

INDEPENDENCY IN ST ALBANS

F A J HARDING

Frontispiece



THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL
Spicer Street

INDEPENDENCY IN ST ALBANS

An account of the Rise and Progress of
Congregationalism in the City of St Albans, Hertfordshire 1650-1962

By

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St Albans 1962

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1662-1962

Dedicated to the memory of those brave Ministers of the Gospel who, rather
than submit to the compulsion of the Law, suffered ejection on St
Bartholomew's day, 24th August 1662.

O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true and bold,
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them, the victor's crown of gold,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Author's Note

The Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales held in May 1965, decided by an overwhelming majority, to adopt a new constitution to take effect at the May 1966 Assembly. The new constitution altered the name of the old Union to

The Congregational Church in England and Wales

and adopted a new basis of faith. As neither the new denomination nor the new basis of faith was found to be acceptable to the members of the Independent Chapel, the Church Meeting of 12th July 1965, decided to withdraw from the Union and seek affiliation with the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches. This matter was carried through and the Church Meeting of 18th October following, was so advised.

Contents

Chapter

Introduction	1
1 Elizabethan background	3
2 The Commonwealth	8
3 Indulgence	17
4 Dagnall Lane, the Presbyterian Era	21
5 Dagnall Lane, the Arian controversy	32
6 Dagnall Lane, Declension	41
7 The Independents, a new beginning	47
8 The Independent Chapel, Spicer Street Rev John Hayter Cox and Rev George Brown	56
9 The Independent Chapel, Spicer Street, the Middle Years	64
10 The Independent Chapel, Spicer Street, Expansion	72
11 The outreach of a New Century	82
12 Twentieth Century Zenith	94
13 The Independent Chapel, the last sixty years	100
14 Conclusion, the present pastorate	109
Appendices	120
Bibliography	146
Plates beginning page	153

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who would study the progress of Congregationalism in St Albans is, at once, under an obligation to the late Rev William Urwick for his monumental work "Nonconformity in Herts." At the outset, the writer feels that due acknowledgement should be paid to this former minister of the Independent Chapel. In his book, "Confessions to an Un-common Attorney", the late Reginald L Hine writes:

"Occasionally if I wanted a change in the relaxation of lunch-time reading, I would forsake the attics and go down into the cellar (ie of his firm: Hawkins and Co, Potmill Lane, Hitchin), a murky, damp, spider-infested place, housing the records of the archdeaconry, in which ecclesiastical area the firm had held office as registrar for more than two hundred years. In the fitful gleam of a candle it was difficult to make out the faded script, and I marvelled at the scholarly devotion and the good eyes of William Urwick, who had spent a whole year in the same cellar digging out material for his 'Nonconformity in Herts'".¹

In tracing the story through the years, the thread leads back again and again to Mr Urwick's work and to the authorities and sources he quotes.

It is a good story and worth the telling. There is cause for joy in it, and reason to praise God, that the handful of believers who went underground with the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, should have such robust descendants in the congregations of Spicer Street Chapel, Trinity Congregational Church and Bricket Wood Congregational Church, to say nothing of the church at Harpenden, which was hewn from the same rock. What is true of St Albans must be true of many other congregations in the cities and provincial towns of our land, congregations who followed their ejected ministers out of their parish churches into the unknown, on that bleak St Bartholomew's Day of 1662; yet the melody of praise has lingered on and the testimony lives still, in spite of the lapse of the years. The story of Congregationalism in St Albans, or anywhere else, is the story of three centuries of Christian witness.

The preparation of this account, which has occupied my very few leisure hours for some years – sometimes only a few minutes in a week – has been a labour of love. The collecting of the photographs has been a great pleasure; many have been the failures; some pictures I have failed to find, but at last the finished work, in its present form, is "laid up" in the archives of the chapel in Spicer Street for any, in the future, who might be interested enough to look through and read. I wish to thank the many friends who have helped me and encouraged me in writing this account. I think of the Church Officers at Spicer Street: the Misses C K Catton and A C Ironmonger; Mr A P Burnet of Trinity Congregational Church; Pastor L T Read and Mr Barlow of Bricket Wood Congregational Church; Mr Lines of Harpenden Congregational

¹ Hine, Reginald L "Confessions of an Un-common Attorney" pp 14 & 15

INTRODUCTION

Church; the Rev Dr Morris West of the Dagnall Street Baptist Church; the Misses Wilson and Bursnell of the St Albans Library; Mr Howard Cox of Ruislip, the great-grandson of Spicer Street's first minister, the Rev John Hayter Cox; Mr Tom Beardsmore, who placed his unique collection of books on Hertfordshire at my disposal; Mt A H V Poulton, curator of Hatfield Road Museum; the staff of Dr William's library; Mr K J Townsend, one of the deacons of Spicer Street Chapel who drew the map; Messrs Brian Beardsmore, Michael Bakes and my old friend Mr R H Weighell of Ventnor for help with the photography and finally, but not least, Mrs Valerie Payne and Mrs Margaret Ramsey for doing the typing; my hearty thanks to them all.

This is not a 'deep' work, nor is it necessarily exhaustive. I believe that it does form the first attempt to bring the history of Congregationalism in St Albans, as such, into one volume. As faithfully as possible, I have followed the original records where they have been available and secured as many books on the subject as I was able. My earnest wish is that if any do turn over these pages and look at the plates, they may not only be interested, but see something of the love which the writer has for the people and place of the chapel in Spicer Street; and above all, may Christ be glorified in this and in all things.

If I have made mistakes as, no doubt, I have; if I have been guilty of omissions or if I have used material without due acknowledgement, I crave forgiveness and would shelter behind the fifteenth century dedication of old Sir Richard Ross: -

Goo, little book, God sende thi good passage,
And specially lete this be thi prayere
Unto hem all that thi wil rede or here
Where thou art wrong, after their helpe to calle,
The to correcte in eny parte or alle.

F A J Harding

The Independent Chapel
Spicer Street
St Albans

St Bartholomew's Day, 1962

Chapter 1

ELIZABETHAN BACKGROUND

“For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.”¹ Such was the background of Independency in the closing years of the Sixteenth century. Mary Tudor died on 17th November 1558 and the fires of Smithfield abated, but the “battle of the warrior” went on. John Richard Green states: - “Never had the fortunes of England sunk to a lower ebb than at the moment when Elizabeth mounted the throne.”² Fear of Rome, hatred of Spain and dread of war with France, caused a violent reaction among the people in favour of the throne, and Elizabeth, inheriting a kingdom stricken by the misrule of her predecessor, at once became the symbol both of political freedom and the Protestant religion of her father and her brother. It was most surely not the fulsome praise of the sycophant which prompted the translators of the Authorised version of the Bible to refer to the new queen afterwards, as “that bright Occidental Star...of most happy memory.”³

By birth and conviction, Elizabeth was a Protestant. That she persecuted both Roman Catholics and Puritans with equal vigour was a sign of the times. She cared neither for “the theology of Protestantism nor its ritual, but the loyalty of her people and the ecclesiastical independence of her crown. She was resolved to be the Queen of all Englishmen, and to permit no rival power to command the obedience of her subjects.”⁴ Thus the Queen, in her attempt to achieve political unity, endeavoured to secure spiritual uniformity as a means to this end. To do this successfully, she appointed Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury – “Nosey” Parker, as the vulgar called him - to assist her, and at once he began to introduce such measures as would secure uniformity of faith and worship.

The forty-two articles of religion recognised in the reign of Edward VI were reduced to thirty-nine, and the Act of Uniformity of 15th January, 1549 ordering the use of the Prayer Book, and which had been repealed by Queen Mary in 1553, was re-enacted in 1559 by Queen Elizabeth's orders. Parker's instructions were that the Prayer Book was to be rigorously enforced and that departure from its use or the practice of rites other than those laid down in the rubric, were to be punished. Out of this attempted compulsion, grew the Separatist movement. “For a Catholic priest to celebrate mass was a crime. For an Anabaptist minister to baptise an adult by immersion was a crime. For a Presbyterian minister to baptise a child, administer the Lord's Supper, or conduct public worship after the custom of the Church at Geneva was a crime: and it was a crime to be present at any of these illegal services.”⁵

¹ Isaiah 9:5

² Green JR “A short history of the English people” Everyman edition vol 1 p 349

³ Preamble to the Authorised (King James) version of the Bible

⁴ Dale RW “History of English Congregationalism” pp 79 & 80

⁵ ibid pp 69 & 70

From this religious welter, four men emerged as the fathers of Congregationalism in Britain. They were Robert Browne, Henry Barrowe, John Greenwood and John Penry. Of these, Browne seems to have been chief, hence the name "Brownists" being applied to the early Congregationalists. Educated at Corpus Christi College Cambridge, he first became a schoolmaster and then attracted public notice by his outspoken criticisms of established religion. After a brief time studying theology at Cambridge, he was invited by the Vice-Chancellor to accept an appointment as preacher in one of the Cambridge churches. His conscience, however, prevented his doing this, as by this time he had adopted the central principle of Congregationalism: that if office was to be accepted, authority must be received from Christ Himself as Head of the Church, and from none other.⁶ Browne is eventually found with his friend, Robert Harrison and sixty other Norwich Congregationalists, settled at Middleburg in Zeeland.⁷ After Browne, Henry Barrowe was the most outstanding of the Elizabethan Congregationalists. Born at Shipdam, Norfolk in 1546, he trained for the Bar at Gray's Inn and for some years, led a dissolute and vicious life: subsequently he was converted and became a zealous Puritan and Separatist. As a result of this, he became acquainted with another Separatist a few years his junior, John Greenwood. Their joint activities attracted the attention of the authorities and after many hardships and imprisonments they were both hanged at Tyburn on 6th April 1593. Indeed the fires of Smithfield had died down, only to give place to the reek of Tyburn.

John Penry was born at Builth, in Breconshire, in 1559. After graduating at Peterhouse, Cambridge, he went to Oxford where he became active among the Puritans. His thoughts, however, were ever turning towards Wales, and we are told by Dale that "his heart was on fire for the evangelisation of his fellow countrymen."⁸ His outstanding protests against institutional religion and his frank writings, soon brought him into conflict with the authorities and he, like his contemporary Puritan friends, Barrowe and Greenwood, at last was executed. Sentence was pronounced on him by the Lord Chief Justice on 25th May, 1593 and he was hanged on 29th May at St Thomas-a-Watering, the place of execution for the County of Surrey. Penry left a widow and four small daughters, almost babies, but he left something else: the memory of a brave, godly, winsome and attractive personality. It is at this point that we must leave the facts of general history and pass to the history of Independency in St Albans, for the town, very definitely, had its Puritan sympathisers. Chief among these was Lady Anne Bacon, mother of the famous Francis First Earl of Verulam.

About 1570, Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lady Anne's husband, appointed one Robert Johnson to be his chaplain at Gorhambury. An avowed Puritan, Johnson was an outspoken preacher. Although he was not vicar at St Michael's, Sir Nicholas arranged for him to preach there frequently. His preaching seems to have been with power, for soon a kind of revival took place among the members of the congregation, additional hearers were

⁶ Dale RW "History of English Congregationalism" p 121

⁷ *ibid* p 125

⁸ *ibid* p 153

attracted from St Albans and the influence for good exercised by the Bacon family, much increased. Sir Nicholas eventually presented Johnson to a prebend in Norwich Cathedral, which was in his gift.⁹ Another of Lady Bacon's protégés was William Dyke, a Puritan preacher who hailed from Coggeshall, near Colchester. He came to Gorhambury in 1588 and from then until 1591, ministered frequently at St Michael's. The vicar at that time was an old, weak man named Thomas Wetherhead. We read that he was a "doting old man, no graduate, no preacher, insufficient, who frequents alehouses and plays dice and cards there."¹⁰ Under Dyke, the improvement, which had begun under Johnson, was continued. Conditions were not allowed so to remain, however. Aylmer Bishop of London, was informed that Dyke had preached against gambling and drinking, and finding an excuse in Dyke's refusal to have the sign of the cross over his infant at baptism, and his declining to kneel for the Holy Communion, deprived him of his living and suspended him. In 1591 Dyke went to Hemel Hempstead as assistant to Richard Gawton and, for the moment, was outside the jurisdiction of his persecutor, the Bishop of London. Dyke remained at Hemel Hempstead until 1604 having received the living when Gawton resigned in 1594.

Prior to his execution in 1593, John Penry, whom we have already seen to be a notable Puritan and one of the founders of Congregationalism in England, was an occasional visitor to St Albans as the guest of John Clark, Mayor in 1592. Clark was a strong Puritan sympathiser and both Dyke and Penry found a staunch friend in the town's first citizen. Clark encouraged his visitors to preach in his private house, and to conduct the sacrament. Urwick's comment is apposite: "It is to the honour of our City of St Albans that there was in it, as its mayor, a man of the calibre of John Clark, who did not shrink from welcoming John Penry, the Puritan martyr, into his home, or from committing the "ecclesiastical offence of praying for him".¹¹ After the death of Penry, Clark was arraigned before the Ecclesiastical Court on various charges, one of which reads: "That you, the said John Clark, in the years 1593 and 1594, have also permitted divers and sundry other ministers not licensed, and some such as have been especially disliked and disallowed by authority, to be so privately exercised in your own house, and namely, JOHN PENRY, lately executed, or at least have secretly received and entertained the same Penry, and have had much conference with him within your own house, and have uttered your liking of many of his factious opinions, in so much that you have kept many of his seditious books, supposed to have been written by him ...That the said Penry, not long before his arraignment, was at your house, and had conference with you: and that you, the said John Clark, before his departure from you, understanding that he was in danger, did then promise to pray for him, saying that you hoped both he and his cause would return with credit."¹² Clark seems to have escaped with a fine. Later, in April 1597, he is thought to be one of a party of four emigrants who sailed for the Gulf of St Lawrence to set up a colony on a small island there. He and his three companions were allowed to leave the country, guarantees having been given

⁹ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p 82

¹⁰ *ibid* p 114

¹¹ *ibid* pp 93 & 94

¹² *ibid* p 93

to the authorities that they would not return to England unless and until they were willing to conform to the religious practices prescribed. The expedition proved disastrous and by September of the same year, the vessel was back in the Channel and the party landed at Southampton. They eventually reached Amsterdam.¹³

The death of Elizabeth on 24th March, 1602/3 was at once followed by the proclamation of James VI of Scotland as King James I of England. The hopes of the Puritans began to soar in the expectation that many of the abuses and burdens placed on them under the Elizabethan Settlement would be dealt with. In April James set out for London to receive his kingdom and, as he journeyed, many Puritan clergymen presented petitions praying for reform. The chief of these was the famous Millenary Petition, which was signed by between seven and eight hundred Puritan divines and represented a thousand of the clergy. "This manifesto was expressed in very mild and respectful terms, entering no theoretic questions, but praying for the removal simply of the worst grievances".¹⁴ Its title, in full, was "The Humble Petition of the Ministers of the Church of England desiring Reformation of certain Ceremonies and Abuses of the Church".¹⁵ The King, characteristically, gave a two-faced answer, as he did to all difficult questions. He affirmed his intention of maintaining the status quo in spiritual matters and at the same time, promised a conference to consider the abuses. This met at Hampton Court from 14th to 18th January 1604, but things went against the Puritan section from the start, and on the last day of the conference, the King brought the proceedings to an end by addressing the Puritan clergymen's spokesman, Dr Rainolds, thus: "Now, Doctor, have you anything else to say?" "No more, if it please your Majesty" was the mild rejoinder; to which the King replied with vigour: "If this be all your party have to say, I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of the land, or worse."¹⁶ Paradoxically, as it may seem, it was the same Dr Rainolds who, earlier in the Hampton Court Conference, had pleased the King by suggesting a revised translation of the Bible, thus, with prejudice and harshness, "the Most High and Mighty Prince James" alienated the loyal affections of the cream of the Church of England clergy.

So the unrest of Elizabeth's reign was to go on. History shows that it did continue and became more intense. The Puritan assemblies in Amsterdam and Leyden were augmented by further additions from England and fears grew that they would soon become part of the Dutch nation; thus losing their English identity. To counteract this tendency, means were sought to emigrate to America. After long negotiations with London, permission was at last granted for such an expedition. Two vessels were chosen for the voyage, The Mayflower and the Speedwell, but as the latter was found to be unseaworthy, the Mayflower eventually set sail alone on 16th September 1620 and arrived at Plymouth Rock on 21st December 1620, after a stormy and dangerous passage. Hence the one hundred souls on board this little vessel carried to the New World the seeds of a robust liberal government and a reformed

¹³ Dale RW "History of English Congregationalism" p 168

¹⁴ Drysdale AH "History of the Presbyterians in England" p235

¹⁵ *ibid* p235

¹⁶ *ibid* p239

Christian faith. We may fittingly close this part of our study by recalling the words spoken by Pastor John Robinson as he parted from the little company of pilgrims, as they left Leyden on their hazardous crossing of the North Atlantic Ocean. Dale states: "His memorable words addressed to the founders of New Plymouth when he was bidding them farewell express the true spirit of Congregationalism - a spirit apart from which its mere external polity is worthless."¹⁷ Robinson is reported to have said: "We are now ere long to part asunder, and the Lord knoweth whether ever I shall see your faces again. But whether the Lord has appointed it or not, I charge you before God and His blessed angels, to follow me no farther than I follow Christ. And if God should reveal anything to us by any other instrument of His, let us be ready to receive it, as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am confident the lord has more truth and light yet to break forth out of His Holy word."¹⁸

¹⁷ Dale RW "History of English Congregationalism" p 207

¹⁸ *ibid*

Chapter 2

THE COMMOWEALTH

*“A sound of battle is in the land; and
a great destruction.” Jer 1:22*

The little Mayflower had departed on its great endeavour and after three weary months, the little company of emigrants made their landfall in the New World. For them indeed, it was a new world, and a new life and a new religious experience, too. The keynote of this newness was Freedom. But back in England, the sharp cutting-edge of nonconformity was becoming blunted, for not only had the more vigorous of the religious malcontents left the kingdom for Holland or America, but other and equally difficult problems were beginning to fill men's minds: notably the King's claim to absolutism in Church and State. Here was something which struck at the very roots of a freedom, which had been born in religion and had spread to politics. In fact, this was the rock on which the ship of state could very easily founder. The failure of the Puritans to obtain satisfaction at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 was followed by James' misrule in other spheres. In 1614 he dissolved Parliament and ruled without it until 1621. His antipathy to the Puritans drove him into the arms of the High Church Party, which, in turn, played up to the King. The accession of his son Charles, in 1625, made a bad situation worse. By 1630 the flow of men to America had increased: clergymen, lawyers, scholars from the Universities, godly farmers: “men driven forth from the fatherland not by earthly want, or by the greed of gold, or by the lust for adventure, but by the fear of God and the zeal for a godly worship.”¹ As an example of this widespread exodus to the New World, we are told that on or about the 6th April 1635, the Planter (Nicholas Trarice, Master), set out for America with sixty-six souls on board. All these folk came from Hertfordshire and carried certificates provided by the minister of St. Albans. In looking through the list of emigrants we find the following trades represented: mercer, shoemaker, tailor, mason, stationer, weaver, glover and carrier.² The withdrawal from one county of such considerable skilled labour could have a serious damaging effect on the local area's economy. Urwick states: “While the King violated the constitution, refusing to call a Parliament for eleven years, and levying taxes by force of arms, Laud, first as Archdeacon of Huntingdon...” and subsequently as “...Archbishop of Canterbury, endeavoured to Romanise the English Church” and among other things, to enforce the Book of Sports.³ Clergymen who refused to read and enforce the rules of this book were severely reprimanded or deprived. It is small wonder that the Puritan clergy were shocked by this, for the book was ordered to be read in every parish and enforced “games, dancing of men and women, archery, leaping, vaulting and such-like recreations on Sundays after

¹ Green JR “A Short History of the English People” vol 2 p476

² Urwick W “Nonconformity in Herts” pp 831 & 832

³ *ibid* p 121

morning service.”⁴ Small wonder then, that the rowdier elements of society should get out-of-hand when thus encouraged by those clergy who conformed to this rule.

In St Albans there were four such conformists: John Browne of the Abbey (1627-1643); Anthony Smith of St Peter’s (1628-1644); John Starr of St Stephen’s (1617-1642); Abraham Spencer of St Michael’s (1617-1643); creatures, for the most part, of Archbishop Laud. The Civil War broke out in 1642 and the citizens of St Albans, strongly for the Parliament, took steps to have these ministers removed and replace by “men of piety and the fear of God, advocates of temperance, eminent in prayer, pastors who visit the sick and needy, firm in their allegiance to Christ and the truth, stern in rebuking vice, but withal men of compassion.”⁵ The Rev Job Tookey was a person of this order.

During the Commonwealth, the following clergymen ministered in St Albans; some were afterwards ejected from their livings under the act of uniformity, 1662:

The Abbey Church

George Newton, MA, 1664	(ejected from Taunton)
John Gere, MA, 1646-1648	
Job Tookey, MA, 1649	(ejected from Yarmouth)
John Oliver, 1653	
Richard Roberts, MA, 1655	(ejected from Cullesden, Surrey)
Nathaniel Partridge, 1657	(ejected)

St Peter’s Church

Robert Tirling, 1644-1645	
William Rechford, 1647-1659	
William Haworth, 1660	(ejected)

St Stephen’s Church

.....Chappell	
Richard Lever, M.A., 1646-1649	
Simon Smyth, 1650	
Edward Withnell	(ejected)

St Michael’s Church

George Newton, M.A., 1644	
John Lesley, 1645-1656	
Nathaniel Partridge, 1657-1660	

From this list of clergy, one name emerges as being that of the founder of Congregationalism in St Albans. It is that of Job Tookey, who, according to Calamy⁶ was preacher at St Albans in 1648, and “gathered a Congregational church there.” Urwick adds,⁷ “The first Congregational church in St Albans was gathered in St Albans Abbey.” Notice that both commentators use the word “gathered”. This is a basic congregational principle, which denotes that

⁴ Urwick W “Nonconformity in Herts” p160

⁵ ibid p 161

⁶ Matthew AG “Calamy Revised” p489

⁷ Urwick W “Nonconformity in Herts” p 136

those forming that particular assembly of worshippers are “gathered” round Christ, Who is at the centre of the Church. The church meeting in St Albans Abbey under the ministry of Rev Job Tookey was truly “congregational” for the reasons that, being a “gathered” church, the congregation, as directed by the Holy Spirit, was a sovereign body and independent of outside control, humanly speaking; and Job Tookey himself, was appointed minister by the citizens of the town. This independency of action claimed by Congregationalists, earned for their assemblies the title of Independent Churches. Spicer Street Chapel, the present-day direct descendent of the Abbey Congregational assembly, is still known as the Independent Meeting House. By way of further explanation, the late Dr AM Fairbairn might be quoted: “While Congregational denotes the normative principle and constitution of the society, Independent simply describes the relation in which all societies so constituted must stand to every authority external or foreign. The term in its oldest historical use expresses the right of the churches to be independent, as regards interference from without, in order that they might be free to live under the sole authority of Christ. And so Independency here means freedom; ‘free’ is the modern synonym of ‘independent.’”⁸

The appointment of Job Tookey as minister at the Abbey was made easier by the fact that the citizens of St Albans were, in truth, the owners of the Abbey Church and were, therefore, in a position to appoint whoever they liked to the living. They were no doubt influenced in their choice by reason of Tookey’s personal piety and general trustworthiness as well as their desire to get rid of the risk of having one of Laud’s nominees. Tookey’s two Commonwealth predecessors at the Abbey, Newton and Gere, while chosen by the citizens, do not appear to have held the principle of the “gathered church” as did Tookey, and it is for that reason we fix on him as the originator of the Congregational manner of worship and church government.

It may be well at this juncture to explain how the Abbey came into the possession of the citizens. After the expropriation of church lands and buildings by order of Henry VIII, all such property became vested in the crown; in 1553, however, the townspeople of St Albans were able to buy the building for £400 to convert it into a parish church and grammar school, the latter being conducted in the Lady Chapel. This purchase was made possible by a charter granted by Edward VI on 12th May 1553. The charter provided, to quote Clutterbuck, that “in consideration of the sum of £400 and a yearly fee farm rent of £10 paid to him by the inhabitants of the borough, granted the same, together with the advowson and right of patronage thereto belonging, to the Mayor and Burgesses of St Albans for ever, to serve as the parish church of the borough...” This bargain was confirmed by a clause in the charter of incorporation granted to the Borough by this monarch. The fee farm rent was afterwards redeemed by the inhabitants of the Borough on 30th July 1684, for £200...⁹

⁸ Fairbairn AM “Ecclesiastical Polity and the Religion of Christ” (Congregational Union Jubilee Lectures 1882) p40

⁹ Clutterbuck R “The History and Antiquities of the County of Hertfordshire” vol1 p44

Records of Job Tookey's ministry are few, but of great interest. In 1650, the year following the execution of Charles I, commissioners appointed by Parliament to enquire into the state of the Ecclesiastical Benefices, found by their inquest that "this Rectory was... sequestered from one John Browne; and that Mr Job Tookey, an able and godly minister, officiated the Cure".¹⁰ A few items in the Parish Registers established Job Tookey's stay in St Albans: -

"May 26 1650 (born March 10), Job, son of Mr Job Tookey, Minister"
 "November 16 1651 Hannah, daughter of Mr Job Tookey"¹¹

Other daughters were Martha, Rebecca and Sarah. His son Job, according to Calamy, went to the north of England and turned out to be a scapegrace.¹² A grandson, Thomas Tookey, was minister of the Yarmouth Congregational Church from 1711 to 1724.¹³ After about five years Tookey removed to Yarmouth, where he became the teacher of a Congregational Church until ejected under the Act of Uniformity 1662. In 1665, he came to London and died there in 1670. His legacy to the world was an unpublished concordance to the scriptures in the original Hebrew.

