling about three feet higher, all inside measure; which, it was thought, would be large enough to seat them all on the ground floor, and be high enough for a gallery, if it should be wanted. The foundation stone was laid May 23rd, 1792. The whole expense of the building was £182. 9s. 3d. All these particulars have been minutely recorded by Mr. Collis, with the manner in which the money was obtained, and every donation that was received for the purpose; and he adds to his account the following characteristic note: "If the Meeting House had had but one door, and a much less window, it would have been better, and saved some pounds in the expense." But, to his honour be it recorded, he gave a larger sum towards the building than any other subscriber. This place continued in connexion with the Church at Brigstock until the time when Mr. Pickering, who had for twenty years served both congregations, determined on confining his labours chiefly to the latter place. During the ministry of Mr. Pickering, the Weldon congregation increased; so that it was thought necessary to erect a gallery across the end of the Meeting, to face the pulpit, five seats deep, which was done in the year 1808, at an expense of £39.

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About the year 1824, Mr. Pickering resigned his connexion with Weldon, and the members of the Brigstock Church residing here received their dismissal to form themselves into a distinct Church of Christ, when they came to the determination to endeavour to obtain a stated pastor to reside at Weldon, and to preach regularly on the Sabbath at Weldon and Corby. After some time, they gave an invitation to Mr. John Philip, who became their first pastor here, and laboured among them about twelve years, and then was called to close his life suddenly in their service. One Sabbath morning, while engaged in preaching, he ruptured a blood vessel, was carried from his pulpit to his house, and, after a short time, died in his chair. Mr. Toller, of Kettering, improved his death, from Zech. i. 5: "The prophets, do they live for ever?"

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The next minister was Mr. Moffat, who was with them but a short time. He was succeeded by Mr. S. A. Bradshaw. After the removal of Mr. Bradshaw, an invitation was given to Mr. Thomas Thomas, from Newport Academy, who became their pastor, and was ordained May 25th, 1848. The following account of the ordination service we find in the records of the Church:—"On this day," it is stated, "Mr. Thomas was ordained. Mr. Coleman, of Ashley, commenced by reading portions of Scripture, and prayer; Mr. Thomas Toller delivered the introductory discourse, and asked the questions; Mr. Green, of Uppingham, offered the ordination prayer; Mr. J. Bull, M.A., of Newport, delivered the charge; Mr. Robinson, of Kettering, preached to the people in the evening. The services were numerous attended, and were peculiarly interesting: near 300 ministers and friends took tea together, in a close lent for the purpose. Mr. Robinson preached in the Chapel close, in the evening; near upon 500 persons were present, and appeared much interested with the faithful and appropriate discourse." Mr. Thomas is still the minister of the congregations at Weldon and Corby.

The village of Corby is situated about two miles to the west of Weldon, containing about eight hundred inhabitants; a small sum of money was given a hundred years ago for the preaching of a lecture here on a Sabbath evening by Independent ministers. This appears to have been first preached by Mr. West, who was minister at Ashley, and afterwards by Mr. Bacon, his successor. When the congregation at Weldon was taken into connexion with the congregation at Brigstock, the Corby lecture was preached by the Brigstock minister; but in the year 1824, when it was determined to have a settled minister at Weldon, it was agreed that he should preach once every Sabbath at Corby; and this is the arrangement at the present time.

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About the year 1834, William Rowlatt, Esq., who was born at Corby, but who was then residing at Burton, in the parish of Christchurch, in the county of Southampton,<sup>[7]</sup> anxious to do something for the benefit of his native place, first erected good school-rooms for Day-schools of both sexes in Corby and its vicinity, and liberally endowed them, and gave a dwelling-house for the teachers. By a deed of gift, they were transferred to the British and Foreign School Society, and are placed under the superintendence of a local Committee. They are efficiently conducted by the present teachers, Mr. D. Fisher and Miss Ross. The schools have already proved a great advantage to Corby and the surrounding villages. Soon after the schools were erected, the Old Meeting House was greatly improved, by a new gallery, pews, and pulpit, at the expense of Mr. Rowlatt; and he has left an endowment of £500 to be placed on Government security, the interest to be applied towards the support of the minister. Whatever opinion may be entertained as to the principle or the working of endowments for religious objects, the kindness of Mr. Rowlatt's spirit and design

must be acknowledged, and that hitherto the result has been good.

There is a Sabbath-school connected with this place, consisting of fifty-four children. The school connected with the congregation at Weldon numbers twenty-one children. The present number of communicants is twenty-seven. [334]

In the year 1850, the sum of £55 was left by Mrs. Mary French, partly for the purpose of renewing the trust deeds of the minister's house and the close belonging to this interest, and partly for making improvements in connexion with the premises. The larger part of this sum has already been applied according to the will of the donor.

While we record the pecuniary aid thus afforded to a small body of Nonconformists in these places, who have no wealthy individuals amongst them, and who have to stand against much influence that bears against the advancement of their principles, we trust it is ever borne in mind that the promotion of the cause of pure and undefiled Christianity, the conversion of sinners unto God, and the advancement of believers in divine knowledge, faith, holiness, and love, are the great objects for which a Christian Church is formed and the ministry of the Gospel sustained. Here may these objects be abundantly promoted!

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## CHAPTER XVIII. [335]

### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT YELVERTOFT.

In the village of Yelvertoft, which has a population of between six and seven hundred inhabitants, there is a neat Independent Chapel, capable of accommodating near four hundred persons, situated about the centre of the village, with school-rooms adjoining. Passing on to a rather lower part of the village, on the opposite side may be observed a respectable dwelling-house, with garden and orchard, which is the residence of the Independent minister. To be able to go back to the commencement, and trace the onward progress of such a cause, thus situated, must be especially gratifying to those who are now connected with it, while it might be gratifying to all who take an interest in the things that relate to the kingdom of Christ and the highest welfare of men.

It is not more than sixty years since the present Chapel was erected, an Independent minister regularly settled as pastor, and a Church formed on Congregational principles; but in the early part of the last century, occasional services were conducted here by Dissenting ministers, chiefly from Welford, where those residing in Yelvertoft who dissented from the Established Church were in the habit of attending.

In the book containing the records of the Church, we find an account of the earliest efforts made by Nonconformists in this village, and how they led on to the formation of the present interest. This account we shall now present to the reader. [336]

Some time before any attempt at all was made to introduce the preached Gospel into this place, and also during the time that the weekly lectures only were enjoyed, a few persons were in the habit of going to Welford (about five miles distant), where they could attend that mode of worship which appeared to them most agreeable to the word of God; and there can be little doubt that it was at the suggestion of some of them that the preaching of the Gospel here was commenced.

When this took place (which must be now, if it occurred in the time of Mr. Norris, who died in 1738, nearly one hundred and twenty years ago),<sup>[8]</sup> a private house was licensed, to afford the minister at Welford an opportunity to preach a week-day lecture. It is probable, though difficult to ascertain with certainty, that Mr. Norris, of Welford, was the first that ever preached the Gospel in this place amongst Dissenters. His service consisted of a monthly lecture on a Tuesday afternoon, which was continued by his successor, the Rev. Samuel King. The number that usually attended on these occasions was between twenty and thirty, composed in part of the revered ancestors of those families that form no small part of the present congregation.

In the year 1758, a place was fitted up out of an old barn, in a central part of the village, for the better accommodation of those who attended. Then it appears, at least towards the close of Mr. King's service, in addition to the monthly lecture, the students from the Independent Academy, then at Daventry, supplied occasionally on the Sabbath-day—procured, perhaps, through the instrumentality of Mr. Richard Norton; and partly from this circumstance, together with occasional help when it could be had, and the greater convenience of the place for worship, the congregation gradually increased, notwithstanding the fact that a Dissenting place of worship was considered by many a degradation, and the name of Dissenter or Presbyterian, which were confounded with each other, had considerable odium attached to it. It is to be observed, however, that the means of grace about this time were very irregularly enjoyed, for, besides its being but seldom on the Sabbath, the monthly lecture was continued only [337]

nine months in the year, beginning about the first Tuesday in October, and continuing till Midsummer. [The lecture being preached on the afternoon of a week-day, we suppose they found it necessary to omit the service during the busy seasons of agriculture, the hay time and the harvest.]

From tradition, which is indeed the chief source whence this imperfect account has been drawn, it would seem that the first person who assumed anything like the character of a settled minister was a Mr. Bryson, the author of a book explanatory of the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. He was one of those ministers the late Countess of Huntingdon in her liberality provided, as a means in the hands of Christ to extend his Church. He stayed here about two years. As her Ladyship had been solicited to permit Mr. Bryson to continue, he being much approved of after he had been heard a little while, it is likely that she would consider herself as bound to attend to the necessities of this place, for three more gentlemen who were under her directions followed in succession. The next who succeeded was a Mr. Green, whose services were enjoyed but one year. After him followed a Mr. Porter, who, leaving at the expiration of a year, was succeeded by a Mr. Pritchard, who it seems did not stay quite one year. These ministers being, as to their personal expenses, permitted to draw upon their patroness, the people had only to provide them board and lodging; they boarded amongst the friends, as circumstances determined. The labours of these men were followed up by those of a Mr. Coulson, who divided his attention between Rugby and this place. He resided some time at Hillmorton, but afterwards came and lived here, and this place then enjoyed the whole of his services. He commenced his labours in the year 1783, and continued until the year 1788, occupying during his residence here a house adjoining the premises used as a place of worship.

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About three months after the removal of Mr. Coulson, in which there was no public worship (an inconvenience which the cause here had experienced more than once), Mr. Garner, who properly speaking was settled at Kilsby, preached here one part of the day for about three months, his services commencing at Michaelmas and ending at Christmas the same year. Mr. Jones was the next person who endeavoured to advance the Redeemer's cause in this place. He lived at West Haddon, whose services at both places were all which at the time they enjoyed. He continued in this sphere about two years—first preached here in the beginning of the year 1789, and left in November of the year 1790.

Although we have reason to hope that during all these years the labours of the several persons above named were not entirely useless, but that some persons were suitably impressed with divine things, and lived and died under the influence of them, contributing in some humble proportion to preserve the worship of the true God, yet it is certain that a Church was never formed, and that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was never administered, until a period to which we are now approaching. Those who felt themselves to be members of the invisible Church of Christ, and were desirous of commemorating his dying love, sought the privilege in the neighbouring Churches, as their particular views led them.

It was in the beginning of March, in the year 1791, that Mr. Knight was, by the good providence of God, called to this place; and it was now that the cause of Christ, after experiencing many vicissitudes and serious interruptions in its progress, was destined to enjoy a greater permanency and regularity in the means of grace than it had ever done from its first existence.

Mr. Knight was a student from the academy at Mile End. He left the academy to come and reside amongst this people when the cause of Christ did not present a very encouraging appearance; and he was removed from hence to his eternal rest, this being the only place that enjoyed the stated labours of that highly esteemed servant of God. He served his great Master in this place from March, 1791, to September, 1822, a period of more than thirty years. During his ministry the cause of religion was considerably improved. The present Chapel, a very compact one, capable of accommodating two hundred and sixty persons [it has since been enlarged] was erected in the year 1792, in a very suitable part of the village, and near the site of the former place. Whilst it was erecting, the service of God was performed in a spacious barn. Mr. Knight had been here some time when his ordination took place. The following ministers took the principal parts in the services of that day: Mr. Grundy delivered the charge, from Titus ii. 15, last clause; Mr. Gill preached to the people, from 2 Thessalonians iii. 16. Mr. Horsey preached in the evening, from Acts xiii. 40. The service was highly interesting, bringing together great numbers, being rather novel at that time to many in this neighbourhood. After the ordination a Church was formed, which at the beginning was small; but in the course of Mr. Knight's ministry several were added as the fruit of his labours. As must be expected, however, in a place circumstanced as this is, the Church never reached to any very great number. It has so happened, indeed, that soon after any who promised to be a great acquisition to the Church, and to form its brightest ornament, were joined to it, they were removed by providence to some other place; and when the Church has been deprived of two or three of its members venerable for their experience, by the stroke of death, the Church's loss being their eternal gain, the void thus made has not been speedily made

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up; so that the Church has assumed those appearances which have served alternately to raise and depress the spirits of those who tremble for the Ark of God. Some, indeed, of those who have been reluctantly transferred to other Churches, remain, not only as monuments of divine mercy and preserving grace, but as proofs of usefulness attending the ministry of the Gospel here; and many have fallen asleep in Christ, a part preceding and the others following him who had been the honoured instrument of their conversion.

Here the account closes, as written by one hand. It appears to have been penned shortly after the death of Mr. Knight. [340]

We have some rather slight recollections of Mr. Knight. The year preceding his own death he was present at the funeral of the Rev. T. N. Toller, of Kettering, when he offered a solemn suitable prayer before the delivery of the funeral sermon by Mr. Hall. At the half-yearly meeting of the Association, held the next April, at Rowell, he delivered a sermon in reference to the character and death of Mr. Toller, from Acts xiii. 36: "After he had served his own generation according to the will of God, he fell on sleep." The next year Mr. Knight died, in an equally sudden manner. In person he was robust, with a florid countenance; his manner in the pulpit was earnest and impressive, but laborious, strained, and sometimes painful to the occasional hearer; his voice was powerful, but rather harsh. A ministry faithful and persevering left its testimony in the hearts of his people. He was highly esteemed by his brethren, and by a considerable circle of Christian friends.

For about six months from this time the pulpit was kindly supplied by the neighbouring ministers; after which, Mr. Nettleship, from Rotherham Academy, was invited on probation for a month, which invitation was renewed with a view to a final settlement; but he declined acceding to it. After an interval of two months, during which several students from Mr. Scott's seminary at Rowell preached, Mr. Gibson, from Rotherham, paid a probationary visit, and on further invitation resided here three years, at the expiration of which he was induced by various circumstances to direct his attention to some other part of the vineyard of the Lord. This left the congregation again destitute of a minister, and opened the way for the introduction of Mr. Barber, who had been educated for the ministry at Wymondley, and came here the 30th of July, 1826. His ordination took place October 9th, 1827, on which occasion the following ministers were engaged:—Mr. Gawthorne, of Derby, stated the nature of a Christian Church; Mr. Scott, of Rowell, gave the charge; Mr. Pinkerton, of Weedon, preached to the people; Mr. Hobson, of Welford, offered the ordination prayer. Mr. Gravestock, of Old, addressed the congregation in the evening. [341]

Mr. Barber remained the highly respected pastor of this Christian Church until October, 1831, when, agreeably to his own wish, he removed to go into America. He and his wife set sail on the 20th of October.

The congregation was supplied two Sabbaths by students from Rowell; and on the 23rd of the same month in which Mr. Barber left, Mr. Islip, late pastor of the Independent Church at Ketton, Rutlandshire, entered on his stated labours here.

It was during the ministry of Mr. Barber that the dwelling-house for the minister was rebuilt, and fitted up in the state in which it now appears. In the spring of the next year after Mr. Islip commenced his ministry, the Chapel was enlarged ten feet in length, and completed by the 8th of July. The cost of enlargement was £110, which, with a debt remaining on the house, was in the spring of 1837 entirely defrayed by the united efforts of the friends.

Mr. Islip's ministry was attended with a good degree of comfort and success, but was of rather short continuance here, for, owing to the unfavourable state of his health, he was obliged to resign his charge after about six years' labour in this situation. He was succeeded by Mr. G. Nettleship, who, after labouring thirteen years and a half in another situation in Cumberland, accepted now the united invitation of this Church and congregation to become their pastor. Mr. Nettleship commenced his stated labours here on the 18th of June, 1837, and removed from Yelvertoft in the year 1846, when he was shortly after succeeded by the Rev. Thomas James, the present pastor of the Church. [342]

The number of Church members recorded when Mr. Barber commenced his ministry in 1826 was twenty-one; and five in addition appear to have been admitted by him. About the same number we find when Mr. Islip took the pastoral charge of this people in 1831. On the first Sabbath in April, 1837, the minister writes—"This closes the services and the pastorate of Thomas Islip: twenty-eight admitted." When Mr. Nettleship commenced his labours, there appears to have been forty-five members in the Church; and there were thirty added during his ministry. Since Mr. James accepted the pastoral office, thirty-two additions have been made to the Church; and during his ministry new school-rooms have been erected for the children of the Sabbath-school, at a cost of £116. The present number of communicants is above 80. There are 130 or 135 children attending the Sabbath-schools.