Job Tookey was followed by John Oliver. He is described in the marriage register of All Saints' Church, Hertford, as being "minister of St Albans", the entry having been made on the occasion of his marriage to one Susannah Sheffield of Hertingfordbury on 20th February 1653.¹⁴ In 1655 John Oliver gave place to Richard Roberts. The faithful Calamy says: "In his ministry he was a very fervent and convincing workman, and blessed with great success in his labours. He was richly furnished with all good learning, of great industry, and never willing to be found idle."¹⁵ In 1657 he removed to Cullisden, in Surrey, where he suffered ejection in 1662. He returned subsequently to Hertfordshire, settling down in Watford, where he continued to work as a godly minister, apparently, in spite of having been ejected. Calamy adds: "he was greatly honoured and beloved...for his prudence, exemplary piety and abundant charity in that great but poor town."¹⁶

During the Interregnum, St Albans increasingly favouring the Parliament, encouraged clergymen holding Congregational principles to minister in all parishes. Reference to page 19 supra, will show which of these were nonconformists and consequently ejected in 1662. It will be observed that Richard Roberts was succeeded by Nathaniel Partridge who ministered both at the Abbey and at St Michael's between 1657 and 1660. In the records of the latter church he is termed "Intruder."¹⁷ The Rev Nathaniel (sometimes written Nathanael) Partridge was a Congregationalist and pastor of the church

¹⁰ Page W "St Albans Cathedral and Abbey Church" p87

¹¹ Bigg W "The Parish Registers of St Albans Abbey 1558-1689" p84

¹² Matthew AG "Calamy Revised" p489

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p137

¹⁵ *ibid* (quoting Calamy)

¹⁶ *ibid* p138

¹⁷ Rogers JC "The Parish Church of St Michael's St Albans" p31 (in addition to Nathaniel Partridge, George Newton (1644) and John Lesley (1645-1656) are given as "Intruders")

which Job Tookey had founded.¹⁸ He was no stranger to St Albans, as an entry In the Abbey Register reads thus:

“1610, July 8 Baptised Nathanael, son of Nathanael Partridge.”¹⁹

At the time of the passing of the Act of Uniformity, 24th August 1662, Partridge was both minister at St Michael's and preacher at the Abbey. By 1663 he had left St Albans and gone to London where, with other ejected ministers, he continued to preach. In London, the dispossessed divines were less exposed to the attention of spies and informers. Partridge's congregation in London met in a conventicle in Old Street, near St Luke's, and at one time consisted of one hundred and fifty persons. Here he ministered until the passing of the Act of Indulgence in 1672, when the congregation removed to Old Street Square, near Bunhill Fields, and Partridge received a licence to preach. During his stay in Old Street, he was imprisoned for six months for his nonconformity and while in prison “took great pains with the condemned prisoners there not without some success.”²⁰ After leaving the prison and obtaining his licence, he continued his work as prison visitor. His only published work, “Blood for Blood”, was a distressing account of a condemned woman he met during his visitation and who had been indicted on a charge of infanticide. She was eventually hanged, but during the time she was under sentence of death, the diligent minister was able to point her to the Saviour. Partridge's book is one of the earliest tracts in favour of the abolition of capital punishment. He died on 6th August 1684, at the age of seventy-four, greatly loved and respected.

Another pioneer of Congregationalism in St Albans at this time was William Haworth, minister of St Peter's Church from 1660 to 1662. His stay was marked by one very tragic happening. On 4th May 1662, just three months before the Act of Uniformity became law, Haworth was called from St Peter's to the Abbey to conduct the funeral service of a Mrs Tervil, one of his own parishioners. During the service, the proceedings were rudely interrupted by the entry of a Major Crosby “swearing in a furious manner, calling them rogues and rebels, and directing his speech to the preacher” and ordering him out of the pulpit.²¹ Leaving the Abbey, Crosby returned at once, flourishing a pistol and accompanied by an armed constable, threatened the minister. At this, one of the congregation, John Townsend stepped forward to intervene and was shot dead by the irate officer. Instead of arresting Crosby, the constable took Haworth and other members of the congregation into custody. When the prisoners were brought to trial Haworth was imprisoned, but no action whatsoever was taken against Crosby. The judge who acted in so infamous a manner was Sir Harbottle Grimston.

Released from prison, Haworth was obliged to leave St Albans. He retired to Hertford, where we find him ministering in secret to a small company

¹⁸ Urwick W “Nonconformity in Herts” (quoting Calamy) p169

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *ibid* p175 See also “The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses in London, Westminster and Southwark” (4 volumes) vol 2 pp 526 & 527

²¹ Clutterbuck R “The History and Antiquities of the County of Hertfordshire” vol1 p100

of Independents until 1672, and then as the appointed minister until 1703. At Hertford, Haworth succeeded a John Singleton, MD who was ejected from Oxford in 1660 for his nonconformist sympathies. The Congregational Church in Hertford, situated in Cowbridge, still have in their possession the original church book, dating from 1673. A former minister of the church there, states that the book "...is worn and discoloured by age and the writing is not always easy to decipher...unfortunately the pages that contained the record of Mr Haworth's ministry are missing; but from the list of members, which was written by Mr Haworth, we may surmise that the district was large and the work heavy."²² A memorial tablet in the vestibule of the present building bears the inscription: -

The Congregational Church assembling in this place
was instituted AD 1673.
The Rev William Haworth
of St John's College, Cambridge,
afterwards Vicar of St Peter's, St Albans,
was the first pastor.

Haworth died in January 1702/3 and was succeeded in the pastorate by Mr (later Dr) John Guyse who remained until 1727, when he proceeded to a church in New Broad Street, London. As regards the church itself, Turner, a local historian of the early nineteenth century, has this to say: "The Independent Chapel is situated at Cowbridge. It is a freehold, secured to the Protestant Dissenters of this faith and order; and comprises a neat and commodious building, fitted up with galleries, capable of accommodating about 500 persons. The first Independent or Congregational Church in England was established in the year 1616, and there is every reason to believe that a chapel for their accommodation was erected in Hertford shortly after that period."²³

In addition to the settled ministers already enumerated on page nine, the following were occasional visitors to St Albans during and after the Commonwealth. First, Nathaniel Eeles, who was minister in Harpenden. Eeles was a Hertfordshire man, having been born at Aldenham in 1617. He graduated from Emmanuel College, Cambridge and for a further two years studied under Cisbert Voet at Utrecht. He then became minister of a congregation at Caddington, Bedfordshire. Writing of Nathaniel Eeles, Calamy says: "...in the year 1643, Eeles was called by the people of Harpenden (alias Harden) in Hertfordshire to be their pastor. There he continued preaching with great satisfaction, and good success, till 1661, when he was ejected by the succeeding incumbent, Dr Killigrew...When the Corporation Act had passed, he left his Family, and liv'd sometimes at Bovingdon. Before and after which, as he had opportunity, he preach'd in private sometimes at his own House and sometimes at St Albans.... he was an excellent text man and well acquainted with the Scriptures, strict in the observance of the Lord's Day, both for himself and Family; very tender of offending any, and one that had a good report of all...He was afflicted several years with a sciatica...and 'tho' his pains

²² Skinner RO "History of the Hertford Congregational Church' pp12 following

²³ Turnor L "History of the Ancient Town and Borough of Hertford" p381

were often great, was never heard to speak an hard word of God.”²⁴ Eeles died on 18th December 1678.

The second minister of note in this occasional ministration is Edmund Staunton, DD (1600 to 1671). He began his career in Bushey and for some years preached in West Hertfordshire. Later as President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, he suffered ejection under the Act of Uniformity and withdrew to Rickmansworth. Later Dr Staunton removed to St Albans where he continued to preach “by Stealth, and in face of the penal laws against him.”²⁵ Dr Staunton was a member of the Westminster Assembly.²⁶ He died on 15th July 1671 and was buried two days later in the yard of the parish Church at Bovingdon.

A third name might be added to this list in the person of the Rev Isaac Loeffs, the Rector of Shenley from 1650 to 1662. He was a lecturer at the Church of St Magnus in London, at that time a Congregational foundation. He suffered ejection but appears to have remained at Shenley. He was known to have been preaching in 1669 at St Albans, Elstree, Codicote and Ridge. About 1675 he removed to London and acted as assistant to a famous congregational minister, Dr Owen.²⁷

With the ejection of Nathaniel Partridge, the congregation in the Abbey Church was without a pastor, but in spite of the rigorous provisions of the Act of Uniformity and the other enactments of the infamous Clarendon Code,²⁸ the little flock of believers persevered. According to Urwick, there is, among the manuscripts in the Lambeth Library, a paper containing details of dissenting meeting houses in St Albans in the year 1669. The information was that procured by spies and informers.²⁹

²⁴ Calamy E “Account of Ejected Ministers” vol 2 p367

²⁵ Urwick W “History of Nonconformity in Herts” p182

²⁶ “Westminster Assembly” – See appendix II

²⁷ Matthew AG “Calamy Revised” p326

²⁸ “Clarendon Code” – see appendix II

²⁹ Urwick W op cit p179

THE COMMONWEALTH

Parishes	Sects	Numbers And Quality	Preachers And Teachers
The Abbey Parish			
1. At Mrs Bachelor's every Sunday	Presbyterian	100	Dr Staunton of Bovington Mr Jenkins of Langley Mr Loeves of Shenley
2. Not constant to time or place	Anabaptists	50	One Heyward, a woodman. One Heyward of Hertford, a scholler
3. At a hyred house for ye purpose every Sunday and Wednesday	Quakers	60	Elizabeth Humble, and one Crook, a subtile fellow and a lace seller
St Peter's Parish			
At ye house of William Aleward, yeoman, called New House	Congregational	Great Sufficient men	Mr Lownes (loeffs?), Non- conformist minister. Sect, an Oliverian captain. Thomas Flindell, a cooper. Thomas Heywood, shopkeeper

The word "Congregational" does not appear in the original paper but there is good reason to believe that the assembly comprised by the "great" number of "sufficient men" was, by elimination, a Congregational assembly. It would appear from this list that Dr Staunton and Mr Loeffs followed the Presbyterian way, although the latter is probably the "Mr Lownes, Nonconformist minister". "One Heyward of Hertford" is undoubtedly, William Haworth, formerly of St Peter's Church and latterly minister of the Independents in Hertford.

Very little is known of "William Alewood, yeoman" of New House; he may have been related to Edmund Alewood, who was common clerk from 1697 to 1732.³⁰ "Scot, an Oliverian Captain", was a chaplain in the army of the Parliament and returned to St. Albans after the Act of Uniformity was passed. Thomas Flindell and Thomas Heywood are obscure, although the latter could be the Thomas Hayward who was Mayor of St. Albans in 1673 and 1689.

The decade following the passing of the Act of Uniformity was one of hardship and repression for the nonconformists; we can only hazard a guess at the privations of the ejected ministers and the risks that were run by worshippers in secret. Meeting in the woods, behind closed doors, in the lonely countryside, the nonconformists were continually a prey to the

³⁰ Gibbs AE "The Corporation Records of St Albans" p298

constable and the informer, running the grave risk of fines or imprisonment if they met “to remember the Lord’s Death” privately and away from their parish church. All honour is due to an almost unknown man in St Albans, “William Aleward, yeoman”, who took care of the little congregation and allowed it to use his dwelling as a meeting place. His house would be a kind of headquarters for the fellowship and a clearing house for news. It is obvious that meetings at his house were going on and known to the authorities, hence the note handed in by some informer, mentioned on page 14 supra.

In spite of the rigorous enforcement of the various enactments which comprised the Clarendon Code, it appears that some attempt was being made to bring relief to the two thousand ejected ministers. In his Autobiography, Richard Baxter, recording, the death of Archbishop Juxton in early June 1663, adds: “About these times the talk of liberty to the silenced ministers (for what ends I know not) was revived again...”³¹ Little seems to have resulted from these conversations although, as time went on, enforcement of the law did not always follow offences under the acts. Many of the “silenced ministers” found refuge in London, for there, in the more congested areas; they were freer from spies and informers. Our own Nathaniel Partridge was an example.

In 1667 there was a threat of danger from overseas. The rivalry between Britain and the Netherlands in the field of international trade, which had led to the passing of the Navigation Acts during the time of Oliver Cromwell, flared up into open hostility. The Dutch men-o’-war sailed into the Thames Estuary, Sir Edward Sprag, commander of the garrison at Sheerness, fled, and the foreign war-ships bombarded Chatham. The failure of the fort of Sheerness to prevent the depredations of the Dutch fleet filled the nation with concern. A scapegoat was sought and found in the person of the Lord Chancellor, Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon. The King had long wished to be rid of Clarendon, and the defeat of the British Forces in the Thames, furnished the excuse for the Lord Chancellor’s dismissal. The painting in the National Gallery by EM Ward may be remembered. This shows Clarendon leaving the palace of Whitehall in disgrace, after his last interview with Charles II. The picture shows him descending the stairs with unseeing eyes, the centre of attention of all the gay mob whose lewdness and fooleries always excited his undisguised disgust. May be in his aversion to the immorality of the Court, he challenged a profligate king. With the departure of Clarendon out of office and out of the realm, talk of indulgence to the Nonconformists was revived. Meanwhile, continual trouble with Holland brought Charles and Louis XIV together for consultation. They decided that in order to put on a bold front abroad, peace at home was essential. One of the measures introduced to achieve this end was a promise of some toleration to the ejected ministers. On 15th March, 1671/2, the King issued a Declaration of Indulgence in which he affirmed his resolution to preserve the integrity of the Church of England but, at the same time, allowed all legal actions running against nonconformists to be suspended and permitted the nonconformists to open sufficient meeting places for the use of those who preferred not to conform to the Church of England. The winds of change had begun to blow.

³¹ Baxter R “Autobiography (Everyman edition)” p188

Chapter 3

INDULGENCE

"I see the rod of an almond tree." Jer 1: 11

Immediately the King's Indulgence became operative, Nonconformists began to come out into the open. The freedom conferred by the Act of Indulgence, however, was somewhat tempered by the passing in the following year, of the Test Act. Though aimed at Roman Catholics, it also hit the Nonconformists. Briefly, the provisions of the Act were that no one could be employed in the Government service who did not take an oath denying transubstantiation and observe the sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the practice of the Church of England; however, Nonconformists continued, if not to flourish, certainly not to languish. In 1672 the Congregational Church in Bedford called out John Bunyan to be its minister; the church still bears his name. Round about this time, John Milton published some of his greatest work; Richard Baxter and John Howe wrote books which are still read. Many Independent congregations came into being in these days of restricted liberty and many licences for private houses to be used as meeting places were obtained.

In St Albans, it was one, Robert Pemberton of St Peter's parish, who placed his residence at the disposal of the little group of Independents who had survived the rigours of suppression; hence is found among the preaching licences granted in 1672, the following entry: "The house of Robert Pemberton at St Albans, Hertford, licensed for a Congregational meeting."¹ From this time forward, for many years, both Presbyterian and Independent ministers served the St Albans congregation; among them some already mentioned as having suffered ejection in 1662: Isaac Loeffs of Shenley; Captain Scot, the former chaplain in the Army of the Parliament; Dr Edmund Staunton of Bovingdon² and Nathaniel Eeles of Harpenden. Lay support for the church came in considerable strength from Joshua Lomax, a man of some substance and influence in the town. He, himself, was not free from some persecution, for it is known that on one occasion he was arraigned before the Archdeacon's Court in 1683, for not attending communion at St Peter's Church. There is no record that the findings of the Court were ever confirmed or sentence pronounced.³

The change of political temperature which took place on the abdication of King James II, coupled with the favourable impression made on King William III by the Nonconformists, for they had supported his accession with great enthusiasm, led to the passing of the Toleration Act on 24th May 1689. It was styled: "An Act for exempting their Majesties' Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties of certain laws." While Nonconformists were exempted by this act from certain obligations imposed by previous laws, they still were required to accept the doctrine of the

¹ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p180

² Staunton had been a member of the Westminster Assembly

³ Urwick W op cit pp 187 & 188

Trinity, hence Unitarians were excluded from the benefits of the Toleration Act. It is estimated that during the twenty years following 1689, the Nonconformists, between them - Baptist, Independent and Presbyterian - built more than one thousand meetinghouses.⁴

At this time there was very little difference between an Independent and a Presbyterian Church. They did differ in one important thing; in the Independent Church, the minister was appointed by the whole body of the members, while in the Presbyterian Church, the minister was chosen by the Trustees.⁵ Their similarity in constitution, led the two groups, in 1690, to explore a means of union. About ninety ministers of both denominations entered into this agreement and a document was issued entitled: "Heads of Agreement assented to by the United Ministers in and about London, formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational." So the streams of Presbyterianism and Independency frequently flowed together, to their mutual enrichment; hence the congregation in St Albans, originally licensed as a Congregational Meeting, passed through a Presbyterian stage before settling down finally into a Congregational church. Arising out of the coming together of the two denominations there was created what was termed: "The Common Fund". The minutes of this fund, now in the archives of the Presbyterian Board, are dated "at London 1 July 1690". The Fund was administered by seven Presbyterian ministers and seven Congregational, and was amassed by gifts and subscriptions of dissenting ministers for the most part. The money thus collected was meant to assist in the training and maintenance of the Ministry, both those of the "Presbyterian persuasion" and those "commonly called Congregational".⁶ The "Happy Union", however, did not prove so successful as had been hoped. Controversy over doctrine and polity soon showed the two groups to be uneasy bedfellows and so, by 1696, the Union was a dead letter. The accumulated resources of the Fund were divided and each body administered its own share. It must not be inferred from this that the two denominations were, in any way, at enmity. Each produced its own great men who worked together with the greatest co-operation. The last decade of the seventeenth century saw a great increase in Nonconformist activity. Men were raised up who have had a lasting influence on the Free Church life of the nation. The name that springs first to mind in this connection is that of the Rev Isaac Watts, doctor of Divinity of Edinburgh. Watts had little connection with St Albans, but he was a close personal friend of both Dr Samuel Clark and Dr Philip Doddridge. Both these famous divines are mentioned later in this account. What Charles Wesley's hymns did for Methodism, Isaac Watts' did for the Dissent. Indeed, Watts' hymns coming at an earlier period than Wesley's, set the pattern for, what was then, a new type of praise. With his other writings, he did more to establish Nonconformity as a feature of English life than any other single individual, John Wesley, perhaps, excepted, although the latter deprecated the setting-up of denominations and remained a staunch adherent of the Church of England until his death.

⁴ Peel A "A Brief History of English Congregationalism" p63

⁵ Lyon Turner G "Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence" vol 2 p731

⁶ Gordon A "Freedom after Ejection" p158

Julian lists Watts' hymns and metrical psalms as four hundred and fifty-four and adds details of his religious and philosophical works. Of the man, himself, he says: "His learning and piety, gentleness and largeness of heart, have earned him the title of the "Melanchthon of his day."⁷ Bernard Lord Manning, Cambridge scholar, whose untimely death in 1941 robbed the Dissent of one of its most brilliant and informed historians, wrote this of the matter under discussion: "To Watts more than to any other man is due the triumph of the hymn in English worship. All later hymn-writers, even when they excel him, are his debtors; and it is possible to hold that his work for hymns is greater than Wesley. Metrical psalms there were in great number before Watts, and they were much used. But here, as in his hymns, Watts was a pioneer. In his Christian interpretation of the psalms, he had predecessors but no one had so thoroughly carried out the plan before. In examining what Dr Watts wrote, we must then always remember that he is hewing his way through an almost unexplored territory, and that his successors, not having his rough work to do again, will be able to polish and improve."⁸

Back again to St Albans. By the last decade of the seventeenth century, nonconformist expansion was being felt in the town, and a meeting house is being used about 1683. This meeting was, no doubt, the successor to the one gathering in the house of Roger Pemberton as early as 1672 and relied for its lay-leadership on Joshua Lomax who had been indicted for not attending his parish church. This same Lomax was very active in the building and opening of the meetinghouse in Dagnall Lane and his name appears as one of the trustees. There is no indication of the whereabouts of a meetinghouse between the passing of the toleration Act and the opening of the chapel in Dagnall Lane. There is, however, ample evidence that such a meeting was in existence. The diligent Urwick quotes from the Diary of Oliver Heywood, 14th February, 1682/3, as follows; "I visited my son John, who is comfortably placed at Mr (Joseph) Marshes, at Garston, hath much respect, in a good frame, had a wonderful deliverance in preaching for Mr Grew in his Meeting Place at St Albans. Three Justices, three constables, four soldiers came to the fore-gate. Not going in, went to the back gates. That while people slipped out at fore-door, he was let down at a trap-door, so they all escaped...Mr Grew of St Albans hides himself at Mr Marsh's house at Garston."⁹

One further, interesting item regarding this intermediate period occurs in a manuscript discovered among the Archives of the Presbyterian Board by Dr James Patrick Longstaff in 1912. This manuscript, written, it is estimated between 1690 and 1693, gives details of allocations to ministers from the Fund and among the entries, there appears the following under "Hertford": - "Ministers that have a competent supply":

⁷ Julian J (editor) "Dictionary of Hymnology" pp 1236f

⁸ Manning BL "The Hymns of Wesley and Watts" p81

⁹ Urwick W "Centenary Memorial" p19

Mr Grew (Grue) At St Albans a Burrough has 40 L or 50 L
Subscriptions and some Estate of his owne, has 300 auditors: 50
communicants.”¹⁰

This Mr Grew, afterwards Dr Jonathan Grew was, of course, the first minister
appointed by the trustees, of whom he was one, of the Dagnall Lane Chapel.

¹⁰ Gordon A “Freedom After Ejection” p 50

Chapter 4

DAGNALL LANE

The Presbyterian Era

*“Whenever God erects a house of prayer
The devil always builds a chapel there,
And 'twill be found upon examination,
The latter has the larger congregation”.*

Daniel Defoe

The Dagnall Lane Meeting House was opened for worship in 1698 and stood almost within the shadow of St Albans Abbey.¹ The foundation deed was dated 11th October 1698, the trustees being: -

Joshua Lomax	Matthew Ironmonger
Jabez Earle	Thomas Jones
Jonathan Grew	William Grunwin
William Pembroke	William Smith
John Eeles	William Knowlton
Ralph Thrale	

Jonathan Grew was the first minister and one of the original trustees. In addition to the signatories of the original deed, Grew had the support of certain other local persons of influence, notably Joseph Marsh of Garston, his close friend; and John Tombes and John Leigh both of St Albans.²

The old chapel, still standing in what is now called Lower Dagnall Street, was finally given up for worship in 1895. Further information on this point is given in the next section. The side of the building adjoins the old burial ground of the present Congregational Chapel in Spicer Street. An anonymous author writing in 1815 says: “The Old Meeting, of Presbyterian origin, is...in Dagnall Lane; a plain building and commodious place of worship.”³ An interesting description is given by Urwick, who had many opportunities of examining the original building, within and without, and who, for a short time, held Sunday afternoon services in it. He writes: “It is a square substantial building of red brick, unpretentious but massive, the thick walls on either side each with six windows, three above and three below, the front with three windows above and two wide entrance doors. Within, a deep gallery runs along three sides, and the pulpit with communion pew below occupies the fourth, commanding a clear view of every seat below and above. The massive

¹ Defoe's cynical piece of doggerel, if in fact it was his, might be thought to show a lack of sympathy with the Dissent. On the other hand, his “Shortest Way with the Dissenters”, was a bitter satire written against Dr Sacheverell in ‘of the Dissent. Moderate Nonconformists deprecated this kind of championing of their cause. Defoe, for his pains, was put in the pillory which the common people hung with garlands of flowers. (refer: Dale RW “History of English Congregationalism” pp 492 & 493)

² Urwick W “Nonconformity in Herts” P188 and note

³ Anon “History of Verulam and St Albans” p192 “The Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times” of 9th May 1896 carried a long article in this connection with a sketch by a local artist: FG Kitton

roof of solid oak beams, ceilinged off, is supported by two strong, tall, tree-like pillars of timber, reminding one of the 'Jachin' and 'Boaz' of Solomon's temple; pillars whose very names denote 'firmness' and 'strength'. In fact, the building stands just as it was when first erected."⁴

Jonathan Grew was an able and well-read man. At the time he became minister of Dagnall Lane he was seventy-two years of age, having been born at Atherstone, Warwickshire in 1626. He was the nephew of the famous Dr Obadiah Grew of Coventry and was educated at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. After leaving the university, he went to Framlingham, Suffolk, as assistant to the rector, Dr Simpson, and so remained for several years until he received an invitation to become the tutor to the two sons of Lady Hales of Caldecott Hall, Nuneaton. During his stay in Caldecott, the minister there, a Mr Evans, became greatly attached to Grew and when Mr Evans died, it was found that he had arranged for the living to be offered to Grew. This was, however, refused by the tutor, as was also the offer by the Bishop of a prebend in Coventry and Lichfield - at this time, one diocese. In a letter to Calamy, Grew pointed out that these offers were no temptation to him to hazard the peace of his conscience.⁵

From Caldecott he proceeded to Stoke Newington, in North London and taught in a school there, after which he went to Garston, near Watford, Hertfordshire, to stay in the home of Mr Marsh. This was the connection which led to his introduction to the congregation at St Albans. A side-light on his character is furnished by the Rev Matthew Henry, the commentator. Matthew Henry, leaving London on a preaching tour on 2nd May 1698, passed through St Albans, paying "a short visit to the Rev Mr Grew, nephew of Dr Grew; a grave, serious man, who entertained him and his fellow-traveller, Mr Tong, with very good discourse, and showed them many mathematical curiosities."⁶ Jonathan Grew died in 1711, at the advanced age of eighty-five years and was buried in the Abbey, in the presbytery, by the Lady Chapel. Clutterbuck states that in the pavement, is a small, broken stone inscribed:

"Jon. Grew, dyed 1711. Mary Grew, his wife, 1719
Anne Freeman, her granddaughter, 1732".⁷

According to Urwick, the remains of Jonathan Grew and Mrs Mary Grew are interred in the Shepherd family vault, built and purchased in 1768.⁸

Dagnall Lane was not long without a minister, for within the year, Samuel Clark, at the age of twenty-eight, was ordained to the pastorate; and for the next thirty-eight years exercised a most influential ministry in the town. Clark sprang from a distinguished nonconformist family, his great-grandfather being Samuel Clark, the martyrologist (1599 to 1682), who was ejected in

⁴ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" P190

⁵ Sibree J and Caston M "Independency in Warwickshire" p406

⁶ Williams JB "Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Rev Matthew Henry" p36 (This 'life' is subjoined to a "A Commentary on the Holy Bible" by Matthew Henry.)