There is a Chapel in the village of Swinford, about four miles from Yelvertoft, connected with this cause, in which a regular Sabbath-evening service is conducted by the pastor of this Church. There have been occasional services here for some years past, and a new Chapel was erected a few years ago. [343]

Thus we have seen that there has been a gradual and pleasing advancement in this cause, giving

hope of still further tokens of the divine presence and favour; while the pastor and his flock unitedly plead, "Let thy work still appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children."

## CHAPTER XIX.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT WOLLASTON.

The Independent Church in the village of Wollaston is of rather recent formation. Not more than sixty-four years have passed since the professing Christians residing in this place who dissented from the Established Church were formed into a regular independent Christian society; but in looking back to the early days of Nonconformity, we find a Mr. Edmund Matthews, a man of good learning, sound judgment, and serious piety, who had been the vicar of Wollaston, resigning the living, refusing to submit to the terms imposed by the Act of Uniformity, coming out from the Church, and taking his place among the noble band of Nonconformist worthies. It was a considerable sacrifice that he had to make, for truth and a good conscience. "Cut off from his former means of support, he lived privately at Wellingborough, and practised as a medical man, but was often reduced to great straits. When things were at the lowest, he would commit his wife and seven children to the care of Providence; and God mercifully appeared for them. He was laid on the bed of affliction, and saw his end approaching, with the prospect of leaving his family unprovided for. There came a messenger from two of his relations, one a draper and the other a minister, bidding him be easy about his wife and children, for the one would clothe them all, and the other provide them with food;" and to show how well they were disposed of, it is stated "that his wife afterwards practised medicine, and sent two of her sons to the University, while the eldest daughter married a knight." Mr. Matthews was a man full of compassion and genuine charity; exemplary for faith, meekness, patience, resignation to the will of God, and reliance on the promises. He had great comfort in death.

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It does not appear that Mr. Matthews made any attempt to raise a congregation or to carry on his ministry after his ejection; but as there were Nonconformist ministers who in this early period took opportunities to preach the Gospel at Wellingborough, which is within four miles of Wollaston, those who separated from the Established Church in the latter place would travel to the former to attend those services, and would become connected with the Independent Churches that were early formed there, while they endeavoured to obtain occasional services in the village where they resided.

It was soon after the middle of the last century that the present Chapel was built, viz., in 1752; but it was not until the year 1788 that the Church was formed and the first pastor settled. In that year Mr. Perry, of Lavendon Mill, near Olney, was invited to take the pastoral charge over them. He was the intimate friend and had been the fellow-labourer of Mr. Raban, who was pastor of the Church at Yardley Hastings. They had been connected with the Established Church at Olney; both of them had engaged in delivering exhortations at meetings for social prayer and for the mutual improvement of their fellow Christians who belonged to the Church. These engagements were the means of introducing them to further service, so that they both became pastors of Independent Churches in these villages, which were but a short distance from their former abode.

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In the records of the Church at West End, Wellingborough, it is stated that "at a Church-meeting held October 5th, 1778, Mr. Perry, of Lavendon Mill, who had for some time before exercised his gifts among Dissenters, though at that time in connexion with the Church of England as by law established, having testified his desire to join this Church with a view to his being sent out to the ministry in an orderly way, he came, and gave an account of his call to speak the word, the reasons that induced him to approve of the order of Congregational Churches, and his reasons for desiring to join with this Church. He was proposed to the Church to join next Church-meeting." In a month from this time another meeting was held, when "Mr. Perry gave in his experience to great satisfaction, and then, according to former appointment, preached amongst us to good satisfaction also; and the Church being consulted, they thought it was plainly their duty to send brother Perry out to preach the Gospel wherever the Lord should be pleased to call him, and concluded the next Church-meeting should be held for that end and purpose." Then it was unanimously agreed that brother Perry should preach wherever Providence should call him.

It appears that Mr. Perry put himself into the hands of this Church that they might judge of his qualifications for the ministry, with a determination to submit to the judgment they formed. In the year 1778 it is recorded, "we dismissed brother Perry to the newly formed Church at Wollaston, and on May 28th he was ordained their pastor."

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Some time before this Mr. Perry had been preaching at Wollaston, and when he was invited to the pastoral office twenty-four persons had united together in the fellowship of the Gospel. At the ordination service, Mr. Hillyard prayed; Mr. Carver stated the nature of the service, and proposed the usual inquiries; Mr. Raban offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Carver gave the charge, from Rev. ii. 10—"Be thou faithful unto death," &c.; Mr. Bull preached to the people, from Phil. i. 27—"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ." In the evening Mr. Greathead prayed, and Mr. Goode preached from Psalm li. 18—"Do good in thy good



pleasure unto Zion," &c.

Mr. Perry's ministry, after his settlement, was of short duration, scarcely extending to five years; during its continuance he admitted twelve members to the small society. On February 28th, 1793, he died. He was interred at Lavendon the Sabbath following, when Mr. Raban preached the funeral sermon, from 1 Thessalonians ii. 8—"So, being affectionately desirous of you," &c. He was a man of a truly pious, affectionate spirit, and was much beloved by the little flock over which he presided.

Immediately after the death of Mr. Perry, another member of the Church at Wellingborough, who had been chosen to the office of a deacon there, but who was resident in Wollaston, was called to take the oversight of this infant Church. In the records of the Church to which he belonged it is stated, under the date of April 8th, 1793, "Brother David Hennell exercised his gifts by expounding Scripture to the Church in the vestry, which was very acceptable." October 3rd, "He was dismissed to the pastoral office, having the united and fervent desire of his Church for his usefulness and comfort." The friends at Wollaston record, "immediately after the burial of our late worthy pastor, the Lord was pleased to show us he had seen our distress and heard our cries, for he was disposing the mind of a dear friend of this place to the work of the ministry—Mr. David Hennell. His gifts were tried at Wellingborough, at the Church to which he belonged, under Mr. Carver, and approved; they in Christian love gave him liberty, unanimously, to come and stately preach amongst us. The ordination service was held October 8th, 1794, when Mr. Raban commenced and asked the questions; Mr. Carver delivered the charge, from Matthew xxviii. 20—"Teaching them to observe all things," &c.; Mr. Bull preached to the people, from 1 Thessalonians v. 12, 13—"I beseech you, brethren, to know them which are over you in the Lord," &c. Mr. Hillyard, junior, preached in the evening, from Acts xi. 23." [348]

Mr. Hennell continued his services as pastor for twenty-nine years, and during that time the place of worship underwent some enlargement, and some additions were gradually made to the Church, seventy-five members being added during the course of his ministry. At the commencement of the year 1822, owing to advancing years and increasing infirmities, Mr. Hennell felt it to be his duty to resign his office, which he did on Lord's-day, January 21st.

Immediately after this, the attention of the people was directed to Mr. Thomas Coleman, who was a member of the Independent Church at Kettering, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. T. N. Toller. Mr. Coleman had preached at Wollaston for the first time on the Christmas-day previous to the resignation of Mr. Hennell, and was now invited to preach to them on probation. This engagement was continued until Midsummer, when he was invited to become the pastor, and was ordained September 5th, 1822. The following is the record preserved of the ordination service:— [349]

Mr. West, of Harrold, read the Scriptures and prayed; Mr. Morris, of Olney, delivered the introductory discourse and asked the questions; Mr. Hennell, the former pastor, gave a brief statement of the steps that had led to the formation of the present connexion; Mr. Coleman stated the motives which he trusted influenced him to engage in the work, the reasons why he preferred to exercise his ministry among Dissenters, and his views of the doctrines of the Gospel; Mr. Jacomb, of Wellingborough, offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Renals, of the same place, delivered the charge, from 1 Tim. iv. 16—"Take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine," &c.; Mr. Toller, of Kettering, preached to the people, from 1 Peter ii. 2—"As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word," &c. Mr. Pickering, of Brigstock, preached in the evening, from Col. i. 12—"Giving thanks unto the Father," &c.

A Sabbath-school was first formed here after this settlement.

Mr. Hennell survived nearly eight years after the ordination of his successor, and acted during the whole of that period in the most kind and affectionate manner towards him. He died July 28th, 1830. By his request, his death was improved by his successor, from words chosen by the preacher as appropriate to his character and the peaceful close of his life (Luke ii. 29): "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word."

In the year 1831 Mr. Coleman removed from Wollaston, having received an unanimous invitation from the Church and congregation at Ashley and Wilbarston. During his ministry twenty-two members had been admitted to the Church. [350]

After this, Mr. Edwards was engaged in preaching to the people for about ten months. When he had left them, different supplies were engaged, until, at the commencement of the year 1834, Mr. Thomas Lord, who was a member of the Independent Church, Castle Hill, Northampton, was engaged as a supply. His services proving acceptable, after a suitable time of trial he was invited to become the pastor, and was ordained October 24th, 1834, when Mr. Morris again stated the nature of a Christian Church, and asked the questions; Mr. Renals offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Bennett, of Northampton, delivered the charge, from 1 Tim. iv. 6—"A good minister of Jesus Christ;" Mr. Phillips, of Harrold, preached to the people, from Phil. ii. 1—"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ," &c. Mr. Vorley, of Charlton, preached in the evening, from Phil. i. 27—"Only let your conversation," &c. Mr. Lord's ministry here continued until the year 1845, when he removed to Brigstock. During the course of it about fifty members were added to the Church; but ere it closed, some declensions took place. Considerable improvements were made in the place of worship, by its being repewed and a new vestry erected, at a cost of about £250. A



dwelling-house was also purchased and fitted up for the minister, and made over to the interest, by the liberality of Mr. John Ward, of Knutson.

On the third Sabbath in August, 1846, Mr. John Anderson became the pastor; but he resigned his office in July, 1847.

In the year 1848, Mr. E. W. Finch, from Mr. Frost's seminary at Cotton End, near Bedford, became the minister of the place; but on March 27th, 1851, Mr. Finch resigned, and removed to Portshead, Somerset. Fourteen members were added to the Church by Mr. Finch. [351]

In October, 1851, Mr. D. Herschell came to Wollaston, and is at present ministering there. There are now about forty-one members in the Church. There are about fifty children in the Sabbath-school. Occasional services are conducted in villages in the vicinity.

Amidst various and frequent changes of late, this interest still remains, attended with difficult circumstances. May it be greatly revived, its numbers increased, and its efficiency promoted!

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## CHAPTER XX.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT PETERBOROUGH.

The Independent Church at Peterborough appears to have originated in the labours of a Mr. Glascott, a minister belonging to Lady Huntingdon's connexion, who came to this place about the year 1776 or 1777, to preach the Gospel of Christ. He first took his stand under the Cross in the Market-place. He was often interrupted in his services, and experienced much opposition; but on some occasions there was seen the Lady of — Orme, Esq. standing beside him, which proved some protection to him from the assaults of the rude assemblage around.

There was also the late Mrs. Baker, who was one of the first fruits of his ministry, who became an eminent Christian, useful in the cause of God, regarded as a mother in Israel, surviving to a good old age.

After some time they obtained a small building for public worship, on the premises of Mr. Ashby, of Westgate Street. At length an opportunity was presented for building a more commodious place. Roger Parker, Esq. was willing to let them have the piece of ground where the Chapel now stands, for the small sum of five guineas; but the circumstances connected with this agreement show that to the poor emphatically the Gospel was preached, for they were unable to raise the sum above specified, and were obliged, when they met Mr. Parker at the office of the attorney where the agreement was to be fulfilled, to inform him privately that they could not raise the amount required; and he put his hand into his pocket and nobly gave them the five guineas, that they might fulfil the contract before the attorney. The Chapel was erected in 1779 or 1780. [353]

Mr. Thresher was the first minister that was settled over them. But such was the intolerant spirit then prevailing in the place, that much persecution was endured by the minister and his people. They were frequently assailed on leaving the Chapel, pelted and sometimes almost covered with mud and dirt. After Mr. Thresher's ministry closed amongst them, Mr. Woodward became the pastor. He preached every third Sabbath at Pinchbeck, near Spalding, to which place he subsequently removed.

The people had to struggle with great difficulties, and the congregation became very low; so that at length the Chapel was closed, and remained shut up for about seven years. At the end of this period a lay preacher from Northampton visited Peterborough; and seeing the desolate state of things, he endeavoured to collect the scattered few, and to preach the word unto them. Application after this was made to Thos. Wilson, Esq., who sent supplies from Hoxton Academy. The Chapel was re-opened and stated services restored about the year 1804.

The labours of Mr. Harris, one of the students from Hoxton, proved very acceptable; he received an invitation to become the pastor, and was ordained over them. In his days the congregation flourished; he became very popular, and great numbers heard the word from his lips. Such was the interest that his preaching excited, that the late Bishop Madan, who manifested a liberal spirit towards Dissenters, has been known to stand at the entrance of the Chapel, with his hat in his hand, to hear Mr. Harris. But he removed to Swansea about the year 1810. [354]

After this, supplies were again obtained from Hoxton. Mr. Jeanes was invited to become the pastor; his preaching was acceptable and useful; but a few years after he removed to Market Deeping. Mr. Cave was another of the students who accepted an invitation to minister here; but after a few years he removed to Yaxley. The next minister was a Mr. Phillips, who had been in Lady Huntingdon's connexion, and had ministered in Zion Chapel, London. He was pastor for a few years, and some success attended his labours; but the people again wishing for a change, Mr. Phillips retired in the year 1818, but continued to reside in Peterborough, and preached occasionally. He was at length seized with paralysis: tried by long and heavy affliction, under which he was very graciously sustained. He died in the year 1831.

Mr. J.E. Isaac was the next minister who received an invitation to the pastoral office. The

congregation was in a very low state when he entered on his labours, but it increased under his ministry; and after he had laboured for three years, the Church was re-organized, and Mr. Isaac was ordained May 22nd, 1821. On that occasion, Mr. Jervis, of Ramsay, commenced the service; Mr. Holmes, of Wisbeach, delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Morrell, of St. Neots, offered the ordination prayer, and gave the charge; Mr. Wright, of Stamford, preached to the people. In the course of his ministry, Mr. Isaac had some serious trials to contend with; but he persevered in his labours, and they were rendered in some measure successful; so that in the year 1832, the Chapel having become too small for the congregation, it was thought desirable to attempt an enlargement. This was effected, and the place was re-opened for divine worship in July of that year: on that occasion, Dr. Pye Smith preached in the morning and evening, and Mr. Haynes, of Boston, on the following Sabbath. About this time a Sabbath-school was commenced in connexion with the Chapel. [355]

There are the names of about thirty persons recorded "who," it is observed, "regarded Mr. Isaac as their spiritual father." But under date of 1834 we find the statement, that the Church saw the necessity of a change, on account of the great decrease in the number of hearers; so that Mr. Isaac resigned in September of that year. Some time after this, Mr. Penman became the minister, and was ordained February 3rd, 1836. About this period, application was made to Earl Fitzwilliam for the grant of a piece of ground on the south side of the Chapel, on which to build a school-room for the use of the Sabbath-school. This was obtained, at a rental of five shillings per annum, on a lease of ninety-nine years. The cost of building, with some alterations in the Chapel, was about £205.

During the last five years, Mr. William Palmer has been the pastor of this Church. His labours have been rendered very successful, in increasing the congregation and making many additions to the Church. Side galleries have been added to the Chapel, at a cost of £100. There have been 120 members in Peterborough and Yaxley added to the Church. The Sabbath-school has increased from 60 to 200 children. But in the month of October, this year (1852), Mr. Palmer was obliged to resign his charge and retire from his labours for a season, on account of long and severe affliction. [356]

Thus another change has come over this people; but if the spirit of the Gospel prevails amongst them, they will receive direction from above, and God will carry forward his designs of mercy by the ministry of his truth and the other appointed means of his grace.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH IN TOWCESTER.