⁷ Clutterbuck R "The history and Antiquities of the County of Hertfordshire" vol 1 p72

⁸ Urwick W op cit p190

1662 when he was minister of Bennet-Fink Church in the City of London; two sons of the latter, John and Samuel (our Samuel's grandfather) being ministers, were both ejected from their respective pulpits in 1662.⁹

Clark came to St Albans with a great reputation for classical and scriptural learning, having had an outstanding career under Dr John Ker, a Scotsman, who kept an academy at Highgate and who, himself, had graduated as a doctor of medicine with great distinction, at Leyden University; Drs Doddridge and Calamy, each bear witness to the scholastic excellence of both teacher and taught.¹⁰ For a short period after leaving the jurisdiction of Dr Ker, Clark acted as tutor and chaplain in private families, using the time for the further improvement of his own knowledge and education. It was during this time that he received a pressing offer of preferment in the Established Church from one of his patrons, and was led, thereby, to make a close study of church history. The result of those researches, far from drawing him into the Establishment, set him planning to enter the ministry of the Protestant Dissenters. When Dr Philip Doddridge came to St Albans on 16th August 1750 to preach the sermon at Dr Clark's burial, he referred to the advantages which had accrued to the St Albans congregation by reason of their late minister's long service. The preacher said: "The result is well known to you, by the happy effects of it, which you enjoyed for so many years; and though no man was less enslaved to a party-spirit, or more ready to do justice and honour to learning, moderation and piety, wherever he found any of them; yet I am authorised to say, he never repented the choice he made, under all its temporal disadvantages: nor is it any wonder to me, that the observation of growing years, and the freest converse with men and books, and above all, the nearest views of eternity, increased his satisfaction in it."¹¹

The Ordination service took place in the Dagnall Lane Chapel on 17th September 1712 and was attended by several famous dissenting ministers of the day; it must have been a most impressive occasion. The sermon was preached by Mr Jeremiah Smith. Dr Daniel Williams proposed the questions to the incoming minister according to "the Method and Solemnity of Presbyterian Ordinations", and the exhortation at the end of the service was given to the new minister by Mr Matthew Henry, the bible commentator.¹²

Clark's ability as a preacher became widely known in his day and he appears to have been able to steer a successful middle course through the extreme controversies of his time. His young friend and protégé, Doddridge, states: "He happily joined the rational and pathetic with the scriptural and evangelical strains. The most judicious hearers were entertained, while the least knowing were instructed, and they who had made the greatest progress

⁹ Sibree J and Caston M "Independency in Warwickshire" p402 and Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p191

¹⁰ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p 192

¹¹ Doddridge P "A Funeral Sermon preached at St Albans Dec 16 1750 on the occasion of the much lamented Death of the late Reverend Samuel Clark DD" p27

¹² There are two copies of this sermon in the library at St Albans, one of which bears the name of Sarah Clark, and could be her autograph. Bound up with it, is the record of the Ordination Service. In his diary under 18th September 1712, the day following the ordination, Matthew Henry wrote: "I visited Mrs Grew." (Williams JB "Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Rev Matthew Henry" p 75)

in the divine life were led on to further improvements.”¹³ As a pastor he was nothing behind in his diligence and ability. It was his custom on Thursday evenings to hold a Bible class for young people in his vestry. In these classes he considered such subjects as: “The History of Scripture”, “Evidences of natural and Revealed Religion”, “Reasons for the Reformation from Popery” and “The Ethics of Solomon”.¹⁴ These talks resulted in the publication of his “Scripture Promises or, the Christian’s Inheritance. A collection of the Promises of Scripture under their proper heads”. Says Dr Isaac Watts in his “Recommendatory notice” (19th January, 1750): “The worthy author of this collection, whom I have long known with esteem and honour, has chosen to reduce all the most useful and important promises of the word of God into order, and set them before us here... It is the least thing that I can do to show my gratitude to the pious author of this collection, to tell the world how much I esteem it....”¹⁵ Clark’s “Promises” as it became known for short, formed an important adjunct to every library of his day, and even down to the mid-nineteenth century, formed part of the reading of the seriously-minded. The book contains one hundred and seven sections under various heads, and assembles under each, the apposite passages of scripture, eg “Promises of Temporal Blessings”; “Promises relating to Troubles in Life”, etc. Tradition states that General Gordon was much devoted to this book and kept a copy always within easy reach.

In his “Introduction” to “Scripture Promises”, Clark states: “...I know of no better way of enriching the minds of children with useful and solid knowledge, than by making them well acquainted with the Scriptures themselves, those pure, unmixed fountains of excellent and divine wisdom, and treasuring up in their memories a great number of select scriptures most suited to their capacity and use.”¹⁶ “Those young persons for whose benefit this collection was first undertaken...”¹⁷ were those youths and maidens who met Dr Clark in his vestry on Thursday evenings, in the old Dagnall Lane Meeting House.

Samuel Clark had been ministering for about three years when there occurred one of those happenings which change the whole course of a person's life - in this case, the life of a young lad of thirteen, one Philip Doddridge. Doddridge was born in London on 26th June 1702, the twentieth, and last child of his father's marriage; all the other children, with the exception of one daughter, died in childhood, and Philip himself was so delicate as a child, as to give grave doubts of his survival. His parents, most worthy and godly folk, brought him up in the fear of God. His biographer states: “I have heard him relate, that his mother taught him the history of the Old and New Testaments, before he could read...”¹⁸ Before he was ten he had begun his studies in the classics under a minister of religion named Stott, who carried on

¹³ Doddridge P “Works” vol 3 p391

¹⁴ idem op cit “A Funeral Sermon etc” p34n, also refer to note 11

¹⁵ Clark S “Scripture Promises’ & Isaac Watts’ “Recommendatory Notice” p.v

¹⁶ ibid p xxxi

¹⁷ ibid p xxxiv

¹⁸ Orton J “Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Rev P Doddridge DD” (subjoined to Doddridge’s ‘Works’) p18

a school in London; from the age of ten until he was thirteen, he was at a school at Kingston upon Thames, and then tragedy befell him: on 17th July 1715, his father died. The day following he wrote in his diary: "God is an immortal Father. My soul rejoiceth in Him. He has hitherto helped me. May it be my study to approve myself a more affectionate, grateful, dutiful child."¹⁹ About the time of his father's death, young Philip was sent to St Albans to continue his studies. This he did under the guidance of the Rev Nathaniel Wood, DD, a man of great learning and kindness, with whom Doddridge kept in touch for many years after the days of instruction were left behind. Long after his settlement in Northampton, it is recorded that Doddridge carried on a correspondence with both Dr Wood and Dr Clark regarding the influence of the Moravians on the religious life of the nation. He had, also, exchanges of letters with a doyen of the Moravians in Germany: Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf of the "Herrnhutt Gemeinde".²⁰ Doddridge's connection with Dr Wood proved to be of a most providential character, for through Dr Wood, Doddridge met Dr Clark of the Dagnall Lane Chapel.

Shortly after Doddridge arrived in St Albans to be placed with Dr Wood, his mother died, and his self-appointed guardian, one Downes, was found to have speculated with his own and Philip's fortune and to have lost everything. For this, he was put into a debtor's prison. Doddridge, true to his generous, lovely nature, sold the only asset that remained in his family, the family silver; this he did to secure the release of Downes from prison. Philip Doddridge's position was now very precarious. Dr Wood was much exercised about the matter and consulted his friend, Dr Clark. Clark at once responded, with the result that the worthy thirty-one year old minister and the godly thirteen year old youth came together in a life-long association. From that moment, until Doddridge buried Clark on 16th December 1750, they remained fast friends, and, incidentally, Doddridge survived Clark by less than a year.

Under Clark's care, the youth progressed with his studies and was prepared for church membership by the minister. Doddridge was admitted to the Lord's Table on 1st February 1718/19 at the Dagnall Lane Chapel²¹; he was then seventeen years of age. On the day of the communion, he wrote in the diary he had been keeping religiously for two years: "I rose early this morning; read that part of Mr Henry's book on the Lord's Supper, which treats of due approach to it. I endeavoured to excite in myself those dispositions and affections which he mentions as proper for that ordinance. As I endeavoured to prepare my heart, according to the preparation of the sanctuary, though with many defects, God was pleased to meet me, and give me sweet communion with Himself, of which I desire always to retain a grateful sense. I this day, in the strength of Christ, renewed my covenant with God and renounced my covenant with sin...."²²

¹⁹ Orton J "Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Rev P Doddridge DD" (subjoined to Doddridge's "Works") p18

²⁰ Arnold T and Cooper JJ "History of the Church of Doddridge" p118

²¹ *ibid* p19

²² *ibid* pp19 and 20

All this time Dr Clark was assisting the young man in many ways. His purse was at his disposal; he oversaw his academic studies and exerted a benign influence over him to enter the ministry. Doddridge could not come to an immediate conclusion about this step and went away for a short stay at Ongar, in Essex, where his only remaining relative, his sister, was the wife of Rev John Nettleton, the dissenting minister there. During his stay at Ongar, he received a pressing offer from the Duchess of Bedford of a place at either Oxford or Cambridge, if he would consent to prepare for the Church of England. He declined this offer, howbeit, with gratitude and approached the great Dr Edmund Calamy for advice on entering the ministry of the Protestant Dissenters. Calamy gave the young man little encouragement and Doddridge, cast down and disappointed, began to consider a legal career. At last the day came when he had to decide finally whether he would enter the service of a well-known advocate of the day, a Mr Eyre. As he was prayerfully considering his reply, indeed as he was praying, a letter arrived from Dr Clark of St Albans stating that he had heard of the young man's disappointment and offering to take and train him for the ministry. Doddridge wrote later: "I looked upon this almost as an answer from heaven; and while I live, shall always adore so seasonable an interposition of divine providence."²³

Through Dr Clark's instrumentality, Doddridge was placed under the tutorship of Mr John Jennings, who kept an academy at Kibworth in Leicestershire. Jennings was famed for his learning and piety. This was in 1719 and Doddridge stayed with Mr Jennings until the latter's death in 1723. In June of that year, Doddridge returned to Kibworth as pastor of the congregation there. During this period of his life, Doddridge made the acquaintance of the Rev David Some of Harborough, with whom he often exchanged pulpits. Here again, Doddridge seems to have been most providentially guided in his contacts. Of Mr Some he wrote: "In him I found a sincere, wise, faithful and tender friend. From him I met with all the goodness I could have expected from a father, and have received greater assistance, than from any person; except Dr Clark in the affair of my education."²⁴ This is quoted to show the deep and abiding regard Doddridge cherished for Samuel Clark, a regard which increased with the years. When in 1729 he was urged by Dr Isaac Watts and others to set up an academy of his own at Harborough, it was to Dr Clark he turned chiefly for advice. The project matured, and at midsummer 1729, the academy was opened. Here again, we see the hand of Dr Clark at work. We find him sending Doddridge transcripts of lectures in divinity delivered by a Mr Jones of Tewkesbury,²⁵ and then when, a few months after, Doddridge was invited to accept the pastorate of the Castle Hill Meeting in Northampton, Clark is strongly urging him to take the offer.

On 19th March 1729/30 Philip Doddridge was inducted to the pastorate of Castle Hill, the charge being given to him by Dr Samuel Clark of St Albans - in one sense, the architect of his career.²⁶ A certificate of his ordination was

²³ Orton J "Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Rev P Doddridge DD" (subjoined to Doddridge's "Works") p21

²⁴ *ibid* p24

²⁵ *ibid* p42n

²⁶ *ibid* p47

given to him by the ministers attending the function.²⁷ His fame as a preacher and a scholar now began to spread far from his immediate neighbourhood. In 1736, the two colleges of the University of Aberdeen, Mareschal and Kings, each conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity; Doddridge graciously accepted the honour, and acknowledged it in his best Latin.²⁸ In 1745, Doddridge published his "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul". This work had originally been projected by Dr Isaac Watts, but ill health having prevented his going on with the task, he asked Doddridge to undertake it. In this connection, Doddridge wrote to Clark in December 1743: "I am hard at work on my book of the 'Rise and progress of Religion', which Dr Watts is impatient to see and I am eager to finish, lest he should slip away to heaven before it is done."²⁹ This work obtained a wide public and was translated into Dutch, French, German and Welsh. If this publication established Doddridge's reputation, it is more by his other publications that he is remembered. His greatest work was "The Family Expositor". This was a work in five volumes consisting of a paraphrase and commentary on the New Testament. It did much to popularise the study of the scriptures in an age which was about to experience the full force of the Evangelical Revival of Whitefield and the Wesleys. It so frequently happens, however, that a man's final reputation depends on some unexpected thing. While it might be assumed that the name of Doddridge would be perpetuated by his religious commentaries and dissertations, he is remembered chiefly by his hymns, the more familiar of which are mentioned later.

There was an interesting connection between Doddridge and the early Methodists, who had a very high opinion of "The Great Dissenter", as Tyerman calls him.³⁰ Charles Wesley records in his "Journal" under date 15th August 1749: "We had the satisfaction of two hours' conference at Mr Watkins', with that loving, mild, judicious Christian, Dr Doddridge."³¹ George Whitefield records in his "Journals": "22 May 1739: Reached Northampton about five in the evening, and was most courteously received by Dr Doddridge, Master of the Academy there."³² On 9th December 1745, John Wesley records that he left London for Northampton and called on Dr Doddridge; he states: "It was about the hour when he was accustomed to expound a portion of scripture to the young gentlemen under his care. He desired me to take his place."³³ Wesley received much help from Doddridge, especially when the former was compiling his "Christian Library".³⁴ Dr Doddridge wrote to Wesley, thus: "I set myself down, as well as I can, to discharge my promise, and fulfil your request, in giving my thoughts on that little collection of books, which you seem desirous to make for some of your young preachers." Then follow his recommendations and comments which

²⁷ Arnold T and Cooper JJ "History of the Church of Doddridge" p84 (see also Appendix III)

²⁸ *ibid* p114

²⁹ Milner T "The Life and Times and Correspondence of the Rev Isaac Watts DD" p627

³⁰ Tyerman L "Life and Times of the Rev John Wesley MA" p490

³¹ Wesley C "Journal" vol 3 p206

³² Whitfield G "Journals" p273

³³ Wesley J "Journal" vol 3 p206

³⁴ *idem* "Letters" vol 2 p152

show a great broadness and depth of reading and knowledge.³⁵ The Rev James Hervey, one of Wesley's close associates, wrote to a friend on 13th July 1754, that is, three years after the death of Philip Doddridge: "I now feel the loss of our valuable friend Dr Doddridge, to whose judgement I ever paid the highest deference."³⁶ One more example of the high esteem in which Doddridge was held in his day, may suffice: "it is the opinion of Count von Zinsendorf, the Moravian, written in a letter to Doddridge in December 1739, in which he gives the doctor an account of the overseas activities of the Moravian Missions. He addresses Doddridge as: "The very reverend man, much beloved in the bowels of the blessed Redeemer, pastor of Northampton, and vigilant theologian."³⁷

So Philip Doddridge continued on his widening way at Northampton and Clark continued at St Albans; separated by some distance, they yet managed to continue in a close fellowship. Letters were frequently exchanged, and in one such, Doddridge wrote to Clark: "It is a great satisfaction to me to think, that, when you cannot speak to me, you can speak to God for me; and however Providence may dispose of me for the present, I hope we are to live near each other in a better world, where I may be for ever improving by your conversation and for ever acknowledging, and perhaps repaying, those obligations, which do so immediately relate to that state, that I cannot but think they will be most gratefully remembered there."³⁸

From the moment that Dr Clark arrived in St Albans, he took an interest in the education of the young. His close association with the youthful Doddridge brings out this trait in the older man's character. This interest resulted at once in his Thursday evening bible class, already referred to. The ultimate outcome of this work among youth was the founding of the Charity School. Urwick suggests that this school was one of the first ever established in the country by the Protestant Dissenters. This took place in 1715. The pioneer character of the school and the approximate date of its founding have been deduced from a reference made by Dr Doddridge in the sermon he preached at Dr Clark's funeral. Said the preacher: "I cannot look upon the children of the Charity School now present, without recollecting that it is now more than thirty years since it was founded by his pious care, exciting the generality of his flock, to make (if I mistake not) the first effort of this kind, that was ever made among the Dissenters in the country; which has since been followed in many other places with happy success, and which I hope will still be, as I am sure the Institution here has already been, a means of great good, with respect both to the temporal and eternal Interest of many who must otherwise have been exposed to great ignorance and wretchedness."³⁹

Dr Clark's school was justly famous in its day and provided educational facilities for over one hundred scholars at one period of its existence. Some of

³⁵ Tyerman L op cit pp 518 and 519

³⁶ idem "The Oxford Methodists" p288

³⁷ idem "The Life and Times of the Rev John Wesley MA" p300

³⁸ Orton J "Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Rev P Doddridge DD" (subjoined to Doddridge's "Works") p99

³⁹ Doddridge P "Works" vol 3 p35

the pupils received free instruction and free clothing, while others were fee-paying.⁴⁰ Prior to the founding of Dr Clark's school, another educational establishment was carried on between 1715 and 1718 in the Old Manor House, then standing on the Hatfield Road near St Peter's Church. One of the roads in this vicinity is still called "Manor Road". This school was highly esteemed by the Dissenters of St Albans, and it was here that Dr Clark arranged for the early training of his young friend Philip Doddridge. Subsequently, the Old Manor House was demolished to make room for the handsome alms houses, known as "The Buildings", erected and endowed by Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough; these alms houses are still standing.⁴¹ By 1815, Dr Clark's school had declined in numbers to thirty boys and ten girls, but this was partly due to a split in the congregation in 1795; a further twelve boys and eight girls attended the school started by a seceded section of the church, meeting as Independents, at their own building in Spicer Street. This division is dealt with, at length, later. All the children attending the Independent school were charity scholars, but did not receive clothing.⁴² In 1739, the practice was started of having an annual collection in aid of the school and this was accompanied by the preaching of a sermon by well-known Dissenting ministers of the day. This annual event continued from 1739 to 1836. One interesting fact in this connection is worthy of mention: the Rev Thomas Urwick of Clapham, who preached the annual Charity School sermon in 1780, 1781 and 1797 was the brother of the great-grandfather of the Rev William Urwick, minister of Spicer Street Chapel from 1880 to 1895. By a providential fall out of events, in the course of his pastoral duties at Clapham, he came into contact with a youth named Joseph Lancaster. Mr Urwick's kindly influence led to the lad's rehabilitation after an abortive attempt to "run away to sea". As a result of his change of heart, Lancaster gave himself over to projects for the education and training of young children and became famous as the inventor of the Lancastrian system of education.⁴³

Dr Samuel Clark continued in the pastorate of Dagnall Lane with success and acceptance until the end of 1749, when owing to increased infirmity, although he was only in his middle sixties, he found it necessary to find an assistant. Such a person was found and proved to be a young man who had been born in St Albans and who had been much under Dr Clark's influence: Mr Jabez Hiron. Mr Hiron was born on 11th July 1728 and was, therefore, only twenty-one when he became Dr Clark's assistant. Hiron, after juvenile training at Kibworth, spent a short period with Dr Doddridge at Northampton, taking up his duties at St Albans in early 1750; but the joint pastorate was destined not long to continue; at last the end came. On the morning of Sunday, 2nd December 1750, surrounded by his deacons, in the old Dagnall Lane Chapel, Dr Clark conducted the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper for the last time. On the following Tuesday, 4th December, he died peacefully. His great friend and erstwhile pupil, Philip Doddridge ("Dear Phil"), came from Northampton to conduct the funeral on Wednesday 12th December. The burial took place in St Peter's Churchyard. The sermon, later

⁴⁰ Urwick W "Bible Truths and Church Errors-Dr Clark's Charity School" p219

⁴¹ Anon "History of Verulam and St Albans" pp201 & 202 and note

⁴² *ibid* pp211 & 212

⁴³ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p 225

published, was based upon the text: "Jesus wept" (John 11:35) and consisted of "Meditations on the Tears of Jesus over the Grave of Lazarus." The printed copy, published at Northampton, 7th January 1750/1, was dedicated "to Mrs Sarah Clark, the worthy Relict of...the late Reverend Doctor Clark." Clutterbuck gives details of the memorial stone which was erected In St Peter's Church.⁴⁴

The day of Dr Clark's funeral was a tragic day for Dr Philip Doddridge. Always a delicate individual, he caught cold easily in the bleak December weather, and the consumption which for long had lain dormant, flared up. At this trying period of his life, Doddridge still retained an indirect connection with his deceased old friend, for he was being ably assisted by Dr Clark's son Samuel, at the Northampton Academy. "It is a happy circumstance that at the time of Dr Doddridge's illness and decease, he had for his assistant in the academy, Mr Samuel Clark, the son of his friend Dr Clark. In this gentleman were united wisdom, knowledge and an uncommon equanimity of temper. Indeed, though very young, he was well qualified to have been chosen to succeed Dr Doddridge in the office of principal tutor; but this his modesty would not have permitted, and, upon the whole, it was undoubtedly proper that a man of more advanced life should be appointed."⁴⁵

The congregation at Northampton were much distressed by the great man's increasing weakness. The torch passed on by Dr Clark, had fallen into a nerveless grasp. The doctor already had one assistant; the congregation gladly and readily found the money for a second assistant, but to no purpose.⁴⁶ His general health, now very poor indeed, caused his people to assist him to take a sea voyage, in the hope that the change of scene and the sea air would benefit the sick pastor. The cost of this venture was met by subscriptions from his members and from a judicious rearrangement of his finances by a friend in London, a Mr Neal, who for years had managed his temporal affairs.⁴⁷

Accompanied by Mrs Doddridge, the Doctor set sail from Falmouth on 30th September 1751, bound for Lisbon, and after a pleasant voyage, during which his health improved, they made their land-fall on 13th October following. The next day he wrote home to his assistant, adding to his letters; "I bless God, the most undisturbed serenity continues in my mind, and my strength holds proportion to my day."⁴⁸ Notwithstanding the healthful nature of the voyage and the novelty of the new scenes around him, he began to decline rapidly, and on 26th October 1751 (OS), in the early morning, he died, in the fiftieth year of his age and but a few short months after the departure of his close friend and patron, Dr Samuel Clark of St Albans.

⁴⁴ Clutterbuck R "The history and Antiquities of the County of Hertfordshire" vol1 p72 (see Appendix VI)

⁴⁵ Orton J "Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Rev P Doddridge DD" (subjoined to Doddridge's "Works") p204 (footnote added by Dr Kippis)

⁴⁶ Arnold T and Cooper JJ "History of the Church of Doddridge" p84 (see also Appendix III p138)

⁴⁷ Orton J op cit p193

⁴⁸ *ibid* p198

After his death, the Rev Dr Job Orton, his biographer, collected and published the Doctor's hymns. This book reached its third edition in 1766 and contained 375 items.⁴⁹ In the Doddridge Chapel at Northampton, over the pulpit, there is a handsome tablet to his memory,⁵⁰ but a far greater monument is to be found in the hymns and sacred poems which have been bequeathed to posterity and which form a rich part of our Nonconformist legacy. To mention a few of the most well-known, there are: -

O God of Bethel, by Whose hand.....
Hark, the glad sound
See Israel's gentle Shepherd stand.....
My God, and is Thy table spread.....
O happy day that fixed my choice.....
My gracious Lord, I own Thy right.....