In the early part of the 17th century, Mr. Samuel Stone, one of the Puritan divines, ministered in the Church at Towcester. He was born at Hertford, and educated in Emanuel College, Cambridge. Having finished his studies, he resided for some time in the house of the excellent Mr. Richard Blackerby, where he received useful instructions, and imbibed the spirit and principles of his venerable tutor. Afterwards he became minister at Towcester, in Northamptonshire, where his superior accomplishments and great industry were manifest to all. This, however, could not screen him from the oppression of the times, as he was an avowed but modest Nonconformist to the ecclesiastical impositions. At length, seeing no prospect of enjoying his liberty in his native country, he resolved to withdraw from the scenes of persecution and retire to New England, where he arrived in the year 1633, and there he died, July 20th, 1663. It is observed, that "Mr. Stone was a pious, learned, and judicious divine, equally qualified for the confirmation of the truth and the refutation of error. His ministry was attended with the powerful demonstration and application of the truth: his views of Church discipline were Congregational." [358]

The first regular services by Dissenting ministers that are known to have been held at Towcester were conducted chiefly by Mr. Heywood, while he was pastor of the Church at Potterspury. He preached for some time, every third Sabbath morning, in a licensed house; and in the same place, a Mr. Stranger, a Baptist minister, residing at Weston, preached occasionally. In the year 1764, the pious people of both denominations united to build a Meeting House for their mutual accommodation. When Mr. Goode became the pastor at Pury, he continued the services in the manner of his predecessors, and his labours were crowned with a happy degree of success. But a change occurred, which interrupted the union which had hitherto subsisted between those who held different views on the subject of baptism. In 1782 a Mr. Reddy, a Baptist minister, came to reside at Towcester, and then the stated use of the new Meeting House was refused to Mr. Goode and his hearers, who, in consequence of this, met for three years after in a private house. The attendance increasing, it was deemed necessary to build another place of worship, in which they were generously assisted from various quarters. On the removal of Mr. Goode from Pury, they obtained supplies from Newport and Hoxton Academies.

April 6th, 1794, the members of the Church at Potterspury that resided in Towcester separated from that Church for the purpose of commencing an Independent Church here, Mr. Thomas Slattery, from Hoxton Academy, preaching to them for the first time on that day. On May 5th, 1794, eleven persons were formed into a Christian Church, Mr. Hillyard, of Olney, presiding. For

some time they were supplied by various ministers, Messrs. Bull, Greathead, and Hillyard occasionally administering the Lord's Supper. At length Mr. Gunn, a student from Hoxton Academy, was invited to become the pastor, and he was ordained October 16th, 1796. Upon this occasion Mr. Denny, of Long Buckby, offered the ordination prayer; the solemn engagements mutually confirmed between the people and the minister they had chosen were introduced by some observations on the proper tendency and principles of such a transaction, from Mr. Greathead, of Woburn; Mr. Bull, of Newport, gave the charge, from Col. iv. 17; Mr. Horsey, of Northampton, addressed the Church, from 2nd Cor. iv. 15. [359]

In little more than three years after this settlement Mr. Gunn removed to Aylesbury, and was succeeded at Towcester by Mr. Joshua Denham, who commenced his ministry here February 9th, 1800. Mr. Denham continued his services as pastor until the year 1814, when he resigned, and was succeeded by Mr. Joseph Gravestock, from Newport Academy, who was ordained on the 17th of August in that year, when Mr. Jackson, of Old, began with prayer; Mr. Thomas Morrell delivered the introductory discourse; Mr. Watson offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Bull gave the charge, from Ezek. iii. 17; Mr. Aston preached to the people, from 1st Thess. v. 13. Mr. Jackson preached in the evening.

On the death of Mr. Jackson Mr. Gravestock removed to Old; when, after a period of four years, Mr. Hitchin became the pastor, in July, 1818. In the year 1823 Mr. Hitchin removed to Hockliffe, and Mr. William Hawkins, from Newport Academy, was chosen to the pastoral office. Mr. Hawkins laboured here between twenty and thirty years; during his ministry a new Chapel was erected. Mr. Buckingham, minister at Potterspury, went out from this Church. [360]

Mr. S. Causby, the present minister, entered on his labours in July, 1851. The records of the Church contain 146 names of members admitted to the Church from its formation to the present time; but for seventeen years, *i.e.* from 1815-1832, the book appears to have been neglected, and no names were entered. The number of members at this time is 50. There are 110 children in the Sabbath-schools, and 24 teachers who take part in their instruction.

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## CHAPTER XXII. [361]

### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT OLD.

In the village of Old there is a neat brick building as an Independent Chapel, with a small burying-ground enclosed in connexion with it; and nearly adjoining it is a dwelling-house for the minister. Though this Chapel was not erected until the year 1809, yet we have to look backward for a little more than a hundred years to observe the first efforts that were made to obtain some stated services by Nonconformist ministers in this place. It appears highly probable that the Gospel was occasionally preached at Old and Scaldwell (the latter village being about a mile from the former) in the early part of the last century. We have found, in the records of the Independent Church at Rowell, that there were a number of persons who were members of that Church residing in Scaldwell and its vicinity soon after the commencement of the last century, who expressed a desire to be formed into a separate Church in that place, on account of the distance they were from Rowell; but their numbers were thought not to be sufficient then to justify such a step.

In the year 1750, Mr. Thomas Palmer, of Old, great grandfather to the late Mr. Palmer, by deed of bargain and sale invested certain premises at Old in the hands of four trustees, that out of the rents and profits thereof they should pay £5 per annum, by four quarterly payments, to some Dissenting minister, teacher, or preacher, to do divine service and preach a sermon once a month at Old for ever. [362]

Neighbouring ministers performed this monthly service for some time. The attendance on this lecture was so good as to lead the friends to obtain more frequent services, which were conducted in a barn on the property. Some of the hearers were in the habit of attending the Baptist Meeting at Walgrave, a short distance from Old; but the practice of strict communion cut them off from participating in divine ordinances there, so that it was at length determined to form a Church at Old, and to look out for a stated pastor.

Mr. Shadrach Jackson, from the Newport Pagnell institution, visited Old in the year 1808, and preached in the barn with acceptance and success. The increasing attendance rendered it desirable and indeed necessary to have a more suitable and commodious place for divine worship, and the present Chapel was erected on the premises, at a cost of £850.

At the ordination of Mr. Jackson, his tutor, the late Mr. William Bull, the friend and correspondent of Newton and Cowper, delivered an affectionate and impressive charge, taking for his motto the remarkable words of Joseph, addressed to his brother Benjamin (Gen. xliii. 29): "God be gracious unto thee, my son." The late Mr. Hillyard, of Bedford, in his own peculiar, affectionate, and persuasive manner, gave a most excellent address to the people, from the words of Ruth (i. 16, 17): "Entreat me not to leave thee," &c.

Mr. Jackson was a native of Doncaster. He early became acquainted with Mr. Samuel Hobson, of

Sheffield, afterwards pastor of the Church at Maldon, Beds. The late Mr. Thorpe, of Bristol, married the sister of Mr. Hobson, and to him both these young men were considerably indebted for their ministerial prospects. Both of them became students at Newport; they were both men of ability—Hobson having perhaps most philosophy, and Jackson most genius and pulpit unction. The latter was a striking and impressive preacher, decidedly popular, not failing to secure the attention of his audience. He had an excellent gift in prayer, and was often called upon to pray at the meetings of his brethren in the County Association. But it was not a long course of service that was allotted to him. His health was not good; he was subject to an affection of the throat; but it is thought that the affliction which ended in death was brought on by his preaching one night in wet clothes at the neighbouring village of Holcott. He never ceased to feel the effects of that night, and gradually sunk, though occasionally giving some hopes of recovery. After a long and painful affliction, he died, September 3rd, 1817. His remains were interred near the pulpit, and a tablet was erected to his memory by subscription. [363]

Mr. Hillyard, minister at Bedworth, who was a member of the Church at Old, and has supplied some of these particulars, states—"I saw him just as he was dying, being then about nine years of age; he mentioned my name. Almost the last thing he said referring to himself was, 'A sinner saved by grace.' I well remember the deep impression his death made on my mind; and all the circumstances of the funeral; and the funeral sermon being preached by the late Mr. Toller, from Acts xx. 24: 'And none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.'" The writer of these 'Memorials' attended that service, and has a vivid recollection of the crowded assembly, the impressive sermon, the solemn tones and the tears of the preacher, with the testimony he bore to the increasing spirituality of Mr. Jackson's mind during the closing period of his life. [364]

In the first part of Mr. Jackson's ministry the prospects of the society were very encouraging; but it soon became manifest that, although the Church is not of this world, yet, being in the world, it is more or less affected by those visitations that transpire therein, for three very efficient friends and supporters of the cause were soon removed by death. These events, with the early removal of Mr. Jackson, and some dissensions that afterwards arose, greatly weakened the cause, and cast some gloom over its prospects.