One cannot read the fifth verse of the last mentioned, without a pang:

"His work my hoary age shall bless,
When youthful vigour is no more,
And my last hour of life confess
His love hath animating power".

At fifty, youthful vigour had departed indeed, but hoary age was not to be his. It has been justly said: "Dr Doddridge must find a place, if not the highest, among sacred poets. Some of his hymns are superior, and his epigrams upon the motto of his family arms, are pronounced, by Dr Johnson, the best in the English language."⁵¹

The body of Dr Doddridge was laid to rest in the English Cemetery in Lisbon; Mr Williamson, chaplain of the British factory in the city, conducted the last rites.⁵² Dr Kippis adds a note in the Biography: "Dr Doddridge's funeral sermon was preached by Mr Orton, who was in every view, the properest person for that service."⁵³ So Dr Doddridge, although he outshone in many ways, his friend and benefactor, Dr Clark, yet was a part of the Dagnall Lane tradition and would not, possibly, have become the leading Nonconformist of his day, apart from the influence and very practical assistance on many critical occasions, of the older man.

⁴⁹ Nuttall GF (Editor) "Philip Doddridge 1702-51, His contribution to the English Religion": article by Erik Routley: "The Hymns of Philip Doddridge" p49

⁵⁰ See Appendix IV

⁵¹ Bogue D and Bennett J "History of Dissenters from the Revolution in 1688 to the year 1808" vol3 p484

⁵² Orton J "Memoirs of the Life, Character and Writings of the late Rev P Doddridge DD" (subjoined to Doddridge's "Works") p200

⁵³ *ibid* p204n

Chapter 5

DAGNALL LANE

The Arian Controversy

“Lo, now, my brethren, I am this day fourscore and five years old - a wonder of God's sparing mercy! Sixty- three of these years I have spent in the work of the ministry among you - I am the third of the pastorate in this Church.”¹

These words could almost be true of the Rev Jabez Hiron, successor to the illustrious Dr Samuel Clark, and third of the famous Presbyterian divines of the Dagnall Lane Chapel; for Hiron became minister in 1751, after having assisted Dr Clark for a few months, and continued in the pastorate until his death on 21st December 1812, at the age of eighty-four. He continued in the pastorate for sixty-two years, and it must be something unique in the annals of Nonconformity for two ministers successively to have occupied a pulpit for a whole century, in this case from 1712 to 1812.

Mr Hiron was in his native element at Dagnall Lane. Born at St Albans on 11th July 1728, he had his early education away from the town; at first, at a grammar school in Leicester, and then at Kibworth with Dr Aiken, a former schoolfellow in St Albans of Dr Doddridge. In his middle teens, possibly under the guidance of Dr Clark, he went to Northampton to study under Doddridge and remained there for five years. Meanwhile, Dr Clark's health began to fail and, in 1750, Hiron returned to St Albans to act as his assistant. Dr Clark died on 4th December 1750, and Hiron, although only twenty-three, was appointed minister by the Trustees. His youth did not appear to be a disadvantage, rather the reverse, for he made a great appeal to young people and early in his career, evinced a great interest in the flourishing Charity School established by his predecessor some time before 1720.² We read: “... he visited (ie the Charity school) with parental vigilance and unwearied zeal.”³

In his ministerial services, Hiron was a serious and devout pastor and his preaching was practical and easily understood. Many young persons, who came under his instruction, were known to have received great benefit; He was a man of more than ordinary intellect and literary ability, but of a retiring nature. This may account for the fact that little is known of his career at Dagnall Lane. For many years he contributed “to one of the oldest and most respectable of the periodical publications.”⁴ Like most dissenting ministers of his day, his level of culture was high and his general knowledge considerable.

¹ An extract from a sermon entitled; “The Old Man's Calendar”; a discourse on Joshua 14 v10, preached in the first Parish of Hingham, USA, on Sunday 26th August 1781, the birthday of the preacher, Ebenezer Gay; subsequently published in London; quoted from the “Monthly Repository”, vol 8, 1883 p52

² Urwick W “Nonconformity in Herts” p223

³ Monthly Repository vol 8 p52

⁴ ibid (Could this be a modest anonymity on the part of the Monthly Repository?)

As far as his religious life was concerned, a contemporary writer says: "An habitual regard to God, and a strong sense of his own dependence and obligations, were visible in his conversation and behaviour; and he cordially accepted for himself, and especially recommended to others, the great salvation of the gospel."⁵ His interpretation of the scriptures was, in modern terms, "liberal", but he gave equal honour to men of all shades of religious opinion provided they were sincere; he, himself, was highly esteemed by his contemporaries. "Never was a man more generally or more deservedly respected, in his sphere, for his unaffected candour and catholicism, for his upright, peaceful, blameless and consistent deportment, and for his readiness to do good to all men, as he had opportunity."⁶ These exemplary traits in Mr Hirons' character were manifested in his great benevolence to all, especially to young persons for whom he spent himself. It is on record that he assumed the guardianship of certain orphans and behaved towards them with "all the tenderness and wisdom of a father."⁷

A few years after entering the pastorate, he married Anne, second daughter of the late Samuel Clark, whose family had remained in St Albans after his death. Mr Hirons lived with Anne, a long and happy life of fifty years, and when she died, something vital seemed to go out of his life. "He bore the loss of her in the autumn of 1804, with exemplary submission to his God and Father, but the event left a strong impression on his heart, and it became evident that one of his dearest earthly ties was rent asunder."⁸ Mr Hirons continued as minister at Dagnall Lane for another eight years after his wife's death, dying himself on 21st December 1812, in his eighty-fifth year. He was buried on 29th December in the same grave as Anne, in St Peter's Churchyard.⁹ The funeral sermon was preached at Dagnall Lane Chapel on 10th January 1813 by Rev John Kentish, a well-known Unitarian minister of the day.

In spite of the respect in which he was universally held, Mr Hirons saw many adverse changes in his very long ministry. Like many Presbyterian ministers of his time, he became a Unitarian, and for this reason, his later years were clouded by the serious doctrinal controversies which appeared among the members of his congregation. Had St Albans responded to the appeal of the Evangelical Revival, as many other provincial towns had done, things might have been different at Dagnall Lane and elsewhere, but no Methodist witness began in the town until 1793, and then only as an outpost of the circuit centred in Bedford.¹⁰ There is evidence that members of Dagnall Lane, dissatisfied with Mr Hirons' teaching, withdrew and worshipped with the Baptist Congregation in the same street. There is no record of those who seceded, but an entry in the Baptist Church Book states: "7th September 1794. Some Independents in our congregation left us, and opened a place for

⁵ "Monthly Repository" vol 8 p52

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ See Appendix VII

¹⁰ Greaves JG "Methodism in the City of the Pro-Martyr" p39

public worship, under the ministry of Mr Moreton.”¹¹ Urwick spells this name 'Morton'. It is also quite likely that after the Independent meeting house was opened there may have been others from Dagnall Lane join the congregation, in addition to those who had come via the Baptist Church. This cannot be satisfactorily established and, therefore, there is a short hiatus in the chain from 1650 to the present day.

At this point it would be as well to add a note as to the extent of the spread of Unitarianism in the country. As the name implies, Unitarianism calls for belief in one God, as distinct from the Trinitarian view of God being 'The Father, Son and Holy Ghost' at one and the same time; Jesus Christ being merely human but morally perfect. This view was a return to an old doctrine originally propounded by one Arius about AD 318, but condemned by the early church. It was revived in 1546 by an Italian, Socinius, and introduced into England about 1700. Its success in this country was largely due to a development of the work of a clergyman of the Episcopal Church, Dr Samuel Clarke (1672-1729), rector of St James's, Piccadilly, and not to be confused with Dr Samuel Clark of St Albans. Clarke is justly famous for his "Paraphrase of the Four Evangelists", but in his comments therein, he does not express precise Arian views; in his "The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity", however, "he maintained a position which, without being Arian, leant towards Arianism."¹² As a theologian in the front rank, Clarke was bound to attract the attention of people like Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge, neither of whom however, were Arian in belief, although in some quarters they were accused of being so. The famous Unitarian divine, Dr Lardner, called Watts a Unitarian, but this is deprecated by Milner, who states: "To pronounce him a "Unitarian" in the sense in which the term is commonly understood, is unwarrantable and unjust."¹³ About the year 1820, a Miss Lucy Aikin (1781-1864), a granddaughter of Hiron's Kibworth schoolmaster, Dr Aikin, referred to the work of Doddridge, stating that he "had begun to break forth out of the chains and darkness of Calvinism" and that his manner softened with his system.¹⁴ Any attempt to break away from the stern Calvinism of the age was sure to attract adverse criticism from the advocates of the then accepted scriptural interpretation of the doctrine of Salvation. The protracted, bitter controversy in spoken and written word between John Wesley and Augustus Montague Toplady was a case, not of Calvin against Arius, but of Arminius against Calvin. Indeed, the movement towards Unitarianism was much encouraged by those in revolt against the strong Calvinism of the Presbyterian Church.

As may well be imagined, the best picture of an Arian or a Socinian would be one drawn at the time of the actual happenings. Here are two definitions given by Dr Isaac Watts in a letter to his brother, Mr Enoch Watts.¹⁵

¹¹ Church Book – Dagnall Street Baptist Church St Albans

¹² Dale RW "History of English Congregationalism" p532

¹³ Milner T "The Life and Times and Correspondence of Rev Isaac Watts DD" p190

¹⁴ McLachlan H "The Unitarian Movement in the religious Life of England" vol 1 (Its contribution to thought and learning) p285

¹⁵ Milner T op cit pp190 and 191. The two passages referred to are;_

Of Arians, Dr Watts wrote: "Arians are old heretics, the disciples of one Arias, above one thousand years ago, and in our times some men are apt to believe his errors, which are, First, That Christ is not real and true God, equal with the Father, but only a creature created before all things else, and God made use of him before he made the world. The notion they build upon is the false interpretation of 1 John 1:2 & 3; and Colossians 1:15 & 16. Second, That Christ is called God only in respect of his office; that is, his doing miracles, his instructing the world, and such like. Third, They deny the Holy Spirit to be a person in the Godhead, and so overthrow the Trinity, and hence they are called Antitrinitarians." Of the Socinians he wrote: "There was one Socinius, in Calvin's time, who revived the heresy of Arius, but explained it after another manner. First the Socinians deny Christ to be real God and yet they own the Scripture to be the word of God as well as the Arians. Second: They say Christ did not die to satisfy divine justice for our sins, but only to confirm the truth of his doctrine, and to give us a good example. They deny a trinity of persons in the Deity, they deny original sin and say that children sin by imitation, not from corrupt nature. The foundation of their error is, that they make reason the interpreter of scripture, and generally believe the soul sleeps with the body till the resurrection."

It must be remembered that Arianism was the "Zeit Geist" of the eighteenth century's religious thinking and that between 1730 and 1750, few pulpits were untouched by it.¹⁶ An apparent decline after that date is in general due, most certainly, to the influence of the Evangelical Revival with its greater emphasis on "personal religion" and "experimental Christianity". Some places, little touched by the preaching of Whitefield and the Wesleys, remained Arian, St Albans being an example. The Methodist witness arrived in the town so late in the century that it could have had little or no effect on the Dagnall Lane controversy, (see note 10 on page 33).

Before passing to the subsequent history of the Dagnall Lane Chapel, mention should be made of the connection with the poet, William Cowper. Although this connection lasted barely two years, it formed an important link between the poet and one member of the Dagnall Lane congregation: Dr Nathaniel Cotton (1707-1788). Briefly: Nathaniel Cotton as a young man, studied medicine at Leyden University, under the famous Professor Boerhaare, and devoted his attention especially to the study of the diseases of the brain. As such, he became assistant to a physician in Dunstable. About 1740, Cotton removed to St Albans, where he resided for the rest of his life. He built a large house on the corner of what is now Lower Dagnall Street and College Street. This edifice was known as the "Collegium Insanorum", giving its name to the adjacent thoroughfare. This place was intended to be an asylum for the reception of private patients. Soon after his arrival in St Albans, Dr Cotton allied himself with Dr Samuel Clark at the Dagnall Lane Chapel and

1 John 1:2-3 ("For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested and us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Colossians 1:15-16. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and in invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:"

¹⁶ Colligan JH "The Arian Movement in England" p93

became a great friend of Philip Doddridge, with whom he carried on some correspondence after the latter's removal to Northampton.

A good doctor with an excellent reputation in his day, Cotton was also a deeply religious man; from 1760 onwards he achieved some fame as a hymn-writer and poet. Some of his hymns appeared in a collection made by Dr Dodd for his "Christian's Magazine", while his poetry appeared after his death under the titles: "Various Pieces in Verse and Prose", and "Visions in Verse". His best known hymn: "Affliction is a stormy deep", is a metrical rendering of part of Psalm xlii and appeared in April 1761 but it has ceased to be used in modern hymn-books.¹⁷ Dr Cotton died in 1788 at the age of eighty-one and was buried in St Peter's Churchyard in the same grave as his two wives and his daughter. Clutterbuck records the following: -

"Here are deposited the remains of
Anne, Hannah and Nathaniel Cotton.
Here lyeth the body of Miss Catherine Cotton,
daughter of Dr Cotton, dyed 2 December 1780.
"Time was like thee, she life possess'd
And time shall be that thou shalt rest".¹⁸

In the year 1763, Cotton was called upon to receive the poet Cowper into his "Collegium Insanorum". Cowper was a native of Hertfordshire, having been born at Berkhamstead on 26th November 1731, where his father, the Reverend John Cowper DD was rector. Of his birth he wrote: -

"My boast is not that I can trace my birth
From loins enthroned, or rulers of the earth;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,
The son of parents passed into the skies."¹⁹

From earliest childhood he was affectionate, but sensitive and timid, lacking the care of a mother, who died when he was but six years of age. His early school days were wretched. He was afflicted with eye trouble and subject to continuous bullying by one of his school-fellows. This sorry state only ended when he went to live in the family of an oculist in London. Remaining there for two years, he then entered Westminster School, where he spent the next ten years and where, in spite of his delicate state of health, he acquired a considerable knowledge of the classics. Leaving school eventually, he began a study of the law and in 1754 he was called to the Bar, but had little taste for a legal career and never practised. When he was thirty-one his uncle, Major Cowper, obtained an appointment for him as Clerk of the Journal of the House of Lords, but his sensitive mind shrank from the publicity the duties of such a position demanded and he experienced the violent attack of madness which threw a shadow over the whole of his remaining years. Concerning this, he wrote later: "My continual misery at length brought on a nervous fever: quiet forsook me by day, and peace by night; a finger raised against me, was more than I could stand against."²⁰

¹⁷ Julian J (Editor) "Dictionary of Hymnology" p28 ii (see also appendix VIII)

¹⁸ Clutterbuck R "The History and Antiquities of the County of Hertfordshire" vol 1 p121

¹⁹ Anon "Poetical Works of William Cowper Esq" p10

²⁰ Southey R "The Life and Works of William Cowper" vol 3 p112

Melancholy increasing, Cowper sought relief in laudanum, with which drug he intended to end his life. Poisoning having failed, he tried on two subsequent occasions to commit suicide, first by drowning, then by hanging. He then became obsessed with the delusion that his sins had placed him outside the mercy and providence of God. He was by this time in the depths of despair and his mental illness seized him with unabated fierceness. The poor man, now unable to care for himself, was entirely dependent on his brother John, who, with the help of a few friends, had William removed to St Albans and into the care of Dr Nathaniel Cotton.

His stay with Cotton was of the greatest benefit to him and after his recovery, he wrote to Lady Hesketh from Huntingdon on 4th July 1765, as follows: - "...I reckon it one instance of the Providence that has attended me throughout this whole event, that instead of being delivered into the hands of one of the London physicians, who were so much nearer, that I wonder I was not, I was carried to Doctor Cotton. I was not only treated by him with the greatest tenderness, while I was ill, and attended with the utmost diligence, but when my reason was restored to me, and I had so much need of a religious friend to converse with, to whom I would open my mind upon the subject without reserve, I could hardly have found a fitter person for the purpose. My eagerness and anxiety to settle my opinions upon that long neglected point, made it necessary that while my mind was yet weak, and my spirits uncertain, I should have some assistance. The Doctor was as ready to administer relief to me in this article likewise, and as well qualified to do it as in that which was more immediately his province. How many physicians would have thought this an irregular appetite, and a symptom of remaining madness! But if it were so, my friend was as mad as myself, and it is well for me that he was so."²¹ Upon his mind clearing, his powerful bent for poetry reasserted itself and he thus expressed his own fate: -

"I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
Long since. With many an arrow deep infixed
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by one, who had himself
Been hurt by th' archers. In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live.
Since then, with few associates, in remote
And silent woods I wander, far from those
My former partners of the peopled scene;
With few associates, and not wishing more.
Here much I ruminat, as much I may,
With other views of men and manners now
Than once, and others of the life to come."²²

Here he may have been thinking of his partnership with the Rev John Newton at Olney.

²¹ Hayley W "The Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper Esq" 2nd edition, 3 vols. London vol 1 p26

²² Anon "Poetical Works of William Cowper Esq" p26

William Hayley, Cowper's biographer, expressed a high opinion of Dr Cotton. Referring to William, he wrote: "...it was found necessary to remove him to St Albans, where he resided a considerable time under the care of that eminent physician, Dr Cotton, a scholar and a poet, who added to many accomplishments a peculiar sweetness of manners in very advanced life, when I had the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with him."²³

From December 1763 to July 1764, Cowper was in the most morbid state, but "...the medical skill of Dr Cotton, and the cheerful benignant manners of that accomplished physician, gradually succeeded, with the blessing of Heaven, in removing the indescribable load of religious despondency, which had clouded the admirable faculties of this innocent and upright man. His ideas of religion were changed from the gloom of terror and despair to the lustre of comfort and delight."²⁴

There is a local tradition in St Albans, that Cowper, while staying at Dr Cotton's, was in the habit of taking evening walks accompanied by one of Dr Cotton's servants. Cowper became much attached to this man and took him with him to Huntingdon after his stay in St Albans.²⁵ An elderly man and a member of Spicer Street Chapel in 1891, one Charles Lewis, of Albert Street, told Rev William Urwick that "...his mother knew Dr Cotton and the poet Cowper. Cowper used to walk out by day alone, but at night with a keeper who led the way with a lamp. This gave Cowper the thought in his hymn: "O for a closer walk with God". Cowper was chosen by the Independents of Dagnall Lane Chapel (where he worshipped with Dr Cotton) to be a candidate for the Deaconship, but the Presbyterians carried their Arian candidate, and Cowper left the town."²⁶

This statement may well be true if we think of Cowper and his guide tramping along Spicer Street, turning right down Fishpool Street, and thence into the village of St Michael's. It may well be that as they picked their way along the banks of the little Ver, or across the marshy fields beyond, with only the feeble flicker of the lantern to show the way, the words of the great hymn were born in the poet's minds: -

"O for a closer walk with God
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb.

.....
So shall my walk be close with God
Calm and serene my frame;
So pure a light shall mark the road

²³ Haley W "The Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper Esq" 2nd edition p26

²⁴ idem p28

²⁵ This is probably the lackey he refers to in his letter to Joseph Hill of 24th June 1765: "I am not quite alone, having brought a servant from St Albans, who is the very mirror of fidelity and affection for his master...Men do not usually bestow these encomiums on their lackeys, nor do they usually deserve them, but I have had experience of mine, both in sickness and in health and never saw his fellow." Quoted: Hayley W op cit p35 and Southey R "The Life and Works of William Cowper" pp 35 and 154

²⁶ Urwick W "Centenary Memorial" pp 80 & 82

That leads me to the Lamb.”

In addition to this example, the best known of his hymns are: -

Ere God had built the mountains
Heal us, Immanuel; hear our prayer;
There is a fountain filled with blood,
The Spirit breathes upon the Word,
Hark my soul! It is the Lord;
God moves in a mysterious way
Sometimes a light surprises
Jesus, where're Thy people meet,

Throughout the rest of his life, Cowper was reluctant to refer at length to his stay in St Albans, notwithstanding his very satisfactory relationship with Dr Cotton. He wrote to his close friend, Joseph Hill, from Olney, on 16th June 1768: “I visited St Albans about a fortnight since in person, and I visit it every day in thought. The recollection of what passed there, and the consequences that followed it, fill my mind continually, and make the circumstances of a poor transient half spirit life, so insipid and unaffecting, that I have no heart to think or wish much about them.”²⁷

Undoubtedly, his stay in St Albans, brief as it was, did him much good, and he continued to entertain an affection for Dr Cotton. As late as 1784 (11th September), and but four years before Dr Cotton's death, Cowper wrote to Joseph Hills: “I have never seen Dr Cotton's book, concerning which your sisters question me, nor did I know, 'till you mentioned it, that he had written anything newer than his Visions; I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him, as to be pious and sensible, and I believe, no man living is better qualified to write on such subjects, as his title seems to announce. Some years have passed since I heard from him, and considering his great age, it is probable I shall hear from him no more, but I shall always respect him. He is truly a Philosopher, according to my judgement of the character, every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects, being connected in his mind, with the firm belief of an Omnipotent Agent.”²⁸

At the end of his stay in St Albans, Cowper went to Huntingdon and from there, on 24th June 1765, he wrote to his friend Joseph Hill: “I left St Albans on 17th and arrived that day at Cambridge, spent some time with my brother, and came here on 22nd.”²⁹ In reporting this event, Southey quotes Cowper as saying: “On the 7th of June 1765, having spent more than eighteen months at St Albans...I took my leave of the place at four in the morning and set out for Cambridge.”³⁰ Seeing that he “spent some time with his brother”, the 7th June seems the more reasonable day than the 17th.

²⁷ Haley W “The Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper Esq” 2nd edition pp 66 & 67

²⁸ *ibid* pp 139 & 140

²⁹ *ibid* p34

³⁰ Southey R “The Life and Works of William Cowper” vol 3 p154

The malady from which Cowper suffered would today be called Melancholia, which is a mental illness marked by ill-founded fears and emotions. Persons suffering in this way are frequently subject to delusions; they withdraw into solitude and sometimes evince a tendency to suicide. These symptoms could be seen in Cowper's illness. His mental weakness, however, in no way detracted from his brilliance as a poet and hymn-writer, nor did it dry up the springs of tenderness, which come out so strongly in his writings and his actions.³¹ Julian states: "His great poems show no trace of his monomania, and are full of healthy piety."³² One might here refer to the healthy fun of "John Gilpin". Immediately following his recovery at St Albans, he wrote "The Happy Chance" ("How blest Thy creature is, O God"), and "Retirement" ("Far from the world, O Lord, I flee"). These are not the writings of a maniac.³³ He lived to write his greatest poem "The Task", which was inspired by his great interest in the witty and clever Lady Austen. Later, at Olney, he collaborated with the Rev John Newton to compile the "Olney Hymns" (1779), to which he contributed sixty-seven items.³⁴

An illustration of his tenderness and kindness is expressed in a moving incident, which occurred during his stay in St Albans. He became acquainted with a lad whose parents were neglectful and profligate. Cowper took the lad to Huntingdon, had him educated, and then finally, secured his apprenticeship back in St Albans.³⁵

Although William Cowper attended Dagnall Lane Chapel in Jabez Hiron's heyday, he does not appear to have been a Unitarian. It has already been noted that he was the Independents' candidate for the diaconate, as distinct from the nominee of the Arian section of the congregation. As far as can be ascertained, his only other connection with Unitarianism was a notice he contributed to the Analytical Review of February 1789 regarding Glover's "Athenaid".³⁶

³¹ I came across a case recently, which in many ways, resembled that of Cowper, but which, unlike his, ended in suicide. An autopsy revealed a malformation of the brain. FAJH.

³² Julian J (Editor) "Dictionary of Hymnology" p265 ii

³³ *ibid* p867 ii

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ Haley W "The Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper Esq" 2nd edition vol 1 p71

³⁶ McLachlan H "The Unitarian Movement in the religious Life of England" vol 1 (Its contribution to thought and learning) p173
(The "Analytical Review" was a periodical published between May 1788 and December 1799; an Octavo of 128 pages, running to 28 volumes).

Chapter 6

DAGNALL LANE

Declension

“ ... I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten ”
Joel 2:25

We have seen that the doctrinal crisis at Dagnall Lane Chapel reached a climax during the 1790s with the withdrawal of the orthodox Dissenters. This must have been a great sorrow to Mr Hirons, who was now an old man. This happening, and the death of his wife in 1804, were his crowning sorrows, and he died in 1812. In 1813 he was succeeded by the Rev William Marshall, a highly esteemed Unitarian minister. It was in Mr Marshall's time that the connection with the Martineau family took place. This family, descended from Gaston Martineau, a surgeon of Dieppe and a Huguenot, who had come to England in 1685, following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes,¹ was represented, at this period, by Dr James Martineau of Birmingham, a distinguished minister of the Unitarian Church, who was said to be, at one time, an occasional preacher at Dagnall Lane.² The name of Martineau was certainly familiar in St Albans at this time, because from 1804, and for some years after, there had been a firm of bankers carrying on business under the style of Martineau & Story. This firm became J S Story in 1829 and failed in 1848 during the straitened business conditions that marked the Chartist period of the nineteenth century. Besides his banking activities, Mr Story was also a town councillor. His name disappears after 1848, the year of his failure as a banker. No trace can be found of any connection between Dr James Martineau's family and the banking partnership.³

Rev William Marshall left Dagnall Lane Chapel In 1834 and until his successor, Rev John Mitchelson was appointed in 1835, the services were conducted by a layman, a Mr John Goodland, a friend of the Martineau family and one who had been in charge of the Charity School since 1829. The Martineaus had considerable interests in the Jamaica sugar trade and Mr Goodland had acted as the overseer of one of their plantations. The name of Martineau is still well known in the sugar industry. Mr Goodland was an able man, and account states that he was “an exceedingly clever and good man, a true, devout and practical Christian.”⁴

¹ “The Edict of Nantes” was proclaimed by Henry IV of France on 13th April 1598 to give freedom of worship to French Protestants. The edict was revoked by Louis the XIV on 22 October 1685.