The Church was now supplied by neighbouring ministers and students until April, 1818, when Mr. Joseph Gravestock, of Towcester, who had been a short time fellow student with Mr. Jackson, came to Old as a supply. As his connexion with the Church at Towcester was dissolved, his services being acceptable here, after a period of probation he received an invitation to the pastoral office. On the 3rd of September, in this year, he removed with his family to Old; and on the evening of his arrival, preached from Heb. xiii. 8 ("Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"), having special reference to the death of his predecessor, who had been in the world of spirits just one year, and dwelling on the immutability and all-sufficiency of the ever living Redeemer. [365]

"Amidst varied scenes, producing diversified fears and hopes, Mr. Gravestock (who is still living) pursued his ministerial course till September, 1843, when failure of health and other circumstances induced him to resign his office and terminate his labours in a farewell address, from Rev. ii. 10: 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'" The stated ministry of Mr. Gravestock at Towcester and at Old extended to nearly thirty years, for he was ordained at the former place August 17th, 1814, when Mr. Jackson commenced the service with prayer; Mr. Bull, his tutor, delivering the charge; Mr. Aston, of Buckingham, preaching to the people; and Mr. Jackson preaching in the evening.

After this resignation, supplies were obtained until 1845, when Mr. Ingram Moody was invited to the pastoral office, in which he continued until 1849, when he resigned and emigrated to Australia.

After the removal of Mr. Moody, Mr. John Spence, of Kettering, a member of the Independent Church under the pastoral care of Mr. Toller, who had for some time previously engaged in occasional services in the vicinity, was invited to supply the pulpit at Old. His ministry proving acceptable to the people, at the expiration of four months he received an invitation to become the pastor, and entered on his stated labours in January, 1850, and has now become the resident minister of the place.

In the spring of 1852, alterations and improvements were made on the premises, the burying ground enclosed, at the expense of about £60. On Lord's-day, June 13th, three sermons were preached (morning and evening, by Mr. Toller, of Kettering; afternoon, by Mr. Samuel Marsh, of Moulton), when collections were made towards the expenses incurred. Numerous congregations assembled in the afternoon and evening. On the following day a public tea-meeting was held, when 200 persons took tea; after which there was a public meeting, when Mr. J. Stockburn, of Kettering, presided. Mr. Spence read a brief history of the cause, when effective addresses were delivered by several ministers and gentlemen that were present. The collections and donations produced £36. 17s. 11½d., leaving a debt of £23. 2s. 0½d., which it is hoped will be entirely extinguished at the next anniversary, and by means of exertions that may be made previous to that time. The prospects of the Church appear to be more pleasing than they have been for some years past; and we trust that the present pastor and his flock will go forward with united efforts and realize an abundant blessing, peace and prosperity being richly enjoyed among them, that the great Head of the Church in all may be glorified. [366]

In connexion with this cause at Old there is a small place of worship at Scaldwell, where one service on the Sabbath is generally conducted. The number of communicants at present is twenty-six. There are twenty-five children in the Sabbath-school—number in minister's Bible class, thirty; and occasional services are conducted in villages in the vicinity.

From this village society three Independent ministers have been raised up, viz.: Mr. T. Hillyard, of Bedworth; Mr. Gammage, of Ketton; and Mr. Gammage's son, Mr. Henry Gammage, of Dunmow, Essex.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT EVERDON.

The village of Everdon, four miles from Daventry, contains nearly 800 inhabitants. There were no regular efforts made here for the preaching of the Gospel by Dissenters until the year 1811. Mr. Barge, a member of the Independent Church at Weedon, under the influence of compassion for the state of the inhabitants, fitted up a small place of worship at his own expense, measuring twenty-two feet by ten feet, which was opened May 30th, 1811, and regularly supplied twice on the Sabbath by Mr. Meacock, a member of the Independent Church, West Orchard, Coventry; and occasionally in the week by Mr. Gronow, of Weedon. The services were well attended, and the place was soon found to be too small for the number of hearers; which induced Mr. Barge to give a piece of ground for the erection of a new Chapel, which was opened October 26th, 1813, on which occasion Mr. Jerrard, of Coventry, preached from Rev. i. 12, 13, and Mr. Whitehead, of Creaton, from Matt. xviii. 20, and Mr. W. P. Davis, of Wellingborough, from Num. x. 29. This building was invested in the hands of trustees of the Independent denomination. Several persons from the neighbouring villages began to attend the services, and there was a pleasing prospect of success. The following spring a Church was formed by Mr. Gronow, and Mr. Meacock was invited to become their pastor, and was ordained on the 23rd of August, when Messrs. Morgan, of Kilsby, Watson, of Daventry, Gronow, of Weedon, Whitehead, of Creaton, Bicknell, of Brownsover, Knight, of Yelvertoft, and Griffiths, of Long Buckby, were engaged in the services of the day. An endowment of £500 was bequeathed to the Chapel by William Falwell, Esq., the interest of which is to be applied toward the support of the minister for the time being.

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Much opposition has been experienced here, but some have been brought to the knowledge of the truth. The villages of Bradley, Newnham, and Farthingstone have shared, at different periods, in the pastor's labours; but in his later years Mr. Meacock chiefly confined his services to Everdon. At length, through the increasing infirmities of age, after labouring for a period of thirty-two years amongst his little flock in peace and harmony, he resigned the pastoral office the first Sabbath in April, 1845, and was succeeded by Mr. S. G. Stirney, the present pastor.

Mr. Stirney observes, that at the present time the Church is reduced to a low state, and that the Sabbath-school numbers but about thirty children; for great efforts are made, and very considerable influence is employed, on the side of the Established Church, so that the difficulties with which this cause has to struggle are very considerable.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT BRACKLEY.

Brackley is a small market town and ancient borough, near the south-west extremity of the county: it has, in former times, been a place of considerable importance. In the early days of Methodism, John Wesley might have been seen sometimes, preaching to a rustic throng from the steps of the Market-house. But the Independent Church in this place is of very recent date, and its history will therefore be comprised within a very small compass.

A short time previous to the year 1835, "the North Bucks Association" made an ineffectual attempt to obtain a place of worship in this town. At length a room was secured for the purposes of divine worship and preaching the Gospel. This proving inadequate to accommodate the attendants, in 1836 a Chapel was erected, at a cost of £650, capable of seating about 300 persons. The services of Mr. John Ashby, formerly a student at Newport, now minister at Stony Stratford, were engaged by the newly formed congregation, and he laboured here for somewhat more than a year. After his removal, the pulpit was principally supplied by students from Newport Academy. In January, 1838, Mr. G. Smith, late of Halesworth, accepted an invitation to labour here. In the same year a Church was formed, consisting of twenty persons—the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was first administered June 24th of that year; but in the beginning of 1839 Mr. Smith was compelled by indisposition to resign his connexion with the Church.

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Again supplies were obtained from the Newport seminary, until 1842, when Mr. W. R. Lewis commenced a probationary course of labour, and afterwards settled as the pastor. Under his superintendence the Church was re-organized; but after the lapse of three or four years circumstances arose which rendered his removal to a more extended sphere of labour a subject for consideration, which resulted in his resignation about Christmas, 1846. In 1847, Mr. Robert Davis, who had been pastor at Turvey, Bedfordshire, accepted an invitation to minister in this place, and continued his services until December, 1851. The Church, again being destitute of a pastor, was supplied for a time by ministers from the vicinity; until, in August of this year (1852), Mr. T. Roberts, late student at Newport Pagnell, accepted an invitation to become the pastor under somewhat pleasing circumstances; and it is hoped that his ministry will be rendered truly useful, that the Church may be increased, and the name of the Redeemer glorified. The present number of communicants is thirty-three; children in the Sabbath-school, rather more than fifty.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT BYFIELD.

The village of Byfield, containing more than 1000 inhabitants, has in it a small Independent Church, of recent origin; but it has struggled with many difficulties, and a number of changes have taken place during its short history, of which we can only present some very concise statements.