² The Victoria History of the County of Hertfordshire, (Page W editor), states: “Down at Dagnal Street, on the south side, is the square red-brick Unitarian chapel in which Dr Martineau used to preach; an early 18th century building of the plainest description, but interesting as a specimen of an early Dissenting Chapel.” vol 2 p 472. (This building is still in existence -1962, and is used as a warehouse. The whole front of the building has been cemented over. - FAJH)

³ In a letter to the author dated 24th July 1953, Dr H McLachlan, the well known Unitarian Historian, states: “I have six lives of James M, but no reference to his relation to the Bankers is mentioned. The Norwich family, of which there are records, begins in 1695. James M himself was born in 1805 and if the Bankers of St Albans had been related to him I should have some reference to it.”

⁴ Urwick W “Bible Truths and Church Errors” etc p 225

A distinguished member of the Independent Chapel in Mr Urwick's time, and a former Mayor of St Albans (1875), Mr George Slade,⁵ was educated at the Charity School and came into contact with Mr Goodland over a period of some years. Mr Slade, through Mr Goodland, came to know Miss Harriet Martineau, the sociologist and economist. Mr Urwick states: "George Slade...when a boy...acted as amanuensis for the eminent Harriet Martineau. Miss Martineau was wont to visit her relations in St Albans, and lived with her uncle Peter Martineau three years. During this time, when writing her 'Illustrations of Political Economy', she employed George Slade to copy the work in full."⁶

Mr Goodland left St Albans in 1838 and removed to Great Gaddesden. In his account of his own life, Mr Slade wrote: "Mr Marshall's leaving was a source of lamentation to the poor and needy of St Albans...He was sorely tried and persecuted for his conscientious beliefs, by those who should have aided and assisted him in his good works. Never in the sixty-two years I have resided at St Albans have I known two more true Christians, both in precept and practice, than the Rev William Marshall and Mr John Goodland."⁷

In 1835 the Rev John Mitchelson became minister and stayed for two years, to be succeeded, in 1837, by the last of the Unitarian ministers, Rev Philip Coleman. There is a record of Mr Coleman's claiming a vote by reason of his being the minister of the English Presbyterian Church in St Albans.⁸ Mr Coleman continued at Dagnall Lane until about 1861, when he left the town. From that time his name is not heard except on one occasion, when he was mentioned in the local press as "formerly of St Albans".⁹ Mr Coleman died in 1868.

After Mr Coleman left Dagnall Lane Chapel it seems to have been closed for about two years, when it was taken over by a Mr George Farr Arnold: this was in 1863. Mr Arnold had been the leader of a small cause meeting in a building called "Temperance Chapel", standing, it is thought, on the corner of Lower Dagnall Street and Temperance Street. This became empty and was put up for sale, the advertisement reading as follows: "The Temperance Chapel with the excellent organ, and three cottages in Dagnall Lane...the property of the late Thomas Harris".¹⁰ For the next ten or eleven

⁵ Refer to the photograph of the Rev William Urwick and his diaconate taken about the year 1887. Mr George Slade is at the left end of the back row.

⁶ Urwick W "Bible Truths and Church Errors" etc p225n

(I have endeavoured, without success, to trace any connection between Peter Martineau and the banking firm of Martineau & Story. FAJH).

⁷ *ibid* p 226

⁸ St Albans Times 13 October 1855

⁹ This information was given to me in 1953 by the late Mr Alfred Gentle, deacon-emeritus of the Dagnall Street Baptist Church. Mr Gentle spent a long period carefully scanning the pages of the early editions of the St Albans Times and Herts Advertiser (founded 7 July 1885 – FAJH)

¹⁰ There are two houses standing on the corner of Lower Dagnall Street and Temperance Street, forming numbers 1 and 1a, Temperance Street. On the south side of number 1, which skirts Lower Dagnall Street, there are two large bricked-up, window embrasures, which seem to indicate that the former use of the building was that of a place of assembly. Above the top windows, between the two houses in Temperance Street, appear the words: "the Abbey National schools, Ascension Day 1866." It would seem, if this is the original building, that the Abbey School authorities purchased the building from the estate of Thomas Harris and used it for educational purposes.

years Mr Arnold carried on services in the old chapel on similar lines to those he had already followed in the Temperance Chapel, ie Trinitarian doctrines with a "total abstinence" bias. On the advent of Mr Arnold, the old meeting house became known as Trinity Chapel and continued to be so called thereafter. In a brief article on the history of the building, published some years later in the local press, it is stated that Mr Arnold "for many years was a great supporter of the chapel."¹¹

From 1872 to 1874, the names of the following occur as ministering at Trinity Chapel: Rev CN Barham,¹² Rev WH Stevens and Rev WG Ogbourne.¹³ These names appear in advertisements of services in various editions of the local press. About this time Mr Arnold withdrew and worship ceased for the time being. The Trustees, however, were anxious for services to be re-started, and approached the Presbyterian Church of England with this in view.¹⁴ The Presbytery of London North re-opened the chapel and sent supply preachers from various places, but after a time, this too failed. The Presbytery of London North Church Extension Committee Minute Book affords the following information: -

"8 June 1874

St Albans:

The Convenor reported that the Trustees of an old Presbyterian Church in this place capable of accommodating upwards of 500 persons, offered the building as a free gift to the Presbytery of London. As there is no congregation, and it is doubtful if a self-supporting congregation could be easily formed in the place, the Committee are not prepared at once to accept this kind offer, but instruct the convenor meanwhile to keep up the supply of preaching until next meeting, and to report.

13 July 1874

The Convenor reported as follows: - That the supply had been maintained through Mr Whitmore - agreed that temporary supply be continued.

28 July 1874

The Convenor reported that Mr Main of Chatham had preached there. Agreed that Mr Roome be engaged for a month.

2 Oct 1874

The Convenor reported that Mr Roome had been engaged for a month, but as there was not the slightest prospect of success, the services had been discontinued."¹⁵

The minute of 2nd October 1874 marks the end of the Presbyterian witness in St Albans for sixty-seven years. In 1941, on November 9th, services again

¹¹ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 16 September 1870

¹² ibid 27 April 1872

¹³ ibid 3 January 1874

¹⁴ For information at this point I am greatly indebted to the Presbyterian Church of England Office in Tavistock Place WC1, who very courteously placed the Minutes of the Presbytery of London North Church Extension Committee for 1874, at my disposal. FAJH

¹⁵ Rev JC Whitmore preached at St Albans while carrying on his ministry at Whitfield's, Drury Lane, London. Rev Charles Main MA, of Chatham, died in 1883, at the age of 80. The Rev WJB Roome FRGS, was minister at Aldershot 1876 to 1885.

began under the ministry of the late Rev GM Nicol, MA being held in the Marlborough Road Methodist Church on Sunday afternoons. The Presbyterian's new church in Homewood Road was opened and dedicated on Saturday, 4th March 1950, during the ministry of Rev W Louttit, ACA.

We notice that about 1875 the old name of "Dagnall Lane" is giving place to "Upper Dagnal Street" and "Lower Dagnall Street", sometimes spelt with one "l" and sometimes with two. The double "l" is retained in the Post Office Directory. When the division of Dagnall originally took place, Upper Dagnal Street extended from the Market Street to Spicer Street and was, thereafter, called Lower Dagnal Street. Subsequently, in the 1890s Upper Dagnal Street was curtailed - Market Street to Verulam Road - and Lower Dagnal Street correspondingly extended. In 1870 Trinity Chapel is described as being in "Upper" Dagnall Street. This was before the change in names occurred. It is, in fact, in Lower Dagnall Street now.¹⁶ In this account, from this point on, the name is treated with the double "l", except where quoting.

In 1875 the old chapel was again opened for worship; this time by the Primitive Methodists. Hitherto the Primitive Methodists had been holding their services in a small chapel in Sopwell Lane.¹⁷ They had come originally to St Albans a few years earlier and had held gatherings in Deer's Hotel, London Road. This building has long since disappeared as a hotel. The chapel in Sopwell Lane proving too small and inconvenient, the Dagnall Lane Chapel, being empty, offered the opportunity for expansion. Inaugural services were advertised to take place on Sunday 3rd October 1875, the preacher being the Rev. W Jackson.¹⁸ Here this section of the Methodist Church continued until 1887, when services ceased and the building once more was closed. The Primitive Methodists subsequently opened up a fresh cause in St Albans, this time on the then outskirts of the town in Boundary Road. This particular congregation still meets in a building in that locality.

In his Annual Report for 1887, the Rev William Urwick, minister of the Independent Chapel in Spicer Street, wrote: - "The old chapel in Dagnal Street had been used by the Primitive Methodists who, in this year, decided to close it. Their minister, Rev WA Widdowson, arranged for its transfer to Spicer Street for use as a Sunday school."¹⁹ The building was offered on payment of £10 for fixtures and the Deacons of Spicer Street Chapel agreed to take over the building and spent about £10 on repairs. In fulfilment of the Trust Deed, Mr Urwick held a short afternoon service in the chapel for some weeks, but in the meantime the surviving Trustee, a Mr Fordham, appointed additional Trustees, all Unitarians, and the control of the building passed into the hands of the Unitarian Board.²⁰

¹⁶ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 17 September 1870

¹⁷ This building is still standing in Sopwell Lane. The local directory describes it as "the Abbey Mission room." The St Albans brass band uses it for practice and sometimes it is referred to as the Band Room. Occasional services are held there.

¹⁸ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 2 October 1875

¹⁹ Annual report of Spicer Street chapel for 1887

²⁰ Urwick W "Centenary Memorial" p73

Mr Urwick's desire to take over the old chapel was not received with the best grace by members of his own congregation at Spicer Street. At a specially convened meeting of the Sunday School Council on 13th July 1887, the following comment and resolution occur: - "It having been reported that Mr Urwick had commenced holding services at the old Dagnall Street Chapel on Sunday afternoons, commencing at half-past three, and expecting the attendance of Teachers and Scholars, it was Resolved: "That as it is not considered desirable to curtail the time given for teaching, or to change the hour for commencing School, Mr Urwick be requested not to expect the attendance of Teachers or Scholars at his afternoon service."

In the book in which this minute is recorded, there is a note in Mr Urwick's own hand-writing to the following effect: "It is untrue that I expected or desired the attendance of our Teachers and Scholars at these meetings – W Urwick. My aim was to secure possession of the building for the use of our Church and School, and thus prevent the Unitarians from gaining the place and recommencing their services as ultimately they did."²¹

Unitarian services began again after Mr Urwick's failure to retain control of the building. The chapel, as such, however, was finally closed in 1894.²² In 1895 the Unitarian Board, with the consent of the Charity Commissioners, sold the building to Mr Joshua Pearce of George Street and the building was closed once more.²³ When Mr Samuel Ryder, founder of "Ryder's Seeds" and donor of "The Ryder Cup" for international golf, started his seed business, he began in the old chapel which he took over from Mr Pearce. When Mr Ryder built his premises in Holywell Hill, the old chapel became a warehouse and has remained so ever since. At the present time the building, suitably altered and renovated, is used by the Electrical Services of St Albans Limited, who are automobile electrical engineers.

It is to be regretted that this old building, dating back, as it does, to 1697, has not been preserved in its original state as a good example of a late seventeenth century dissenting chapel.

Before leaving the subject of "Dagnall Lane Chapel", there are a few more interesting facts to record. There were, in all, ninety-eight annual sermons preached in connection with the Charity School founded by Dr Samuel Clark in the early days of his pastorate and which continued to function until about 1838 - in all a life of about one hundred and ten years. The masters in charge of the School were: -

James Turner	1739-1790	(died 1790, aged 76)
William Wiltshire	1790-1796	
James Cole	1796-1817	(died 1836, aged 67)
William Brandon	1817-1829	(died 1829, aged 59)
John Goodland	1829-1838	(about)

²¹ Minute Book 1883 to 1924, Spicer Street, Congregational, Sunday School.

²² "The Victoria History of the County of Hertfordshire", (Page W editor), Vol 2 p511

²³ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 9 May 1896

These details are given by Urwick in his "Nonconformity in Herts" and are based on a document in the possession of Mrs Coleman, the widow of Rev P V Coleman.²⁴

The following information is available for conditions in Dr Clark's time: -

Hearers.....	400
County voters....	48
Borough voters...	99 ²⁵

This suggests a robust and influential membership.

The late Mr W Percival Westell FRSA, FSA Scot. (1874-1943) recalls that his grandparents, Mr and Mrs William Westell, were regular attenders at the old chapel. It was the Rev James Kernaham, minister of Spicer Street Chapel from 1867 to 1876, who conducted his grandmother's funeral service in St Peter's Churchyard in April 1880.²⁶ For many years there was a close bond of friendship between the Westells and the Kernahans: W.P. Westell and Coulson Kernahan, Dr Kernahan's son, being particularly close friends.

²⁴Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p207

²⁵ James TS "The history of the litigation and legislation respecting Presbyterian Chapel and Charities in England and Ireland between 1816 and 1849" p 662

²⁶ Westell WP "Yesterdays, An Autobiography" pp 27 & 28

Chapter 7

THE INDEPENDENTS

A NEW BEGINNING

*"I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts...the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former...and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."
Haggai 2:7 & 9*

We have seen that the Baptist Church meeting in Upper Dagnall Street had given hospitality of worship to a number of Independents, or Congregationalists, who, having seceded from the, now, Unitarian Chapel close by, were without a meeting place. It was increasingly felt by them that a meeting house for the Independents should be opened, in order that any in the town of the Congregational way, should have their own place of worship. Two members of this group, George Gill and Samuel Maxey, carried on business in a cotton mill outside the town; this factory was placed at the disposal of the little group and, for a few months, services were held there, while more convenient accommodation was sought. In the "File of Registration of Places of Religious Worship for Protestant Dissenters under the Toleration Act, Archdeaconry of St Albans 1783-1850", there is the following entry: "Messuage or tenement in occupation of Geo. Gill and Saml. Maxey."¹ The date of registration is given as 5th September 1794 and the certifiers being: TM Morton (minister), W Bacon Geo. Gill, Dan Harding, JN Bacon, Levi Lavender. Worship began on 7th September following, the Rev Thomas Markinson Morton being temporarily in charge, as minister.² In 1820, a publication refers to this building in the following terms: - "On the Ver is a curious mill, erected for the purpose of polishing diamonds, but now employed in the cotton manufactory."³ According to an old contemporary print, this building was erected astride the river and consisted of two large buildings running to five storeys, with various outhouses. The mill was situated about half-a-mile south-east of the Abbey and access was obtained by a path across the fields from the old London Road. This path, now a roadway, is known today as Cotton Mill Lane. The cotton mill was dismantled and disappeared, finally, in 1860.⁴

The Rev TM Morton (1756-1801), who became the pastor of this little flock, began to preach in 1770 and was minister of Holywell Mount Chapel in Finsbury, from 1782 to about 1789. Subsequently he devoted himself to supply work and itinerant preaching. It was in this capacity that he came to St Albans, where he stayed from the middle of 1794, until December 1795, to

¹ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p841

² ibid p229

³ Scatcherd and Letterman (proprietors) op cit "The Ambulator" section p10

⁴ St Albans Times 1 March 1860 (A notice in this issue reads as follows:- "On account of pulling down, the Cotton Mill was advertised for sale by Messrs Page and Cameron – five floors, undershot water wheel – will be pulled down and offered for sale on 4 April 1860".)

get the new cause started. Not much is known of Mr Morton; a brief contemporary account states: "Mr Morton was born anno 1756, and called, by grace, at ten years old. In 1779 he began his ministry and preached his first sermon in 1782 (ie at Holywell Mount) and continued there seven years; after which he only laboured as an occasional preacher. On the last day of May last (1801), he preached three times at Cheshunt, and was engaged to Croydon on 6th of June, but on the Saturday preceding, he was taken ill with gout in his stomach, and died on the Friday following. His last days were very comfortable and happy, and he launched into eternity without a doubt or fear."⁵ The writer of this obituary sums up Mr Morton's character in glowing terms: he "was highly amiable and exemplary; and for integrity and punctuality he was a pattern to ministers as well as people."⁶

Mr Morton died on 12th June 1801 and the funeral service was held at his old chapel, Holywell Mount; the Rev John Towers, of the Barbican Chapel, preached the sermon. This discourse was later published under the title of "The Triumph of the Saints; A Sermon occasioned by the death of the Rev Thomas Markinson Morton, who died June 12 1801, by John Towers, Minister of the Gospel, Barbican...founded on 1 Cor 15: 55-57."⁷

One important feature of the work started in the Cotton Mill was the beginning of the Sunday School. This was supposed to have been as early as 1794 and it is from that date that the present Sunday School attached to Spicer Street Chapel reckons its foundation. According to the record of registrations under the Toleration Act, another entry occurs soon after that already referred to; this is on 18th May 1795; "A building in Long-butt Lane in the occupation of W Bacon, JN Bacon, and G Gill." This application was certified by TM Morton (minister), W Bacon, JN Bacon and Geo Gill. From this it can be definitely established that the Independents, formerly meeting with the Dagnall Street Baptist congregation and desiring a separate place of worship, called the Rev TM Morton to lead them and assist in the forming of a Congregational Church. The "building in Long-butt Lane" was converted for worship at a cost of £88, and was opened by Rev John Clayton of the King's Weigh House Chapel, London, on 22nd May 1795.⁸

Mr Morton, having seen the little congregation established in its new surroundings, returned to London, preaching his last sermon on 6th December 1795. The congregation soon settled down into an established "gathered" church; the record runs thus: "Feb 1 1796. Wm Bacon, John Newbold Bacon, Mary Bacon, Martha East, George Gill and Martha Gill, met together at Mr Gill's house and formed themselves into a Church of Christ, by giving themselves up to the Lord and each other by fervent prayer, in the presence

⁵ "Evangelical Magazine"

vol 9, 1801 p484

⁶ ibid

⁷ ibid

⁸ Urwick W "Centenary Memorial" p23 (As nearly as can be established, Long Butt Lane was on the site of what is now Upper Marlborough Road. The whole area from St Peter's Street to Beaconsfield Road on the north side of Victoria Street, in Queen Elizabeth I's time and earlier, was the town's archery butts).

of several persons belonging to the congregation.”⁹This was the authentic and usually accepted method of the forming of a Congregational Church. The temporary leadership of Rev TM Morton, and the proper inauguration of a “gathered” church, opened the way for the calling of a permanent minister. On 1st February 1796, an invitation was sent to Rev Henry Atley, the minister at Farnham in Surrey.¹⁰ Mr Atley accepted this invitation on 7th March following, but can hardly be said to have settled down in the pastorate, for, owing to a difference of opinion concerning his ordination, he resigned towards the end of the year, preaching his last sermon on 25th December.¹¹ From St Albans, Mr Atley proceeded to Hornchurch Lane, Romford, Essex, where, on 1st February 1797 he “was settled over the Independent Church and congregation” there.¹² Henry Atley's claim to fame resides in his connection with the foundation of the London Missionary Society in 1795 and his association with William Wilberforce in the cause of the abolition of slavery.¹³

At its inauguration, the little church in Long-butt Lane, off Sweet Briar Lane, had found a good friend in a Mrs Anne Horn of Bowman's Green, and New Barnes. She was a lady of strong religious convictions, both devout and pious and allowed her house to be used, from time to time, as a meeting place for the Independents. This was in 1791.¹⁴ With the opening of the chapel, Mrs Horn created a trust with a capital of £1,325. 2. 7. Consolidated three per cent Annuities, to yield £40 per annum “for the benefit of the Minister of the Independent Meeting House at St Albans.”¹⁵ The payment from the investment to the Independent Meeting House was contingent upon their continuing to “preach the Gospel consistent with the Assembly's Catechism.”¹⁶ No doubt this proviso was inserted in the trust deed to guard the Trinitarian doctrine.

How much the little congregation may have been disappointed at the so early departure of their first regular minister is not known, but they do not appear to have wasted much time before calling a successor. They found him in the person of the Rev Samuel Burder, who was a member of a famous family among the Independents. His uncle was Rev George Burder, minister of Coventry and subsequently of Fetter Lane, London. Rev George Burder was also secretary of the London Missionary Society and editor of the Evangelical Magazine. Samuel's cousin, George's son, was Rev Henry

⁹ From the original deed dated 1st February 1796

¹⁰ Evangelical Magazine vol IV 1796 p162

¹¹ Urwick W “Nonconformity in Herts” p230

¹² Evangelical magazine vol VI 1798 p121

¹³ Congregational Year Book 1883 p260

¹⁴ Urwick W op cit p326

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ Anon “History of Verulam and St Albans” p192

(The Assembly referred to is the “Westminster Assembly”. This holding of £1,325. 2. 7. Consolidated 3% Annuities, was later converted into £1,420. 1. 5. London County Consolidated 2½% Stock. By the will of the late Rev William Urwick, a further sum of similar stock, amounting to £231. 16. 5. was added to the Anne Horn Charity and the total investment amounts now to £1651. 17. 10. The Trustees all these bequests are the “Hertfordshire Congregational Union Incorporated”.

Forster Burder, who was minister of the Independent Church, St Thomas's Square, Hackney and a tutor at nearby Hoxton College.¹⁷

Rev Samuel Burder was called from Coventry where, for a year or so, he had been assisting the Rev George Burder. On Wednesday 3rd May 1797, he was inducted to the pastoral office of the St Albans Congregation. Those taking part in the service were: Revs J Goode, J Reynolds, J Barber, W Wall and J Humphreys, all of London churches. Mr Burder's uncle, Rev George Burder of Coventry, was present and took part also. A contemporary account states: - "It may not be amiss to hint that this interest has very recently been established. Mr Burder is the first minister ordained over the infant Society. May he live to nourish it in the word of life, and may the Church increase with all the increase of God."¹⁸ Mr Burder stayed at Sweet Briar Lane until 1807, after which he sought preferment in the Establishment. He was undoubtedly a scholarly man, but he does not seem to have distinguished himself greatly. While he was at St Albans, he published a work entitled "Oriental Customs", or "Illustrations of the Sacred Scriptures; with observations on many difficult and obscure texts". A review of this work stated that it was "executed with great diligence of research, as well as with no small share of judgment."¹⁹ Burder's work was well received, and in the year he left the town, 1807, he published a second volume of his "Oriental Customs". On quitting the pastorate at Sweet Briar Lane, Burder resigned from the ministry of the Protestant Dissenters and entered Clare Hall, Cambridge, subsequently being ordained by his friend and patron, Dr Barrington, Bishop of Durham.²⁰ He obtained the degrees of Master of Arts and Doctor of Divinity from the University of Cambridge and was, for some time, lecturer of Christ Church, Newgate Street, in the City of London. This church was destroyed eventually in the air raids on London during the war of 1939-45. In 1815 he published his "Memoirs of Pious Women of the British Empire", a work in three volumes.²¹

His career in the Church of England was not distinguished for a man of his very obvious ability. While he was, perhaps, more scholar than evangelist, he deserved better of the Anglican authorities. He died after a long illness on 21st November 1836, in his sixty-fifth year. An obituary notice stated: "Whatever preferment Mr Burder may have anticipated, he never obtained any ecclesiastical benefices but was allowed by his patron (Bishop Barrington) to spend his days in the drudgery of curacies and lectureships, and sink into the infirmities of declining life in poverty and neglect, affording a melancholy example of the very dubious secular advantages to be gained by an act of conformity to the established church."²²

Before passing on to the next phase in the life of the young church, there is the interesting connection with Mr (afterwards Dr) John Leifchild (1780-1862) with the congregation at Sweet Briar Lane, during Mr Burder's pastorate. John Leifchild's association with the St Albans Independents adds

¹⁷ Sibtree J and Caston M "Independency in Warwickshire" p93

¹⁸ Evangelical Magazine vol V 1797 pp 300 & 301

¹⁹ idem vol VIII 1800 p262

²⁰ idem vol XVI 1809 p124

²¹ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p231

²² Congregational Magazine vol XLIV p70

lustre to an already glorious history. Leifchild was born at Barnet on 2nd February 1780, his father, also John Leifchild, being one of the founders of St Albans Methodism.²³ Early in life, John the younger came into touch with John Wesley and the meeting left a lasting impression on him. The meeting was the occasion of a visit by John Wesley to Watford on Friday 13th October 1786, where the great man was to preach a funeral sermon, staying the night with the Leifchild family.²⁴ Many years after, Leifchild, recalling this incident, wrote: "He (Wesley) drove to my father's house; and, when the door of his carriage was opened, he came out arrayed in his canonicals. Childlike, I ran to lay hold on him, But my father pulled me back; upon which, extending his hand, he said 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.'"²⁵

There had been functioning in Central and East London for many years, indeed, since the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, a Christian society set up by the Huguenot refugees and called by them "La Communauté Chrétienne". This society, having declined somewhat by the middle of the eighteenth century, was renamed "The Christian Community" in 1772, re-organised by John Wesley and placed under the supervision of the Methodist Chapel in City Road. In 1795, one Jacob Stanley, had joined the Christian Community as a local preacher and, about that time, went to preach at Barnet. John Leifchild, then a lad of fifteen, was converted through this visit of Jacob Stanley to his native town.²⁶ In 1797, Leifchild removed to St Albans to work and allied himself with the little Methodist congregation which his father frequently visited as a local preacher. This little society met in a small outhouse by the side of Romeland, beneath the very shadow of the Abbey. Leifchild's name appears as one of the nineteen members of the church in 1799.²⁷

Leifchild's own account of his life at this time shows his religious ardour and keen piety: "After my week's work", he says, "I strictly observed the Sabbath and was regularly in the Abbey Church on the Sunday morning, where I was pleased with the impressive and eloquent discourses of the Rev Samuel Nicholson. I often repeated his sermons in private, and endeavoured to imitate his almost matchless elocution. In the evenings I attended the little Methodist chapel near the end of the Abbey; and occasionally, at the Independent meeting in Sweet Briar Lane."²⁸ During his few years in St Albans, Leifchild worked as a cooper and, when about twenty-one, he married: "a young woman from Mrs Clark's, in the Abbey orchard, who died in child-bed."²⁹ It was also recorded of him at this time, that "he preached at Mr Burder's on Sabbath day."³⁰ Within a very short time he left the town for London.

²³ Greaves JG "Methodism in the City of the Pro-Martyr" pp45f

²⁴ Wesley J "Journal" vol VII p215 and note

²⁵ Leifchild JR "John Leifchild DD" p5

²⁶ Rayner EC "The story of the Christian Community 1685-1909" p41

²⁷ Leifchild JR op cit p16

²⁸ *ibid* p15

²⁹ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p231n

³⁰ *ibid*

How much or how little his bereavement affected him, does not come out in his own account. He states: "When about twenty-three years old (ie c 1803), I became a candidate for an engagement in what, at the City Road Chapel, was termed "The Workhouse Community". This consisted of devoted young men who employed the spare hours of every Sunday to visit the several workhouses of the Metropolis, and to exhort, sing and pray with the inmates of different wards. Everyone had to preach a trial sermon and those brethren who were generally well read, gifted and critical, assembled to pass a judgement upon the preacher. It was considered a proof of great ability to obtain from them a unanimous vote of approbation."³¹ While at City Road working for "The Christian Community", Leifchild met the Rev Dr Jabez Bunting, thus beginning a lifelong friendship severed only by the latter's death. Bunting died in 1858; a contemporary reported: "Dr Leifchild preached many public sermons for the Wesleyans in London, Manchester, Leeds and other principal towns. He had opened their chapels, collected funds for them and now he was at the grave of one of their leaders."³² Thus closed an earthly friendship between a great Methodist and a great Congregationalist, lasting for more than half-a-century; for Bunting had been President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in 1820, 1828, 1836 and 1844, and Leifchild had been Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1842, and Preacher at the Autumn Assembly at Birmingham in 1839.³³

Leifchild's ability as a preacher very soon attracted the attention of various Christian leaders in and around the City Road area, and when, in 1804, he applied for a place at the Dissenting Academy at Hoxton, this facility was readily granted to him. He stayed at Hoxton for four years and then, in 1808, he was called to the pastorate of Hornton Street Chapel, Kensington, where, in 1809, at the age of twenty-nine, he was ordained. Leifchild stayed at Hornton Street until 1824, preaching his farewell sermon on 5th December. His subject was: "Christian Doctrine and Duties"; or "The Minister's Preaching and the People's Practice." This sermon was published later and a reviewer called Wesley, wrote: "The discourse is distinguished by all the well-known qualities of Mr Leifchild's style of preaching. It is throughout, simple and manly, scriptural and faithful, and many passages display, as might be anticipated, in a very high degree that "pathos" for which the preacher is pre-eminent."³⁴

Then followed a series of outstanding pastorates: Bristol, 1824 to 1830; Craven Chapel, Bayswater, 1831 to 1854³⁵; Brighton, 1854 to 1856; back to Craven Chapel in 1856, and so, on to the end. Great honours came to him, not undeserved, both from home and abroad. In 1841 he received the degree of "Doctor Honoris Causa" in divinity from the University of the City of New

³¹ Leifchild JR "John Leifchild DD" p27

³² *ibid* p292

³³ See "Dictionary of National Biography" for an article by Rev Alex Gordon on Jabez Bunting and one by Rev GC Boase on John Leifchild.

³⁴ "Congregational Magazine" vol I 1825 pp 261 & 262

³⁵ "This spacious place will contain 2,000 persons" See "Evangelical Magazine" vol VI 1823 p721

York,³⁶ and his diary showed that on 11th January 1851, as the Chairman of the Three Denominations of Protestant Dissenters, he presented a loyal address to the Queen.³⁷

Leifchild died on Sunday 28th June 1862 and was buried in Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington in North London.³⁸ His obituary, written by his nephew, the Rev J Baldwin Brown, ran thus: "He seems to have borne from a boy the mark of God upon him. Shortly before his death, he told his grand-nephew the story that when he was a boy, not more, I think than six years old, his mother was in peril from some accident and he ran up into a loft behind the house and flung himself on his knees in prayer to God that He would help her, and that he knew that God had heard him before he came down."³⁹

In physique, Dr Leifchild was a big man and powerful. His countenance was remarkably open and expressive. His tread was firm and he evinced an indomitable spirit, which could not be turned from its purpose. He said towards the end of his life: "If you record anything of me, let it be this: - that not one wavering feeling have I ever known as to that 'firm foundation' the cross and sacrifice of Christ."⁴⁰ Brown adds: "Compare him with Luther in his hate of anti-Christ, his strenuous contention for doctrine, his unswerving loyalty to Christ, and his fearless anathema on the devil. As a preacher he was pre-eminent. His commanding form, his musical and powerful voice, his knowledge and cultivation of the rhetorical art, his rich and flowing diction, his thorough self-possession, but above all, his firm and undoubted conviction that he was, while in the pulpit, God's messenger, gave him an influence and power which few men possess."⁴¹

Leifchild left behind him much original work, including collections of hymns, poems, sermons and pamphlets; twenty-seven items in all.⁴² Only one subsequent connection with St Albans is recorded and that is his visit on 17th October 1813, to preach the nineteenth anniversary sermon for the Sunday School.⁴³ It was a far cry from Sweet Briar Lane, with its humble rostrum and homely congregation in 1803, to the great Craven Chapel at Bayswater, with its mighty pulpit and vast auditorium able to accommodate two thousand, in 1831, but John Leifchild was big enough and humble enough for both; perhaps if there had been no Sweet Briar Lane, there had been no Craven Chapel, for as we have been reminded by an ancient authority: the highest is not without the lowest.

The Rev. Samuel Burder left Sweet Briar Lane towards the end of 1807 in order to enter the University of Cambridge, and from that time until the autumn of 1809, the chapel had no settled minister. During the latter year,

³⁶ Leifchild JR op cit p243

³⁷ Leifchild JR "John Leifchild DD" pp 254 & 255 (See also Appendix IX)

³⁸ Grave No 18328 see plate 24

³⁹ Congregational Year Book 1863 pp 235ff

⁴⁰ *ibid*

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² Leifchild JR "John Leifchild DD" Publications Appendix

⁴³ Urwick W "Centenary Memorial" p28

however, the Rev John Hayter Cox of Fareham, Hampshire, was called to, and accepted, the pastorate. He was inducted on 13th October 1809 and began a gracious and fruitful ministry of five years, which greatly enhanced the progress of the Independents in St Albans. At the induction there was a good representation of the Independent ministry taking part, including: Morrison of Barnet, Knight of Ponders End, Edwards of Hackney, Townsend of Rotherhithe, Freer of Uxbridge, Hillyard of Bedford, Chapman of Greenwich and Smith of Redbourn; the sermon was preached by Maslin of Hertford.

The first event of major importance which took place in Mr Cox's ministry, was the founding of the Hertfordshire Union in 1810. This Union, inaugurated on 19th April of that year, was an association of Baptist and Independent interests in the St Albans area, which aimed at the spreading of the Gospel through the towns and villages of the County. The first president was Sir Culling Eardley Smith, Bart, while Rev JH Cox was actively engaged in the launching of the new society. The Union was much assisted later by the Rev William Upton, the indefatigable minister of Dagnall Street Baptist Chapel from 1821 until his death in 1865. The Rev JH Cox preached at the first anniversary in St Albans on 3rd April 1811.⁴⁴ The Union continued to function until 1878, when it was dissolved at the request of the Independents, who meanwhile, in 1862, had formed the Hertfordshire Congregational Association. In 1878, the Hertfordshire Congregational Union was formed, becoming incorporated in 1903.

It was becoming increasingly felt that the premises in Sweet Briar Lane were becoming too small for the growing congregation and plans were begun for the building of a new meeting house. A favourable site was soon found in Spicer Street close by the Abbey, where, tradition has it, a Baptist Chapel once stood.⁴⁵ To meet the cost of the proposed new chapel, an appeal was issued, signed by Rev JH Cox, JN Bacon and Joseph Newsom. Many ministers and prominent Independents, both in the County and in London, supported the appeal. The wording of this document is set out in Appendix X. At last, on 10th June 1812, the Chapel in Spicer Street was opened for worship by the minister who conducted the prayers. The Rev John Clayton, who sixteen years previously had opened the meeting house in Sweet Briar Lane, preached the morning sermon, while Rev Dr WB Collyer and the Rev Mr Hyatt preached in the afternoon and evening respectively. One of the preachers of the day, probably Mr Clayton, remarked: "The present place is twice as large as the former, and the pews are all occupied."⁴⁶

By his Berlin decree of 21st October 1806, Napoleon Bonaparte had declared the British Isles to be in a state of blockade. Prior to this, however, and much more so, afterwards, his shadow lay dark across Europe and especially England. The many Martello towers of the South East coast are a present reminder of this time of threat and tension; yet in this period, the people of St Albans of the Independent persuasion, set out to expand. Indeed, it was a time of almost universal religious revival, for during this period, many

⁴⁴ Evangelical Magazine vol XVIII 1811 pp 117 & 322

⁴⁵ This information came from the late Mr Alfred Gentle. (See Chapter 6 note 9)

⁴⁶ Urwick W "Centenary Memorial" pp 25 & 26

THE INDEPENDENTS: A New Beginning

of the great religious institutions and societies which are in existence today, were founded: eg the British and Foreign Bible Society - 1804; the National Sunday School Union - 1803; the Religious Tract Society (now the United Society for Christian Literature) - 1799; the Wesleyan Missionary Society - 1813; the London Missionary Society - 1795; and the Particular Baptist Society - 1792, the first of the modern societies.

Strangely enough, although international tension was so great, or so we learn from secular historians, there is no mention at all in the Church Book of the Independent congregation in St Albans of anything but the ordinary, prosaic matters of a nonconformist chapel in a provincial town. Perhaps the great tide of events passed the little congregation by and allowed them time and opportunity for religious exercise found so hard to come by in the times of stress of this present century.

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET

Chapter 8

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET

Rev John Hayter Cox
and
Rev George Browne

*“.....behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain
thee; how much less this house”*

1 Kings 8:27

A contemporary writer described the new chapel as “a modern brick building, erected by subscription in 1811, at an expense of upwards of £1,200. The interior is neatly pewed, and will accommodate about five hundred hearers. At present there are no galleries, but the building was constructed so as to erect them whenever an increasing congregation should require it.”¹ A modern description, of a more technical character, runs as follows: “Independent Chapel, Spicer Street, 1811. Three bays with three-bay pediment. Red brick with rubbed brick trim. The bays divided by “lesenes”. Arched main windows with Gothic glazing bars.”²

The provision of five hundred seats in the new building was an ambitious project, for looking closer at the contemporary record already quoted, we read that the number of hearers was only thirty.³ This figure is confirmed by the chapel’s own record, which gives the membership on 6th June 1815, as fifteen men and fourteen women.⁴ There seems, here, to be a considerable discrepancy regarding numbers. The appeal which was sent out in 1811 asking for financial help in building the new chapel,⁵ suggests that the old premises in Sweet Briar Lane were altogether too small to accommodate the growing congregation. On the opening day, one of the preachers, probably Dr Collyer, remarked: “The present place is twice as large as the former, and the pews are all occupied.”⁶ On this count, then, if the new chapel contained five hundred seats, the old chapel must have had, say, two hundred and fifty. The appeal suggests that the old place was too small for the congregation, the visiting preacher states that “the pews were all occupied”, yet the Church Book records only twenty-nine actual members, ie those whose names were on the roll of membership and presented themselves regularly for Holy Communion, as in June 1815. It may be assumed that many who attended the services were not actual members of the Church. John Leifchild was formerly in this category, before leaving for Hoxton. In spite of small attendance at the Communion, however, the congregation at Spicer Street was very happily

¹ Anon “History of Verulam and St Albans” pp 191ff

² Pevsner V “Hertfordshire” (The Buildings of England Series) p222

³ Anon “History of Verulam and St Albans” p192

⁴ Church Book, Independent Chapel Spicer Street

⁵ See Appendix X

⁶ See page 117 Supra

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET

placed in having the Rev John Hayter Cox as minister in this new venture, and although his stay in St Albans was for five years only, he did much to enhance the cause of the Independents in the town.

Mr Cox entered upon his ministry at the age of forty-three and with nearly twenty years of pastoral experience behind him; one might say he was in his prime. Born at Portsea on 26th March 1768, he evinced a great interest in reading at an early age, and a close friend of his family, observing this tendency in the lad, gave him a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*. This met with some success, although in his teens Cox was much addicted to the theatre. At the age of sixteen he left for London to take up indentures of apprenticeship and by this time a deepening of his spiritual life took place. His principal, a draper, was a godly man and used his influence to bring the lad into touch with the Rev W Romaine, an earnest, spiritual clergyman of the Church of England. Mr Romaine's preaching deeply impressed the young man and conversion followed. Cox wrote to his relatives of his experiences, and the information was well received, even leading to the conversion of some members of his family.

Cox's natural abilities and his good character, no doubt, would have made him an excellent draper, but the air of London after that of Portsea, undermined his health and he was compelled to ask for release from his indentures. This was readily granted and he returned home to recuperate, subsequently taking up a post in Southampton. There he soon became identified with a group of Dissenters and, after much thought and study, he decided to join them rather than remain in the Establishment, the church of his birth. So Cox became an Independent and attended the ministry of the Rev Thomas Kingsbury, the pastor of the Above-bar Congregational Church, Southampton. His piety and intelligence soon became patent to all, while he, himself, began to feel the call to the Christian ministry. He found a good friend in a wealthy layman, one George Welch, of Poole, who not only helped the young man with advice, but with money, too. It seemed to follow naturally and providentially, that Cox should enter Gosport Academy in 1784 to prepare for the ministry. At this famous school, he had the advantage of studying under the brilliant theologian and historian, Dr Bogue.

Mr Cox's first call was to Fareham, Hampshire in 1789, where, after a preliminary period of twelve months, he became pastor. Altogether he remained at Fareham for eighteen years, during which time he married a Miss Sophia Reeves Sharradine. The financial considerations of a rising family and his church's inability to increase his stipend, led Mr Cox to establish a school which soon acquired an excellent reputation locally. It was during his days at Fareham that Mr Cox turned his thoughts to writing. His first treatise was on "Conversion", but owing to the author's modesty and nervousness, it remained unpublished for some years. When the book at last did appear, under the title of "Jesus showing Mercy", it was well received and achieved a wide circulation.

After the opening of Spicer Street Chapel, Mr Cox remained a further two years, thus enabling the new chapel to get well established; then, in 1814, came his invitation to the Congregational Church at Hadleigh, Suffolk, where

he was recognised on 26th October of that year. At Hadleigh he was able to give more time to writing and several works appeared: notably a small volume entitled "A Harmony of Scripture", the object of which was to reconcile certain apparent contradictions in the Bible. Other titles were: "An old Smoker's reasons for breaking his Pipe" and "Infant Baptism", both published anonymously.

In 1829 he removed to Uley in Gloucestershire, where he continued until ill health and advancing age led him, in 1839, to withdraw from the active ministry. He took up his residence at Kingston-upon-Thames, where, in 1846, he suffered a stroke of paralysis. He died of influenza on 5th January 1848, the eightieth year of his age. He was buried at Norwood Cemetery on 11th January 1848, the Rev Thomas Binney officiating. His biographer wrote of him: "In early youth he gave himself to God - through fifty years he actively and zealously served Him, as His minister..."⁷

Before leaving this intermission concerning the Rev John Hayter Cox, it should be recorded that he claimed descent from Doctor Richard Cox, one-time headmaster of Eton and Bishop of Ely in the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1.⁸ His grandson, Brigadier Frederick Richard Cox (1858-1928), world-wide traveller and evangelist, was the intimate companion for many years of the late William Booth, founder and General of the Salvation Army.⁹

For three years after the departure of Mr Cox, the pulpit at Spicer Street remained empty. Among those who supplied during this time appear the names of Rev Richard Bowden, Rev Dr John Pye Smith, Rev Joseph Brooksbank, Rev Thomas Palmer Bull, Rev James Raban, Rev William Mitchell, Mr Morris, a student at Hoxton Academy; Mr George Browne, of Rotherham College; and the Rev R McAll of Bethnal Green. Of the visitors during this time, Mr McAll is the one who seems to have impressed the congregation most, for on Tuesday, 16th January 1816, the following resolution was passed at the Church Meeting: "Resolved that the Rev Mr McAll be invited to favour (sic) us with his ministerial Services for one year, to commence the first Sabbath in February next". In accordance with this resolution an invitation was sent to Mr McAll, with the additional information that "the amount of the subscriptions and endowment last year was about an hundred guineas."¹⁰ On 1st February following, Mr McAll's rejection of the invitation was reported to the Church Meeting and the matter was closed by the sending of a letter of thanks for his past services.¹¹

After the lapse of a year, it was resolved at the Church Meeting held 18th March 1817, to invite Mr George Browne of Hull to be minister; Mr Browne having been one of the supplies during the interregnum. This time the congregation was successful and the invitation was accepted.

⁷ Evangelical Magazine vol XXVI April 1848 pp 169ff.

Article by Robert Ashton. See also Congregational Year Book 1848 p219

⁸ Cox JH "He was There! The Story of Brigadier Cox, Armour-Bearer to William Booth" p3

⁹ *ibid* p VIII (I am especially grateful to the brother of the author of this biography, Mr Howard Cox of Ruislip, for help at this point. Mr Howard Cox is the great grandson of the Rev John Hayter Cox. FAJH.

¹⁰ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street 16 January 1816

¹¹ *ibid* 1st February 1816

Just prior to these events, discussions had been going on among the members regarding the orderly conduct of church affairs and the precise stating of the church's beliefs. These talks culminated in a decision taken by the Church Meeting of 11th February 1818, to issue a statement concerning the doctrinal foundations of the society: "Declaration of the principles in which this Church was originally formed and according to which it has been now re-organised and established."¹² With its principles firmly established and stated officially, the Church was ready to welcome its new minister. Mr Browne was ordained and inducted to the pastorate on 27th May 1818.

The new minister entered upon his duties at the age of twenty-eight, having been born at Clapton in northeast London on 14th February 1790. Browne pursued his education under the Rev F Evans at Hitchin and, in 1810, became associated with the Congregational Church there. The minister, Rev W Williams, took an interest in the young man and helped him, in the September of the same year, to get to Rotherham College, where he eventually became tutor in classics. His occasional visits to St Albans, no doubt, prompted the invitation to the pulpit. Mr Browne remained at Spicer Street for six years. In 1824 he responded to an invitation to Clapham where, in 1833, he was chosen as one of the secretaries of the Bible Society, a position he held until 1859. He retired to Weston-Super-Mare in 1862 and died there on 5th September 1868.¹³

An obituary notice stated: "Mr Browne was remarkable for his gentlemanly and courteous bearing, his amiability and kindly disposition, his calm and placid temperament, combined with great firmness of purpose. He was essentially a man of God. No man could be long in his company without feeling that he was in the presence of a holy man - one who was enjoying intimate fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ."¹⁴ A contemporary, Josiah Conder, an adherent of the chapel in Spicer Street from 1819 to 1821, wrote to a friend, the Rev H Marsh, on 15th February 1820: "Mr Browne, our pastor, is everything we could wish, both as a preacher and a man. Need I say how material a circumstance it always was esteemed by us, in planning future settlement, to have the benefit of a faithful and efficient ministry."¹⁵

The residence in St Albans of Mr Josiah Conder and his family, during Mr Browne's ministry, added yet another worthy page to the illustrious history of the Independent Chapel. Born in London on 17th September 1789, Josiah Conder was the fourth son of Thomas Conder, engraver and bookseller, and grandson of the Rev John Conder, DD, first theological tutor of Homerton College. Altogether, Conder was a very able and clever man. When only nineteen years of age he was already a contributor to the "Athenaeum," the "Literary Panorama" and the "Evangelical Magazine". In addition, he was a man of strong religious principles and convictions. His biographer states that

¹² These principles are set out in the Church Book. See Appendix XI

¹³ Congregational Year Book 1869 p 239

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ Conder ER "Josiah Conder, a Memoir" pp218 and 219

he was "a Protestant nonconformist, whose nonconformity was always subordinated to his Protestantism, as his Protestantism was to his Christianity."¹⁶ Prior to coming to St Albans, he had carried on his father's business of bookselling from premises in St Paul's Churchyard. Selling out in 1819, he took up residence in Hertfordshire, his chief reason for coming being his relationship to Thomas Rogers, a godly surgeon who for many years had been a faithful supporter of the Independent Chapel. Rogers was Conder's brother-in-law.

During their brief stay in the town, the Conders lived in a cottage hard by St Michael's Church, on part of the site of the old Roman town of Verulamium. Enquiry seems to suggest that this residence, somewhat altered, is that cottage now known as "Jessamine Cottage". During the two years of his residence in St Albans, two tragic events cast their shadows over his life: Thomas Rogers, his very dear friend and relative, died very suddenly,¹⁷ and Conder himself was severely injured by a fall from his horse. His biographer avers,¹⁸ that during this difficult time Conder wrote the hymn;

"O Thou God, Who hearest prayer
Every hour and every where!
Listen to my feeble breath
Now I touch the gates of death.
For His sake, Whose blood I plead,
Hear me in the hour of need".

For twenty years Conder was editor of the "Eclectic Review", but is chiefly remembered today for his hymns, of which he is credited with about sixty in all.¹⁹ These were contributed to "Hymns etc", edited by Dr Collyer in 1812; "The Congregational Hymn Book" 1836; "The Choir and the Oratory" 1837; "Original Hymns" 1843, edited by John Leifchild; and "Hymns of Praise, Prayer, etc", 1856.²⁰

The most recently compiled Congregational hymn book "Congregational Praise", 1951, contains six of Conder's hymns; perhaps, because they have survived, they are his best: -

No 19 "Beyond, Beyond the boundless sea"
No 5 "The Lord is King! Lift up thy voice"
No 101 "How shall I follow Him I serve?"
No 187 "Thou art the everlasting Word,"
No 247 "Head of the Church, our risen Lord"
No 304 "Bread of Heaven! On Thee I feed"²¹

¹⁶ Conder ER "Josiah Conder, a Memoir" p61

¹⁷ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street 30th August 1820

¹⁸ Conder ER op cit p217

¹⁹ Julian J (editor) "Dictionary of Hymnology" pp 256 & 257i

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ The Methodist Hymn Book 1933 edition contains two of Josiah Conder's hymns:-

"Bread of Heaven! On Thee I feed" and

"O God, to Whom the faithful dead"

The Baptist Hymn Book 1962 edition contains six of his hymns

"Head of the Church", No. 247 in Congregational Praise, is a paraphrase from Gelasian Sacramentary, fifth century. It may be mentioned, in passing, that Josiah Conder's son and biographer, the Rev Eustace Rogers Conder, DD (1820-1892), was born in St Albans. He had a distinguished career as a Congregational minister and "passed the chair" of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in 1873. Dr Conder is represented in Congregational Praise by one hymn. No.106: "Ye fair green hills of Galilee".

Towards the end of 1821, the Condors left St Albans. Mr Conder fully intended to return and went as far as to lease another house, but circumstances ruled otherwise, and the family settled down in Brompton.²² Later they came back to Hertfordshire, living first at Chenies and, subsequently at Watford. This lasted until 1839. Josiah Conder died on 27th December 1855 and was buried in Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington, on 3rd January 1856.²³

In 1821, the congregation at Spicer Street sponsored the entry into the ministry of a Mr Charles Bassano. This is the first case on record in the history of the church, since the withdrawal of the orthodox Dissenters from the old Dagnall Lane Chapel during the 1790's, of one of its members being nominated for training. The records contain a letter sent from the Church Meeting held 9th December, commending Mr Bassano to the Principal of the Blackburn Academy, the Rev Joshua Fletcher, MA. This letter is signed by the Rev George Browne as minister, and Joseph Newsom and Samuel Ward as deacons.