About thirty years ago, some persons residing here, who were members of a Dissenting Church in the vicinity, determined to invite some of the neighbouring ministers to preach the Gospel of Christ in this place. For three months the services were conducted in a room, which was rented and fitted up for the purpose. The Home Missionary Society then agreed to give £30 as a grant for one year, and recommended Mr. Grey as the minister, formerly of Oakham, Rutlandshire. During the first year of his ministry, which was 1827, a neat little Chapel was erected. Mr. Grey remained three years, during which time his ministry was rendered useful. A short time after Mr. Grey had left, the place was supplied by Mr. Kidgell, from Newport Academy, who became the pastor of the Church in 1831. His ministry was continued here for four years. Mr. Phillips next supplied the place for three months, under whose ministry things greatly revived; but through some misunderstanding, he quitted the pleasing scene of usefulness that appeared to be opening before him, the Church much regretting his removal. After this Mr. Moses became the pastor, and continued with them three years. Then a Mr. Sanderson was invited for twelve months, in consequence of an advertisement; "but since then," it is remarked, "the Church has had no faith in advertising ministers." Mr. Kidgell then returned to his former scene of labour, and remained for eighteen months, but under considerable discouragement. After his final removal, the congregation was supplied by neighbouring ministers and occasional preachers for more than twelve months. At length they invited a Mr. Berrill, who remained with them seven years. He laboured under many difficulties, weathered many storms, and at length retired from the situation. For ten months they remained destitute, having supplies as they could be obtained. In March, 1849, their present minister, Mr. Robson, came to supply them, and was invited to remain. He found the place in a very low state, but things have taken a favourable turn. The Chapel is now well attended, and seventeen members have been added to the Church. The present number of communicants is thirty-three. In the Sabbath-school there are thirty children, instructed by six teachers.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

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### MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH AT PAULERSPURY.

In this village, known as the birth-place of the celebrated Dr. Carey, of the Baptist Mission at Serampore, the Independent Church is of recent formation. In the year 1826 a Chapel was erected, and the whole of the expenses were cleared off by the exertions of Mr. Hawkins, Independent minister, of Towcester. About the autumn of 1841, Mr. Buckingham, the present minister of this place, was invited to preach in the Chapel on the week evenings. His services proving acceptable, attention being excited, and indications of usefulness appearing, the congregation expressed a desire to enjoy the benefit of his stated labours. In connexion with this proposal, arrangements were made between the congregation at Paulerspury and the Church at Towcester, for the Chapel, then the property of that Church, to be put in trust for the use of this congregation. In the summer of 1842 Mr. Buckingham began to labour stately among the people, and was much encouraged by the increasing attention, and the disposition manifested by the people to hear the word. A Sabbath-school was formed, when between forty and fifty children attended: it had a gradual increase, until, in the following year, the number of scholars rose to

200. Since then the numbers have varied, owing to different causes which will arise in this changing world. The congregation increased so, that it was found necessary to erect two side galleries, in addition to the front gallery that had been already formed. The week-day services were also well attended. A small number of persons, most of whom had been brought to an acquaintance with divine things under Mr. Buckingham's ministry, were desirous of enjoying the benefits of Church fellowship, and were encouraged to give themselves to the Lord and to each other in these bonds of the Gospel; and were accordingly formed into a Church, consisting of sixteen members, on the 28th of February, 1844. The services on the interesting occasion were conducted by Messrs Hawkins, of Towcester; Slye, of Potterspury; J. Bull, of Newport Pagnell; and Wager, of Stony Stratford: then the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was first administered to them, in which persons of different religious denominations united, who appeared to feel a deep and lively interest in the solemnity.

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In the beginning of the year 1845 some of the members of the Church experienced much persecution, which caused a few to halt, and others to keep back. It rose to such a height, at one time, as to threaten the extinction of the rising energies of the Church; but through the kind interposition of a gracious Providence, a reaction took place, and the wrath of man was made to praise God.

In the early part of the year 1847, the subject of Mr. Buckingham's ordination was mentioned; neighbouring ministers having hitherto administered the Lord's Supper. After much deliberation and prayer, the subject was laid before the ministers of the North Bucks Association, and after mature consideration the approval of their committee was expressed. It was arranged that the ordination service should take place on the 24th of November, 1847. On that day, Mr. Hawkins commenced the services; Mr. J. Bull expounded the principles of Congregationalism in an introductory discourse; Mr. Slye proposed the questions; Mr. Davis offered the ordination prayer; Mr. T. P. Bull gave the charge; Mr. Aston preached to the people.

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The year immediately succeeding this, Mr. Buckingham's health began very seriously to fail, and he was obliged to desist from preaching for several months, during which time supplies were obtained. His health is still very delicate, and but for frequent assistance he would be obliged to resign the pastoral oversight of his much attached people.

In consequence of the large number of school children, it was deemed advisable to erect new school-rooms for their better accommodation. In the year 1850 the school-rooms were erected, at a cost of £150. Through the kindness of friends, and especially the friends at Pury, the whole is now cleared off. A burial ground is attached to the Chapel, and more than fifty interments have taken place since it was appropriated for this purpose in 1843.

In regard to the future, the pastor observes "that the prospects are very cheering." On the Sabbath and week-evening services the attendance continues steady and regular, and never better than at the present time. The Church has continued to increase. The present number of communicants is seventy-two; Sabbath-school children, one hundred and fifty-nine—teachers, forty.

We trust the blessing of the Lord will still rest upon them, and that, "walking together in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they will be edified and multiplied."

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

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### HOME MISSIONARY STATIONS.

#### 1.—KING'S CLIFFE AND NASSINGTON.

In the north-eastern part of the county of Northampton there are two Home Missionary Stations. In the first of these the agent stately preaches at King's Cliffe and Nassington, having a Chapel at Castor also under his superintendence.

The Church that has been formed at King's Cliffe originated in the efforts of the General Baptists about thirty years back. The Rev. Mr. Payne, who belonged to that denomination, and was minister of Baradon, Rutlandshire, preached the Gospel here, and had a Chapel erected. But Mr. Payne shortly after left the neighbourhood; and after repeated efforts by Baptist ministers, with but little success, the place was resigned into the hands of the Independents.

The Northamptonshire Association of Independent Churches took the place under their direction for a time, in connexion with Nassington, and the Rev. J. Matthews and the Rev. J. Dann laboured in these places, having their residence chiefly at the latter village. A Church was formed at Nassington on the 8th of April, 1835; and the present Chapel was opened for public worship on the 21st of May, 1839, when the Rev. B. Hobson, of Welford, and the Rev. E. T. Prust, of Northampton, preached.

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In the year 1841 the station was taken into connexion with the Home Missionary Society. In March, 1844, the Rev. G. Amos, one of the Society's agents, was sent on probation, and accepted

as the minister of the two Churches. On the 24th of June in that year his ordination took place, in the Chapel at Nassington: the ministers who engaged were the Rev. Messrs. Islip, of Stamford, Gammage, of Ketton, Goode, of Peterborough, Newth, of Oundle, Smith, of Wymondham. In October of that year Mr. Amos commenced his residence at King's Cliffe.

The ground on which the Chapel was first erected here being private property, and as no satisfactory arrangements for its purchase could be made, it was at length determined to give it up, and to build a new one. The present Independent Chapel in King's Cliffe was built in the year 1846; the opening services were held on the 29th of September. The Rev. J. Richardson, of Tottenham Court Chapel, London, preached two sermons on the occasion; and on the following Sabbath sermons were preached by the Rev. J. Matthews, of Shepton, Norfolk, the Rev. A. Newth, of Oundle, and the Rev. W. Robinson, of Kettering. A school-room was built in 1847, and opened for a Day-school in October of that year. The cost of the Chapel and the school-room was about £500. Of this sum, there now remains a debt of about £150. At Castor a neat Chapel was erected in 1848; the Rev. T. Toller, of Kettering, and the Rev. E. T. Prust, of Northampton, preached when it was opened for divine worship. There are thirty-seven members in the Church at King's Cliffe, and forty in the Church at Nassington—total, seventy-seven. The Sabbath-school in the former place has one hundred and thirty children, and the Sabbath-school in the latter place, seventy—total, two hundred.

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## 2.—BOROUGH FEN.