In addition to his duties at St Albans, Mr Browne accepted the oversight of the young congregation at Harpenden. This was between 1st May 1822 and 12th June 1824.²⁴ This arrangement is recorded in the Spicer Street Church Book under date 3rd May 1822, when Mr Browne reported that "he had been called on the previous Wednesday evening to assist at the Formation of a Church of similar Faith and order, at Harpenden, and that the infant Church requested to be considered for the present, a "Branch" of this Church, and to have the ordinances administered to them by him, the Pastor. This proposal was cheerfully and unanimously agreed to on behalf of the Church; and G Browne signified his willingness also to accede to the request respecting his services on certain specified conditions as that he should not be expected to administer the ordinances at Harpenden oftener than once a quarter; that he should not be expected to preach except at those seasons; that other pastoral duties should devolve on the officiating minister; that no fresh members should be admitted without his having been previously informed of their names, and of the time of meeting for this purpose and that in general, no measure of importance should be adopted by the Church without his having been previously advised of it."²⁵

²² Conder ER "Josiah Conder, a Memoir" p225

²³ Grave number 14852 see plate 26

²⁴ Williams G "The record of a Hundred Years (History of Harpenden Congregational Church" p39

²⁵ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street 3rd May 1822

In a sense, the pastoral oversight given by Rev George Browne during this time, was a kind of oblique set-off to that given by the Rev Nathaniel Eeles, vicar of Harpenden, to the little congregation in St Albans, meeting in secret after the passing of the Act of Uniformity. Eeles was ejected in 1661 in favour of Dr Henry Killigrew, but the little congregation remained true to his teaching. On 15th March 1671/2, the Declaration of Indulgence was passed, somewhat easing the stringent enactments of the Clarendon Code. Mr Eeles returned to Harpenden at once, and took out a licence for his own house to be used for preaching, and although the licence was subsequently revoked, he continued, in spite of opposition, to hold services in his own house until his death in 1678.²⁶

After the passing of the Toleration Act, which came into force on 24th May 1689, and which was confirmed in 1711, several private houses and other buildings in Harpenden were registered under the Act as meeting places for Protestant Dissenters. Among them was: "The house of the Rev Maurice Phillips...17 May 1819. M Phillips, G Brown, Jos Newsom",²⁷ the last named, a deacon at Spicer Street. Rev Maurice Phillips soon found his private house to be too small for his congregation and more commodious premises were sought elsewhere. Plans were set on foot to form a church on the Congregational pattern, but before these were completed the Rev Maurice Phillips died. This was in January 1822. Nothing daunted, on 1st May following, a group of sincere and earnest individuals met and formed an Independent Church. Their names were: Mr W Biddle, Mrs M Biddle, Mr Richard Whittly and Mrs Whittly, Mr Abel Mann, Mr C Ells and Mr John Smith. The original record states: - "After deliberation and prayer, it was agreed that a society should be formed, consisting in the first instance of seven members. A meeting of these individuals, together with a few Christian friends, was held ... when papers were read containing a statement of the religious experiences and views of each, either written by themselves, or (in the case of those who could not write) drawn up by a friend, and containing the substance of conversations held with them...These papers being admitted as satisfactory, and each individual having signified his desire to unite with the rest in Christian communion, the Church was formed, the Rev G Browne, of St Albans, who presided on the occasion, giving to each the right hand of fellowship. Mr Browne then addressed the members from Psalm 92 verse 13, on the nature, the excellence, and the duties of Church fellowship."²⁸ The record adds: "The circumstances of the Church not admitting the ordination of a pastor to take the oversight of them, it was agreed that the Rev George Browne and the Church under his care (Spicer Street, St Albans) should be requested to consider the newly-formed Church as a branch of their society, and that Mr Browne should be requested to visit Harpenden at certain stated seasons for the administration of the ordinances of the gospel"... and on "the morning of the following Sabbath a letter from Mr Browne was laid before the Church expressing his own willingness and that of his people, to comply with the request made to them."²⁹ This arrangement seems to have been very

²⁶ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" pp 419f

²⁷ *ibid* op cit p425 (The G Brown is, no doubt, the Rev George Browne of Spicer Street, who had oversight of this congregation from 1822 to 1824)

²⁸ Williams G "The record of a Hundred Years (History of Harpenden Congregational Church" pp 6 & 7

²⁹ *ibid*

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET

satisfactory, for when Mr Browne announced his intention of leaving St Albans for Clapham, the Church at Harpenden pressed him to stay. The appeal was strongly worded and urged "our beloved Pastor not to leave us unless the will of God be clearly shown for your removal."³⁰ Mr Browne left St Albans during the summer of 1824 and for a short time, the Rev John Harris, who afterwards became the minister, supplied the pulpit. It is recorded that he presided over a Church Meeting on 2nd July 1824 and that he spent three months in St Albans as temporary minister.³¹

In due course, an invitation was sent to him by the Church Meeting to accept the pastorate and in addition "it was agreed that Rev J Harris shall receive the whole amount of the Pew Rents with Endowment (ie the Anne Horn Charity) and that Mr Harris shall be entitled to six weeks absence from preaching every year, the Church to pay supplies in the interim at their sole expense."³²

Mr Harris accepted the pastorate, taking up his duties as from 1st January 1825, on which day he presided over the Church Meeting. The record runs: "1825. On March 2nd Rev J Harris was recognised as the settled Pastor over the Church assembling in Spicer Street, on which occasion the introductory discourse was delivered by the Rev T Morrell, Tutor of the Wymondley Academy. The Rev G Browne of Clapham addressed the Church and Congregation. The devotional exercises were conducted by the Rev Messrs Upton, Raban, J Harris and Morrell."³³

Before leaving the account of the ministry of the Rev George Browne, there is one interesting fact to be recorded, and that is the appearance of the name of a Mr I Ironmonger as a subscriber to the funds of the Sunday School on the occasion of its twenty-third anniversary, on 19th October 1817. Since that time, and down to the present, the name of Ironmonger has been associated with Spicer Street Chapel.

³⁰ Williams G "The record of a Hundred Years (History of Harpenden Congregational Church" p8

³¹ Church Book, Independent Chapel Spicer Street

³² *ibid*

³³ *ibid*

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET
THE MIDDLE YEARS

Chapter 9

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL
SPICER STREET
THE MIDDLE YEARS

Rev John Harris, Rev William Braden,
Rev Dr James Kernahan and Rev Samuel
Slocombe.

*“.... O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the
years, in the midst of the years make known...”*
Habakkuk 3:2

In one sense, the history of a church is the history of its ministry. By virtue of its succession, the ministry forms the thread of continuity and because of the important place accorded to a minister in a local congregation, events tend to move around him. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Rev John Harris, being the man he was, should have wielded a powerful influence, not only in the church, but in the town itself.

Harris was born at Shrewsbury on 21st April 1783. Through the influence of a godly mother, he was converted at an early age and, as a youth, showed signs of the evangelical fervour, which became the chief characteristic of his preaching. As a member of the Congregational Church in Shrewsbury, he was recommended in 1806 to Dr Simpson, principal of Hoxton Academy, a training college that provided education for many famous dissenting ministers. His studies being completed, he embarked upon his life's work, the Christian ministry; and for seventeen years, served successively at Welshpool, Prees, Whitchurch and Macclesfield. Harris came to Spicer Street in his prime, and for thirty-seven years, led the church with zeal and rectitude. Over and over again in the church records there is evidence of his strong and vigorous control. The Church Book during this period is mostly in his handwriting, and his comments throw some light on the problems and vicissitudes of the church's life. For example: “The meetings for social and special prayer have been well attended during the year and there is good reason to hope God has blessed these means and the word of His Grace to the souls of many....”; and this word of regret: “but few have come forward to unite with us.”¹ He adds: “There is an evil to be greatly deplored amongst members, ie that so many neglect the Duty of regularly communicating at the Lord's Table.”² It would appear that this laxity led to the introduction of a rule that “all persons being Members absenting themselves Three Months from the Lord's Table, be considered members of this Society no longer unless a satisfactory reason for absence can be given to the Church.”³ There was something behind this move, however, for earlier in the year, on 30th August, to be exact, Mr Harris

¹ Church Book, Independent Chapel, Spicer Street 1829. It would appear that while there was a certain fervency in the life of the Church, the membership did not increase greatly.

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*. Resolution passed 27th November.

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET THE MIDDLE YEARS

had preached a sermon entitled "Reciprocal Duties"; this was later printed and circulated. The subject matter of the address was based on 1 Peter 2:18-20, and dealt with the relationship between masters and servants.⁴ Some controversy ensued, leading to changes in the membership; several were offended and left the Church, joining the Baptist Church near by.⁵ Mr Harris seems to have come out of the trouble with credit: "he stood his ground and won universal respect."⁶

One aspect of the church's history during this period seems to have been the strong sense of church discipline felt by both minister and deacons. On two occasions in 1831, for example, male members of the Church were suspended for unbecoming behaviour. This suspension took place at special meetings when "male members only" were present.⁷ Mr Harris's ministry was a chequered pathway of sunshine and shadow. He was often praising God and offering thanks for blessings received, in spite of the severe problems, which, from time to time, arose in the Church. An example of this occurred in 1835, when there seems to have been a serious misunderstanding among the deacons, the nature of which was not recorded. Efforts for a reconciliation were made and a meeting called, but "...the Dissentients (were) absent; they sent a document distinguished for its intemperate language and bitter hate for the Minister. The Church expressed its abhorrence of the document."⁸ The recalcitrant members were separated from membership; Mr Harris's comments in the Church Book (in pencil!) were: "No ornaments to Religion. Weep for them!"⁹

Outside church affairs, movements were going on in the town for the establishment of a day-school for Nonconformist children. On 11th July 1834, a meeting was held to consider the project, and several prominent townsmen were invited to attend. A committee was set up, and Mr Harris was invited to join to represent the Independents.¹⁰ The idea for a purely non-sectarian school, as the Nonconformists wanted, did not work out. Instead, arrangements were made to establish an Infants' School. This was done and the school opened on 7th April 1836, Mr Harris being one of the original trustees. The building occupied by the Infants' School can still be seen in Cross Street, where it is used as a warehouse by Messrs Gibbs & Bamforth Limited, the Printers, and by the Herts Advertiser.

The original trust deed laid down, inter alia, that "No persons shall be appointed trustees other than members of the United Church of England and Ireland, Wesleyan Methodists, and Protestant Dissenters, all professing the doctrine of the blessed Trinity; and no person professing the Roman Catholic

⁴ 1 Peter 2:18-20 reads:

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

⁵ Urwick W 'Centenary memorial' p41

⁶ ibid

⁷ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street 10th October 1831

⁸ ibid 16th February 1835

⁹ ibid March 1835

¹⁰ Urwick W "Bible Truths and Church Errors etc" p243

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET THE MIDDLE YEARS

religion shall be eligible.”¹¹ It was not until 1847 that a school for older children came into existence, but on 7th January of that year, the British School was opened. The first master was a Mr James Townsend, who remained until 1859, when the school was put under Government Inspection and qualified for a state grant.¹²

During the year 1838, Mr. Harris raised a loan of £100 at five per cent per annum, for the purchase of a piece of land behind the chapel, for use as a burial ground; completion took place in November and it was arranged that the funeral fees should be set off against the loan. This arrangement continued until 1845, when the liability was liquidated. From that time onwards, the fees were paid to the minister.¹³

In 1844, the Sunday School celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, a Mr McCaw being superintendent. In that year, Mr Joseph Ironmonger's son, Isaac, was entered as a scholar, thus beginning a long life of faithful service to the Church. The Ironmonger Family's connection with Spicer Street had entered its third generation with the advent of Isaac. The evening sermon on this special anniversary day was preached by the Rev William Upton, minister of the Dagnall Street Baptist Chapel. Mr Upton was a good friend to Spicer Street Chapel, and during his long ministry of over forty years (1821 to 1865), he was in the forefront of every united evangelistic effort made by the Free Churches of the City. There seems to have been considerable friendliness between the Nonconformist churches at this time and it is recorded that a united communion service was held on 1st January 1844, for the first time. Mr Harris wrote: “For the first time in St Albans, this year, a united church communion service was held in our place; ‘twas a delightful time, all found it good to be there. President: J Harris; addresses by W Upton, Baptist; Messrs Measy and Young, Methodists.”¹⁴

Mr Harris continued in the pastorate until 14th July 1861, when he retired. The last entry in his time, in the Church Book, runs as follows: - “Rev JH, Pastor for thirty-seven years, has felt it his duty to yield to the call of Age and Infirmary, and so make an opening for another Pastor; Jan 20th 1861. May the God of Love and Peace dwell amongst the People, while Prayer is made, more and more, that Sinners may be saved, and the Church be filled with the Fruits of the Spirit, and Christ Jesus be glorified in and by all. Amen.”¹⁵

Although he resigned in 1861, Mr Harris continued to live in St Albans for a further ten years, during which time increasing weakness reduced his activities more and more. He preached his last sermon, for the Primitive Methodists, in 1868 and then seems to have completely disappeared from public life. In the Church Book beneath his own farewell message of 20th

¹¹ Urwick W “Bible Truths and Church Errors etc” p246

¹² op cit p251

The British school was transferred to the School Board in 1879. In 1884 the School Board rehoused the scholars in the Hatfield Road School and the premises in Spencer Street were sold. The building is still in use as a warehouse and workshop.

¹³ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street

¹⁴ ibid 1st January 1844

¹⁵ ibid. 20th January 1861. The St Albans Times and Herts Advertiser of 20th July 1861 stated:

“Retirement of an aged minister Rev J Harris, preaching at the Independent Church for upwards of 37 years.”

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET THE MIDDLE YEARS

January 1861, Mr Charles Woods, the Church Secretary, wrote: "Rev Jno Harris died July 31st 1871 and buried in Chapel Yard. Aged 88 years."¹⁶ A biographical note states that he "was an earnest and uncompromising preacher of the great verities of the Gospel. His ministry, especially in the earliest part of it, was a great power in the town, and multitudes in the long course of his pastorate, must have been converted to God. His holy life and character gained him the respect and confidence, not only of his own people, but of the entire religious community of the town."¹⁷

Mr Harris's advancing age, which led him to resign from the pastorate in 1861, most likely prevented his participation in the evangelistic activity in St Albans, which was part of the nation-wide religious movement in the middle years of the last century.¹⁸ The actual revival meetings in St Albans, were the result of gatherings for prayer at Christ Church, Barnet, held by the vicar, the famous William Pennefather (1816 to 1873), who, when he was vicar of St Jude's, Islington, had founded the Mildmay Movement and later, started the Mildmay and Barnet Conventions for which he wrote several hymns, including the well-known "Jesus, stand among us".

Early in May 1861, Pennefather sent two evangelists to St Albans, to begin meetings of a revival character. The St Albans Times reported in its edition of Saturday, 11th May 1861 that "Captain Wilbraham Taylor, from Barnet and W Hill Esq, paid a second visit to St Albans to deliver addresses on the most important subject of holiness." From that time onwards, for several months, meetings were held in the Town Hall, Corn Exchange, infant School in Cross Street and the British School in Spencer Street. They consisted of well-attended gospel services, when the audience was between one thousand and twelve hundred persons, down to small prayer meetings. This gracious movement of the Holy Spirit "was supported by Anglican and Dissenters alike."¹⁹ The St Albans Times continued to report the meetings enthusiastically all through the summer when, sometimes, meetings were held in the open air in a field that was once adjacent to College Street and nicknamed "Revival Meadow" by the St Albans Times.²⁰ After the Barnet evangelists had held their seventeenth meeting, they reported that an "iron room" was being built for further meetings.²¹ This structure – iron, characteristic of the age in which it was built – was opened on 17th December 1861. Two weeks beforehand, details of this new venture were published: "The lighting will be magnificent; the arrangements being fourteen gas stands or chandeliers of six lights each. But the best feature of all is that in it, the "glorious gospel" of free salvation for all who come to Jesus, will be proclaimed."²² Here again, as in previous cases, there is no mention in the Church records of these important meetings, the influences of which are still

¹⁶ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street

¹⁷ Congregational Year Book 1872 p325 (In this account the date of death is given as 28th July 1871)

¹⁸ Orr JE 'The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain' p123

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ Accounts appeared on 25th May, 8th June, 15th June, 29th June, 6th July, 13th July, 20th July, 10th August, 1861

²¹ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 23rd November 1861

²² *ibid* 30th November 1861

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET THE MIDDLE YEARS

felt in the town, but which seem, on the whole, to have passed the congregation of the Independent Chapel by.

Mr Harris's resignation from the pastorate took effect as from 14th July 1861, the occasion of the sixty-seventh anniversary of the Sunday School. The special preacher on that day was a Mr William Braden of Cheshunt College. Mr. Braden's visit impressed the congregation and as a result, he was invited, in due course, to succeed Mr Harris in the pastorate. The invitation was duly accepted on 10th January 1862. The Church Book records under date 6th April 1862: "On this day the Rev W Braden commenced his regular ministry to the people...In the morning he gave a statement of a very succinct character of his views of the fundamental scripture doctrine. In the evening he entered at length into the reasons for believing himself called to the ministry in that place. The Lord was there! The prospect is encouraging. May fruit result!"

One very interesting event which took place in Mr Braden's first year, was the delivery of three lectures to commemorate the bi-centenary of the passing of the Act of Uniformity: St Bartholomew's Day, 24th August 1662. These lectures were delivered in the Corn Exchange, and were entitled as follows: "The causes which led two thousand ministers of the Gospel to leave the Church of England two hundred years ago"; (the lecturer was Rev W C Brownell of Totteridge, Hertfordshire); "St Bartholomew's Day and its practical results to the present time"; (the lecturer was the Rev Samuel Davies and "What we think now, or the conformity of 1862"; (the lecturer was the Rev William Braden). The title of the second lecture, one feels, could have been less clumsily worded.²³

The Rev William Braden (1840-1876) had originally intended to become a lawyer, but, like JH Jowett long years after, he forsook the office-stool for the class room and set out to qualify for the Christian ministry. While at Cheshunt College he showed great promise as a preacher and, when he became established in the pastorate at Spicer Street, threw himself into his work with enthusiasm and eagerness. He was somewhat hampered by reason of an accident in which he was involved just before coming to St Albans and this proved to be a permanent handicap to him. During his five years at St Albans, however, he much endeared himself to his people and to the townsfolk. From St Albans, he proceeded to Hillhouse, Huddersfield and it was on a certain occasion during this period, that Braden went to preach at Pownall Road Chapel, Dalston, in North London.²⁴ In the congregation was the Rev Thomas Binney who, at that time, resided at Upper Clapton nearby. Binney, being much impressed with Braden's discourses, persuaded him to go to the King's Weigh House Chapel and, while there, his ministry was attended by revival. The strain of pastoral work began to tell on his already weakened frame, and in 1876 he went for a voyage to America for health reasons. While in the United States, he preached at Brooklyn for the Rev Dr Scadden but, like Doddridge before him, the exertions of the voyage, coupled with the delicate state of his health, proved too much for him. He returned to

²³ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street 31st July 1862

²⁴ The author had the privilege of preaching in this church in 1929.

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET THE MIDDLE YEARS

England to die on 20th July 1876, being buried at Kensal Green Cemetery five days later. He died in his thirty-seventh year, which Dr Samuel Smiles avers, is the fatal age of genius.

Braden's biographer has put on record that his "preaching was not what is commonly called popular. Its power consisted in the thorough mastery of the subject and in his putting the deepest truths into terse, vigorous and homely words. His sincerity, enthusiasm and brotherliness won him at once a place in the hearts of strangers, while his moderation and integrity, gave him a high position in the regard of his brethren in the ministry."²⁵

Braden's very practical legacy to Spicer Street Chapel was the erection, in 1863, of the Sunday School buildings, together with the enlargement of the vestries. These premises were further extended in Mr Urwick's time. During his ministry, the Church had experienced financial troubles and had difficulty, at times, in meeting the minister's stipend. The Anne Horn bequest, possibly adequate for the stipend in 1796, was found later, even when augmented by the pew rents, to be inadequate to keep the minister. In this connection, the rapid and considerable rise in prices and incomes which accompanied the Industrial Revolution and was a characteristic of the mid-Victorian age, should be borne in mind. It is possible that Mr. Braden might have stayed in St Albans had the financial considerations been more favourable.²⁶ One matter of pleasing character during Mr Braden's ministry, was the exchange of letters of a very cordial nature between the deacons of Spicer Street Chapel and those of the Dagnall Street Baptist Chapel, on the death of the Rev William Upton and the appointment of his successor, the Rev Thomas Watts. The friendly tie between the two congregations still continues.²⁷

Mr Braden preached his farewell sermons on Sunday, 4th November 1866 and the pulpit, for the next three Sundays, was occupied by the Rev J H Bowhay of Hertford. At a special Church Meeting convened on 29th November, a possible invitation to Mr Bowhay to become pastor was discussed. Of the sixty persons present, forty voted in favour, three against, and there were seventeen abstentions.²⁸ An invitation was accordingly sent to Mr Bowhay, but when the Church Meeting assembled on 10th December following, to confirm the invitation, of the seventy present that voted, seven were against his coming. On receiving this information, Mr Bowhay withdrew his tentative acceptance of the pastorate in the following terms: "Finding through the Committee that so unfavourable a feeling exists in the minds of a few, as may disturb the peace of the Church and consequently impede my usefulness if among you, I have, after much prayerful consideration of the subject, made up my mind to withdraw my acceptance of your invitation to the pastorate."²⁹

²⁵ Congregational Year Book 1879 pp 301 & 302

²⁶ Urwick W "Nonconformity in Herts" p240

²⁷ On 18 July 1962, a special service of commemoration was held in Spicer Street Chapel for the Tercentenary of the Act of Uniformity, 24th August 1662. The minister of the Dagnall Street Baptist Church, Rev Dr Morris West gave an address entitled "1662 and all that".

²⁸ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street

²⁹ Mr Bowhay's letter of 7th January 1867, in the Church Book, Independent Chapel Spicer Street

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET THE MIDDLE YEARS

While awaiting the settlement of a new minister, the pulpit was being occupied by a former Congregational minister, the Rev James Kernahan, MA, PhD, FGS, author and lecturer. The Rev James Kernahan had entered the Congregational ministry in 1850, when he became the pastor of the church at St Austell, Cornwall. Then followed a succession of pastorates: Penzance, 1852 to 1858; Ilfracombe, February to November 1858; and Southgate, Gloucester, 1859 to 1862. The Congregational Year Book for 1863 records his resignation from the ministry of the Congregational Union. As a "free lance" preacher, he was invited to supply the pulpit at Spicer Street in succession to Mr Braden and while negotiations were going on with Mr Bowhay; when these broke down, Dr Kernahan was invited to accept the pastorate; this he did by letter dated 21st February 1867. At this time, he was living with his family in Dalston, North East London, and for three years he carried on the work of the ministry from there, travelling down to St Albans on Saturday and returning home to Dalston on Monday. In 1870 he removed to St Albans and took up his residence at No 4 College Street; the house, renumbered, is still standing. Dr Kernahan stayed until September 1876, when he resigned. The name of Kernahan is, perhaps, better remembered in connection with the Doctor's illustrious son, Coulson who, during the family's stay at St Albans, attended St Albans School and who subsequently acquired a considerable reputation as a novelist and essayist.³⁰

The pulpit remained vacant for nearly a year following Dr Kernhan's departure, during which time several candidates were considered. Ultimately on 2nd July 1877, the Rev Samuel Slocombe of Clapham was invited to accept the pastorate, but disaster was to follow. There was nothing in Mr Slocombe's ministry to which objection could be made; he was a good preacher and a delightful personality; he made himself familiar with the Church's history and it is on record that he gave a lecture on one occasion on the Church's historic background,³¹ but his health broke down. His eyesight became impaired and reading became an impossibility. Mr Slocombe strongly felt the difficulties of his position and put the case before the Church; in the meantime, his physician recommended him to take a sea voyage. To help him in this venture, the Church not only released him from the obligations of the pastorate, but made over the sum of £60 by deed, and subscribed in other ways to augment this amount. He sailed for Christchurch, New Zealand, in November 1879. Mr Slocombe remained in New Zealand until 1881, when he proceeded to the United States of America, where he held two pastorates: Cayacas for five years and San Francisco for two years. He died at Alamela, California, on 6th November 1905, at the age of 63.³²

A further link with the Baptist Chapel in Dagnall Street was forged at this time. In December 1879, the Baptist Chapel, being closed for a short time for repairs, the congregation was invited to worship in Spicer Street. The invitation was accepted and the Baptist minister, the Rev Thomas Watts,

³⁰ For information concerning Rev Dr James Kernahan, I am indebted to Mrs AM Puddick, Librarian of the Geological Society of London, of which Dr Kernahan was a fellow. For details of Mr Coulson Kernahan, see: "Who was Who" 1941 to 1950, vol IV p633

³¹ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 12th July 1879

³² Information from the CE Surmon Index in Dr William's Library

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET
THE MIDDLE YEARS

preached on Sunday 7th December.