This place is extra parochial, the property of Sir Culling Eardley Eardley, Bart., situated six miles north of Peterborough. The Gospel was introduced here about twenty years ago, by the Wesleyan Methodists; the preaching services were then conducted in a room of the house now occupied by the minister. In 1836 Sir Culling built a neat and spacious building, which is used both as a daily school-room and Chapel. For several years the preaching services were conducted by the master. A congregation having been thus collected, and Sunday-schools opened, it was considered to be a promising sphere for regular ministerial labour; and accordingly, in 1843, Mr. D. Blellock was stationed here as a Home Missionary. After the removal of Mr. Blellock in 1846, Mr. Alexander Yuill was settled here, who, after a few months of acceptable and useful labour, fell asleep in Jesus. In January, 1849, Mr. J. B. Bishop, the present pastor, was invited to settle over the congregation worshipping in this place and in Peakirk. Through Mr. Bishop's instrumentality a Christian Church was formed, March 30th, 1849, numbering thirteen members. The following places are connected with this station, viz.: Peakirk, Crowland (Lincolnshire), Glington, and New Borough. There are now twenty-seven Church members, seventy-five Sabbath-school children, and one Day-school.

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## 3.—MIDDLETON.

In the year 1844, a neat and commodious village Chapel, capable of seating near two hundred hearers, was erected here, at a cost of more than £300; and this year (1852) school-rooms have been added, which have cost nearly £100. It is supplied generally in the afternoon and evening of the Sabbath, and there is in connexion with it a Sabbath-school containing nearly one hundred children.

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# APPENDIX.

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## I.

The following statements will show the amount of money that has been expended on the Chapels, School-rooms, Ministers' Houses, &c., in connexion with the Independent denomination in Northamptonshire, during little more than the last quarter of a century.

	£	s.	d.
NORTHAMPTON—			
Castle Hill—New School-rooms and improvements in the Chapel, 1825-1852	1,400	0	0
King Street—New School-rooms	336	6	5
Commercial Street—New Chapel, galleries and organ, new School-rooms, 1829-1851	3,800	0	0
ROWELL—Improvements in the Chapel, 1852	800	0	0
KETTERING—New School-rooms and improvements in the Chapel, 1849.	1,400	0	0
HARBOROUGH—New Chapel and new School-room, 1844-1850	3,230	0	0
ASHLEY—Improvements in the Chapel and Minister's House, 1827-1832	400	0	0
WELLINGBOROUGH—			



Cheese Lane—New School-rooms, 1850	300	0	0
Salem Chapel—New School-rooms, 1850	300	0	0
WEEDON BECK—New School-room, improvements in the Chapel	235	0	0
LONG BUCKBY—Chapel enlarged, new School-room, 1819-1825	350	0	0
POTTERSPURY—New School-rooms	208	17	0
POTTERSPURY—Yardley Gobion, new Chapel	368	4	10½
YARDLEY HASTINGS—New School-rooms	400	0	0
BRIGSTOCK—Minister's House, improvements in the Chapel	456	12	9
YELVERTOFT—Chapel enlarged, new School-rooms	226	0	0
WOLLASTON—New vestry, improvements in the Chapel, Minister's House	645	4	3
Carried forward	£14,856	5	3½

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	£	s.	d.
Brought forward	14,856	5	3½
PETERBOROUGH—New School-room, galleries in the Chapel, 1834-1848	350	0	0
TOWCESTER—New Chapel and School-rooms, 1846	1,134	3	10
OLD—Improvements in the Chapel and premises, 1852	60	0	0
BRACKLEY—New Chapel, 1836	650	0	0
PAULERSPURY—New Chapel, vestry, galleries, and School-rooms, 1826-1850	606	12	0
KING'S CLIFFE—New Chapel and School-room	500	0	0
NASSINGTON—New Chapel	300	0	0
CASTOR—New Chapel	260	0	0
MIDDLETON—New Chapel, 1844; School-room, 1852	400	0	0
BROUGHTON—New Chapel	100	0	0
	£19,217	1	11½

## II. THE NUMBER OF COMMUNICANTS AND SABBATH-SCHOOL CHILDREN.

	Communicants.	Children.
Northampton, Castle Hill	150	300
Northampton, King's Street	72	95
Northampton, Commercial Street	160	400
Rowell	130	320
Kettering	200	280
Harborough	163	260
Ashley and Wilbarston	56	60
Welford	80	130
Creaton	60	80
Daventry	94	190
Wellingborough, Cheese Lane	70	190
Wellingborough, West End	37	84
Wellingborough, Salem	100	200
Oundle	70	120
Weedon Beck	80	125
Long Buckby	50	100
Potterspury	65	130
Yardley Hastings	116	260
Kilsby and Crick	60	at Crick 35
Carried forward	1,813	3,359

	Communicants.	Children.
Brought forward	1,813	3,359
Brigstock	60	110
Weldon and Corby	27	75
Yelvertoft	80	130
Wollaston	41	about 50
Peterborough	120	200
Towcester	50	110
Old	26	25
Everdon		30
Brackley	33	50
Byfield	33	30
Paulerspury	72	159
King's Cliffe and Nassington	71	200
Borough Fen	27	75
Middleton		100
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	2,453	4,703

### III. PROVIDENT SOCIETY.

There is a Society in connexion with the Independent Churches, bearing the title of "The Provident Society for the Relief of Aged and Afflicted Ministers and their Families in the County of Northampton and its Connexions."

This Society was established in the year 1811: its funds at the present time amount to about £6,400, and they are receiving a small increase by annual collections and subscriptions, the interest of the funds being applied to the relief of the claimants.

In the year 1817, about six years after its establishment, the first claims were made; since that time, the sum of nearly £5,000 has been distributed to ministers and to the families of ministers who were members. The importance of this Society is amply proved by the extent of relief that claimants have received from its funds. Its management is conducted entirely free of expense, and it will be capable of rendering efficient aid to all its members who, in accordance with its rules, present their case for assistance at the annual meetings of its members.

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### IV.

The following list contains the names of the villages in the County that are supplied with Sabbath evening services, chiefly by the Independent Churches. Some of the villages have an afternoon service on the Sabbath, and some of them an occasional service on a week evening. The list is not to be regarded as quite complete. In some instances, the Independents unite with other denominations in supplying the villages in their vicinity.

Alderton.	Loddington.
Barby.	Mears Ashby.
Bowden, Great.	Middleton.
Bozeat.	Newborough.
Broughton.	Orlingbury.
Cold Ashby.	Oxendon.
Cransley.	Peakirk.
Doddington.	Rockingham.
Draughton.	Scaldwell.
East Haddon.	South Kilworth.
Farndon.	Sutton Bassett.
Finedon.	Swinford.
Floor.	Tansor.
Geddington.	Thorpe.
Glaphorne.	Weston by Welland.
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Grafton Regis.	Warkton.
Great Oakley.	Wilby.
Lubenham.	Yardley Gobion.

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### FOOTNOTES:

- [1] The articles of faith contained in the Church-book are entitled, "A Translation and Collection out of Dr. Francis Junius his Ecclesiasticus, as concerning the nature and administration of the Church of God, Professor of Divinity in Leiden, a choice University, in Holland, about 1595."
- [2] Mr. Edward Barwell was lord of the manor of Marston, when Bridges wrote his 'History of Northamptonshire.'
- [3] Market Harborough is in the county of Leicester; but being just on the verge of Northamptonshire, it has always been connected with the Association in that county, and hence has a place in these 'Memorials.'
- [4] The manuscript was kindly lent to the author for this purpose by the family of the late Mr. Toller.
- [5] A note to this statement observes, that the services, nearly all printed, were never completed nor published, owing to the neglect and indolence of Mr. Worthington, who undertook to superintend the publishing, and unaccountably failed in discharging the trust committed to him.
- [6] The document quoted above does not state the distances correctly. Oundle is seven miles, Kettering eight, Rowell eleven or twelve, and Wellingborough thirteen miles distant.
- [7] The name, in legal proceedings, of Hampshire.
- [8] Some alteration has been made in the account here, to bring it to an agreement with the present date, 1852.

### Transcriber's Notes:

Inconsistencies in spelling, hyphenation and punctuation have been resolved in all cases where it was possible to divine the author's intent with a reasonable degree of certainty.

The remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

Page 88 "...at a meeting this 26th of October, 1820, do hereby call and desire you.." The transcriber has taken the liberty to change 1820 to read 1720, as this appears to be a typographical error.

Again on page 91 "...and entered on his stated engagements there September 14th, 1821" has been changed to read 1721.

On page 313 "Mr. Cuzens, the next pastor, commenced his ministry in July of the same year, and left in October, 1831." 1831 is in error; likely 1841. Has been changed to read 1841.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MEMORIALS OF THE INDEPENDENT  
CHURCHES IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE \*\*\*

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