The Church was now faced with the necessity of finding another minister. The Deacons, in their perplexity, consulted the Rev Dr Newth of New College, London. He recommended the Rev William Urwick, MA, to their notice, and accordingly Mr Urwick supplied for two Sundays in December 1879 and was engaged to occupy the pulpit each Sunday for the first six months of 1880, with a view to taking the pastorate at the end of that period. This arrangement was confirmed at the Church Meeting held on 5th January 1880. Thus began a most memorable and successful ministry.

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET
EXPANSION

Chapter 10

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET
EXPANSION

Ministry of the Rev William Urwick MA

*A veteran warrior in the Christian field who never
saw the sword he could not wield.
William Cowper.*

*Of this blest man, let him just praise be given.
Heaven was in him before he was in heaven.
Izaak Walton.*

The Rev William Urwick occupied the pastorate at Spicer Street from 1880 to 1895, and proved during that time, to be both an acceptable preacher and a diligent pastor, added to all of which, he was no mean scholar.¹ William Urwick was born at Sligo on 8th March 1826; he was therefore, fifty-four years of age when he accepted the call to St Albans. If it is true, as psychologists affirm, that in the average man, the mental climacteric is reached at sixty-three, then Mr Urwick gave to the congregation at the Independent Chapel, the best years of his life; he certainly left his mark upon Congregationalism in the County of Hertfordshire. He was the second son of a Nonconformist divine, the Rev William Urwick DD (awarded by Dartmouth College in 1832), and after leaving school, he entered Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated BA in 1848, proceeding to MA in 1851. After leaving Trinity College, he embarked upon a postgraduate course at the Lancashire Independent College, Manchester, in preparation for the Congregational ministry. He was ordained on 19th March 1851 and inducted to the church at Hatherlow, Cheshire, on the same day.

A useful and varied ministry of twenty-three years followed, during which time he acted, first as secretary and then as president of the Cheshire Congregational Union. It was during his stay in Cheshire that Mr Urwick did much of his writing. The following works belong to this period of his life: first there came his "Historical Sketches of Nonconformity in the County Palatine of Chester" in 1864. This was a symposium by himself and other ministers and laymen of that county. In 1870 he edited "The Life and Letters of William Urwick DD" (his father), followed in the same year by "Ecumenical Councils". In 1872 appeared "Errors of Ritualism" and "The Nonconformist and the Education Act". In the last year of his stay in Cheshire, 1874, he brought out his "The Papacy and the Bible".

William Urwick left Cheshire in response to a request from the Board of Regents of New College, London to take the chair of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis there. He removed to London with his family and took up

¹ See Appendix XII. Rev Alex Gordon, in his article on William Urwick in the Dictionary of National Biography, is divided in his opinion of Urwick's scholarship. He states: "His book on Hertfordshire Nonconformity" (1884), is distinctly the best, so far, of the nonconformist county history...He is however, essentially an analyst, with no historical breadth of view." (See DNB II Sup vol III p 546)

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET EXPANSION

residence in Belsize Park near the then, salubrious suburb of Hampstead, and close to the college itself. Mr Urwick taught at the college for three years, but apart from a modest commentary on a passage in Isaiah (chapter 52:13 to 53:12), which was published under the title of "The Servant of Jehovah" he appears to have been entirely absorbed in his lecturing and his family. Then followed a further period of three years, in which Mr Urwick was engaged in itinerant preaching and writing; it is quite evident that the family had some private means. It was during this period that Mr Urwick first became acquainted with Spicer Street Chapel. Mr Slocombe, being compelled to withdraw from the pastorate, left in October 1879 and, for six months or so; there was no settled minister. Mr Urwick has recorded that he paid his first visit to St Albans on 21st December of that year.²

The two or three sermons that Mr Urwick preached at the end of 1879, seem to have much impressed the congregation; consequently, at the Church Meeting of 5th January 1880, already mentioned, the secretary, Mr George Allin made a statement on behalf of the Committee (ie the Diaconate), as follows:

"That as the Church had been without a settled pastor for some time past, and having had several supplies, it was thought desirable that some one should be decided on as suitable to take charge of the Church and as not one of the supplies was thought qualified for that high office except the Rev W Urwick, a letter was read from Dr Newth of New College recommending Mr Urwick in very high terms and as Mr Urwick had occupied the pulpit three Sundays, the Committee suggested that an invitation be sent to Mr Urwick to supply the Pulpit for six months with a view to taking the Pastorate at the end of that term."³

The matter was freely discussed by those present and ultimately the following resolution was placed on record:

"That the Church invite the Rev W Urwick to supply the Pulpit for six months from January 5th (1880)."

The resolution was carried unanimously.⁴

The new, temporary, minister entered upon his duties forthwith, with zeal and energy, travelling down each weekend from Belsize Park to St Albans. That the probationary period seemed to be a success is proved by reference to the Church Book, where there is the record of a Special Church Meeting held on 7th June 1880 and convened on purpose to hear read the correspondence between the Committee and Mr Urwick. The Committee's letter to Mr Urwick, first thanked him for his great help to the Church thus far and enquired if he would be prepared to accept the pastorate at the end of the six months' period. His reply was to the effect that he would only consider an

² Urwick W "Centenary Memorial" p61

³ Church Book, Independent Chapel, Spicer Street

⁴ ibid

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET EXPANSION

invitation if it were unanimous and took into account his wish to continue to live in London.

Some discussion appears to have taken place and some controversy also, when it was realised that the proposed new minister might be under the necessity of travelling extensively on Sundays. The difficulty was finally overcome by sending a further letter to Mr Urwick suggesting that if the problem of Sunday travel could be solved, the Church would give him a unanimous invitation to the pastorate. Mr Urwick accepted the invitation, at the same time requesting the Church to obtain weekend lodgings for him. These were found in Church Crescent, and during the whole of his pastorate he kept to this arrangement: coming to St Albans on Saturday and returning to Town on Monday.

Mr Urwick's decision was communicated to the Church Meeting of 13th July and received by the members with great enthusiasm. At the same meeting this enthusiasm issued in a practical matter by the committee being requested to accept an estimate for £120 for the repewing of the church by the local firm of Burgone & Sons, to have the heating system overhauled and the school and vestry cleaned and repaired at a cost of £80, making £200 in all; each seat-holder to be asked to make a contribution. The repairs and renovations were ultimately put in hand and the buildings closed for a brief period. During this time there occurs once more the pleasing characteristic of the St Albans Free Churches - hospitality the one to the other. While this work was in hand, the congregation of Spicer Street worshipped, by kind invitation of the church, at Dagnall Street Baptist Chapel.

The Rev William Urwick was inducted to the Pastorate of Spicer Street Chapel on Monday 11th October 1880 and preached his first sermons as settled minister on Sunday 17th October following; he was in his fifty-fifth year.

A full and interesting account of Mr Urwick's induction was carried by the local press;⁵ says the report: "The attendance was excellent." Those taking part, besides the new minister, were: Professor Goodwin, in the Chair; Mr R Love and Mr G Allin, members of the Church Committee; Professor Harley, of Mill Hill; the Rev R Alliot, of Bishop's Stortford, and the Rev R Forsaith, of Hertford. The last address of the service was given by a certain Dr Merry, a lay preacher and personal friend of Mr Urwick. Reporting the address, the local account goes on: "Dr Merry...said he had good reason to speak highly of Mr Urwick. He was a true friend, and he well remembered his venerable father, in whose church the speaker's father was senior deacon. Their pastor was an excellent scholar, and was capable of giving them a sermon one day in Greek, the next in Hebrew, and the next in Latin, which was not a very general acquisition..."

Mr Urwick, in his own address, referred to the Church's history as being "a noble one, especially in regard to the Protestant Dissenters of St Albans", however, "he came there, not as a champion of Nonconformity, but to preach Christ and Him crucified." This was a happy augury for his long and

⁵ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 16th October 1880

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET EXPANSION

distinguished ministry. The new minister threw himself wholeheartedly into his task and commenced a series of spiritual and material innovations, which made his ministry notable.

Soon after his inauguration, Mrs Urwick came to help her husband.⁶ In 1881 she began the Women's Meeting, which has continued uninterruptedly ever since. In this work for the women of the Church and neighbourhood, Mrs Urwick was soon joined by Mrs Ironmonger, the wife of Mr Isaac Ironmonger, one of the Church Committee. It is very satisfactory to be able to say that at the present time, eighty-one years after the founding of the Women's Meeting, this work is led by Mrs Ironmonger's grand-daughter, Miss Alice Crosbie Ironmonger.

The intake of new members appears to have speeded up under the leadership of Mr Urwick. This is not surprising when it is recalled that there had been a period when the pulpit was vacant, and the previous minister had been a sick man. A little more formality is observable in procedure and organisation: the Chapel Committee, the executive of the Church Meeting, is occasionally referred to as the Deaconal Committee while the members of the executive begin to assume the title of Deacons. The Church Meeting of 25th June 1883 directed: "That one of the Committee and other gentlemen of the Congregation who would be willing to (should) stand at the door of the Church and welcome any strangers and show them into a pew; each one to take it in turn."⁷ This work was later placed in the hands of special members elected by the Church Meeting, and called Sidesmen. This system has continued to operate ever since.

In 1884, the fifth year of Mr Urwick's ministry and when it was obvious he was well settled in the pastorate, he and others became involved in some controversy with the local School Board. The British School in Spencer Street had been established through the efforts of several prominent Nonconformists for the promotion of non-sectarian education, and was opened on 7th January 1847; Mr Isaac Ironmonger, who figured largely in the affairs of the Independent Chapel in Mr Urwick's time, had been educated there. In 1878, the St Albans School Board invited the Trustees of the British School to consider handing over their authority to the board. After discussion, it was agreed to accede to the Board's suggestion, provided that the school was carried on in the same building, or another in the Abbey Parish. In consequence, the transfer took place on 1st February 1879. In 1884, the building was found to be inadequate and inconvenient for the growing demands being made upon it and the local School Board, in spite of the undertaking given in 1879 to continue instruction in the Abbey Parish, transferred the scholars to a new wing that had been built on the Hatfield Road Board School. The suggestion made by the nonconformist interests that the old British School should be transferred to a new building to be erected in Hill Street, was ignored by the authorities and, although the grievance of the

⁶ Referring to Mrs Urwick, the Congregational Yearbook 1906, Page 240 States: "She was a woman of uncommon gifts and character, a daughter of the late Mr Thomas Hunter of Manchester. Her husband had in her the truest of helpers from marriage in 1859 till the day she died."

⁷ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET EXPANSION

nonconformists was well ventilated in the local press, no results followed.⁸ In due course, the British School building was sold for £200 and the proceeds appropriated by the School Board, but no building for non-sectarian education was erected in the Abbey Parish. The little, old, red-brick building used by the original British School is still to be seen in Spencer Street, where the changes of the years have seen it a work-shop, a store, a warehouse, a Mormon Meeting House and finally, a warehouse once more. As might be expected, Mr Urwick was prominent in this controversy.

In his report for the year 1884, Mr Urwick states: "We have... expounded the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, chapter by chapter, as illustrative of the great doctrine of Justification by Faith alone. The Book of the Acts in like manner has engaged our meditation at our week evening service."⁹ So the minister, if he had a social conscience and spoke up for non-sectarian education, was not backward in teaching pure doctrine as well. Outreach also seems to have occupied the Church during this period, for the report continues: "In connection with our Church, mission services are conducted regularly in three localities: Bricket Wood, Cooper's Green and the Camp". The work at Cooper's Green and the Camp was in the nature of "cottage meetings", but that at Bricket Wood blossomed out into a much larger fellowship and a room was rented for the purposes of worship, which, when suitably altered, was opened for worship on Tuesday, 7th October 1884. On the Sunday following, 12th October, fifty persons attended the evening service.¹⁰ The cost of the alterations and improvements amounting to £30. 8/- "was subscribed and expended."¹¹

This report contains a notice of Mr Urwick's book "Nonconformity in Herts", published after three years' work. This volume of 875 pages was issued in April and was printed and published by Hazell, Watson & Viney Limited at twenty-one shillings, but copies were available locally at the office of Messrs Gibbs & Bamforth at twenty-five per cent reduction for cash. Mr Urwick's comment is: "I have reason to rejoice in the kindly reception which the book has met."

The increase in membership and the deepening of the Church's spiritual life, which attended the initial years of Mr Urwick's ministry, were soon reflected in the Sunday School. The buildings erected during Mr Braden's ministry, were found to be too small and inconvenient. Plans for a substantial extension were put in hand. On 9th March 1885, at a specially convened meeting of the Church and Congregation, it was announced that two cottages adjacent to the existing school premises, had been purchased for £180 and that Mr Urwick had promised to advance this sum, by way of interest-free loan, provided it was repaid by the end of the year.¹² This information was received with gratitude and a special committee was immediately set up to make the arrangements necessary for raising the

⁸ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 29th November 1884

⁹ Spicer Street Chapel Annual Report 1884 p5

¹⁰ Bricket Wood Congregational Church Book. (The Spicer Street Chapel Annual Report of 1886, p7, gave the average attendance at Bricket Wood as 80 and that at Coopers Green as 40)

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street. In his report for 1885, Mr Urwick gave the figure as £185.

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET EXPANSION

money. The sum of £55 was promised, on the spot, by those present. In his own account, Mr Urwick is modestly silent regarding his own part in this transaction.¹³ It was not, however, until 1889, that the new buildings were ready for use. This may have been due to the adverse social conditions which prevailed during the eighties of the last century. In his report on the year 1885, the minister wrote: "The year 1885 has been one of great poverty and want in St Albans, and of considerable change in our fellowship. As in 1884, we were called to pass through a severe fever epidemic, fatal to many, so in this succeeding year, many in this city have been brought to the extremities of want at their wits end for many a meal, not through any fault of their own, for they have willing hands to toil, but through the extremely low wages, and the lack of work to do. Our tables have been bare, and our Poor House full. This is not a new thing; but this year it has reached a lower and more pinching point."¹⁴

Again during this year, Mr Urwick was, once more, in the lists on behalf of the unprivileged and down-trodden. It appears that on Trinity Sunday, 31st May, following the usual ordination service in the Abbey, the Bishop of St Albans, the Archdeacon and some of the clergy, were lunching at the Peahen Hotel. During the lunch, the local corps of the Salvation Army in attempting to hold an open-air meeting or march-past through the principal streets, were attacked by a mob and their instruments broken up. The fracas was plainly seen from the hotel where the clergy were at lunch, but they did nothing to prevent the incident and did not interfere. On the Sunday following, Mr Urwick preached an outspoken sermon in which he mentioned the incident and some correspondence between him, the Bishop and the Archdeacon followed.¹⁵

By the middle of 1888, the new school buildings became a practical issue and, on 3rd September, the stone was laid by Mr Joseph King of Hampstead. This fact is recorded on the stone itself and may still be seen. As the custom was at that time, Mr King was presented with a trowel inscribed: -

Congregational Sunday School, St Albans
Foundation stone of enlarged buildings
Laid by Joseph King Esq, Hampstead.
Sept 3 1888
Mark ix 14

The new buildings and classrooms were opened on Wednesday 30th January 1889, the sermon being preached by the Rev (afterwards Dr) Newman Hall, LLB, a well-known London Congregational minister and writer.¹⁶ The Mayor of

¹³ Urwick W "Centenary Memorial" p70

¹⁴ Annual Report of Spicer Street Chapel 1885 p5

¹⁵ Urwick W op cit p71

¹⁶ The following paragraph appeared in the Christian World on 18th August 1960: "A reader has asked me if I know when he can obtain a copy of Newman Halls famous tract - published, I think over 80 years ago - called 'Come to Jesus', 'Come to Jesus' sold in hundreds of thousands; there was a story that King Edward VII asked for it in his last illness." The story I want to recall at the moment however, relates to another work of Newman Hall - whom, by the way, I heard preach when he was over ninety. He was engaged in controversy with a brother minister, and wrote a 'slashing' pamphlet concerning his opponent. He took it to his friend Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and asked his opinion of it. Spurgeon read

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET EXPANSION

St Albans, Mr Richard Gibbs, opened the door with a silver key and the goal of four years hard work and planning was, at last, reached; the final cost of the project was £645.¹⁷

Relationships between the Nonconformist Churches continued on very friendly lines and in 1890, at the United Prayer Meetings held in January, the Salvation Army was included for the first time. The local officer gave an address at the Dagnall Street Baptist Chapel and Mr Urwick visited the Salvation Army Hall on 10th January.¹⁸ There is also some evidence at this time of the widening influence being exerted by Nonconformists in the City. At a meeting of the Governors of the St Albans Hospital the question of chaplaincies was raised and the following resolution was passed: -

“That besides the Chaplain appointed who shall be responsible for a short service on Sundays, and for regular visiting of the Hospital, the Nonconformist ministers of the city and neighbourhood shall appoint a representative to hold a short service on one day during the week at a convenient hour, the fullest liberty being at all times acceded to patients to be visited by their own clergymen, or by the minister of any religious denomination to which they may belong.”¹⁹

Mr Urwick was appointed by his fellow ministers to act for the Nonconformists. In praise of the local hospital, it should be stated that the kindness and courtesy extended to the clergy of the city by the Management and Staff, continues on a high level.

In the following year, occurred one of those painful and distressing happenings which mar the life of every church; two of the prominent members, Mr Edwin Nash and Mr SE Buttenshaw, were much offended by a sermon which Mr Urwick preached on 21st June 1891. These two gentlemen, who were Treasurer and Secretary respectively of the Home Mission of the Church, and responsible for the work being carried on at Bricket Wood, Cooper's Green and now, in a house on the Watford Road, withdrew from membership. They started a Congregational Church in a room in Upper Lattimore Road, and were later joined by a Mr Young. The offending sermon was preached on Hebrews 13:7, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.” There is no record to hand which might explain what was actually said to cause such deep offence.

Soon after this incident, Mr Urwick went to Switzerland for his holidays and, during his absence, a special meeting was held “for the purpose of considering the advisability of presenting an address to the pastor....on his return home from his holiday.”²⁰ As a result of this meeting, Mr Urwick

the pamphlet and said: “Very powerful Newman. But I would like to suggest a different title for it “Go to the Devil’ by the author of “Come to Jesus?” Newman Hall flung his manuscript into the fire.”

¹⁷ Annual report of Spicer Street Chapel 1889 p19

¹⁸ Urwick W “Centenary memorial” p79

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street 14th September 1891

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET EXPANSION

received a most enthusiastic welcome from the Church on his return from abroad, and an illuminated address was presented to him on 1st October, signed by the whole diaconate.²¹ In such a gracious and kindly manner did the congregation try to show their sympathy and loyalty, following upon the painful incident of the summer previous.

Pastor and people continued to look forward and press forward. The disaffection of Mr Nash and Mr Buttenshaw seems to have driven the other members closer together and the work of God prospered. At the ninety-eighth Sunday School Anniversary, held on 22nd May 1892, it was reported that there were 260 scholars and 20 teachers on the books and that the average attendance of scholars was 80 in the morning and 250 in the afternoon. In the autumn, Mr Nash, who had seceded from the Church, died, but his friend Mr Buttenshaw continued to act as treasurer for Bricket Wood Mission until his resignation in 1898.²²

The Church Meeting of 28th September 1891, decided to adopt the "New Hymnal", a special fund being opened for members and others who could not afford to buy their own copies.²³ More attention was now being given to the musical side of the worship and with the introduction of the new hymn book, the question of getting a better organ arose. During 1891 the matter was discussed at several meetings and at last, on 17th March 1892, a decision was taken, not only to install a new organ, but to reseat the gallery and open up two windows in the upper part of the chapel on the west wall. By the autumn, all the projected work had been completed and, on 13th October, the new organ, in a specially built chamber behind the pulpit, was opened. The total cost of the work - the new organ, the new pews and the gallery windows - was £400. Of this sum, £115 8/- had been subscribed or promised at the meeting of 17th March previously. Over and over again, as one reads the old records, the impression one gets is of the generosity of the members and their zeal for the work of God and the good of the Church.²⁴

Undoubtedly, the sincerity and zeal of the pastor was reflected in the life of the Church. Following upon the installation of the organ and the other renovations, the ladies of the Church refurnished the vestry as a Christmas present to the pastor. Christmas Day 1892, was a Sunday, and when Mr Urwick entered his vestry to prepare for the morning worship, he found a card on the table, addressed to him: "Please accept the refurnishing of your Vestry as a token of much love and esteem to our dear Pastor from his loving friends the ladies of the Congregation."²⁵ Never, it seemed, had the Church's devotion been so marked, or its unity so pronounced. These were halcyon days for the Independent Chapel, and its influence, and that of its minister, spread to every part of the City.

²¹ See Appendix XIII

²² Bricket Wood Congregational Church Book 23rd September 1898

²³ The New Hymnal referred to, is the Congregational Church Hymnal, generally known as "Barrett's Hymn Book." The Rev George Barrett BA was the general editor and Dr E J Hopkins was the musical editor. It was published in London by Hodder & Stoughton in 1887 and is still in occasional use.

²⁴ See Appendix XIV

²⁵ Urwick W "Centenary memorial" p84

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET EXPANSION

In his Annual Report for 1894, issued in September, Mr Urwick writes in a reminiscent mood. He recalls briefly, many of the events of his ministry which took place between 1880 and 1894. Mentioning first the repewing of Chapel and gallery, the new school buildings and the organ, he adds: "More than these material things, there is a series of common joys, sorrows and bereavement, in personal and family life that have knit our hearts together in the most sacred and tender ties. Many who were scholars in the Sunday School, when I first came, are now useful members of Christ, and teachers, either here or in other parts."²⁶

This report, rather more retrospective than usual, seemed to foreshadow the end of his ministry, and although he remained until 30th December 1894, it came as no surprise to the congregation when he intimated his withdrawal at the morning service of 2nd December. Prior to this, he made efforts to "tie up the ends" before leaving, the first thing being the appointment of new trustees. A new deed was engrossed in accordance with Sir Morton Peto's Act, and a large number of gentlemen appointed.²⁷ The second thing was the publication of his "Centenary Memorial"; this perhaps could be said to be his "swan song". This book consists of an interesting and detailed account of the progress of the Sunday School from the small beginnings in the Cotton Mill, to the century year 1894. There is also much other information about the life of the Church itself. A supplement to this volume records the events of the centenary celebrations, which began on Saturday 12th May, and continued through the following week, many well-known Nonconformist ministers and laymen taking part.

At last, in his wisdom, Mr Urwick had decided to resign. The letter he read from the pulpit on 2nd December was long and detailed, but touching in its sentiments.²⁸ The congregation had been prepared for this event, but when the time came for the actual separation of pastor and people, there was sorrow on both sides. Mr Urwick, punctilious in all things, had given an official month's notice, preaching his last sermon on Sunday evening, 30th December. The local press gave full coverage to the farewell meetings.²⁹ Mr Urwick remained overnight until Monday, 31st December, when the Annual Meeting of the Church and Congregation was held. It made the occasion of a grand farewell to the minister, who was presented with a magnificent illuminated address. Mr Urwick, in his reply, gave great testimony to the kindness of the people: "He had never in visiting any house had anything but a word of hearty kindness and hearty greeting whenever he entered the door."³⁰ Thus came to an end what was, for Spicer Street, the most successful and fruitful ministry of any of the pastors during the nineteenth century.

The late Mr W Percival Westell, naturalist and former secretary and curator of Letchworth Museum, wrote: "As a boy I attended Sunday School at the Congregational Church, Spicer Street, St Albans, and I well remember my

²⁶ Annual Report of Spicer Street Chapel 1894 p4

²⁷ See Appendix XV

²⁸ See Appendix XVI

²⁹ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 5th January 1895

³⁰ *ibid*

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET EXPANSION

seat in the gallery of the Chapel during service, when I used to watch the saintly form of the well-known Congregationalist the late Rev William Urwick.”³¹ A few other interesting testimonies to the great man's character have survived, in the memories of some of his contemporaries. One lady, in a letter to the author, states: “Mr Urwick was most anxious that we girls and boys should join the Church, so he used to have half-dozen at a time in the vestry to ask us questions as to how we thought about God and joining the Church. I well remember it...He was a very kind gentleman and we loved him. When he left, I remember standing at the door which leads into the Sunday School, and he said: “Good-bye Lydia” and kissed me.”³² Another of his contemporaries stated verbally to the writer: “He wore a black gown in the pulpit and was so earnest in his preaching that he sometimes sobbed during the sermon. I can see him now, with his white hair, standing there, benign, a real old gentleman.”³³ An obituary notice stated: “He was an excellent preacher, earnest, instructive and scriptural. He was also an ideal pastor, visiting systematically, every member of his flock. He was a man of strong convictions, an ardent Nonconformist and Puritan.”³⁴

Mr Urwick continued to reside in Hampstead, but in 1897 Mrs Urwick died, affecting him considerably. “She was a woman of uncommon gifts and character, a daughter of the late Mr Thomas Hunter of Manchester. Her husband had in her the truest of helpers from marriage till the day she died.”³⁵ Mr Urwick died on 20th August 1905, while visiting his family in Dublin - he was in his eightieth year.

³¹ Westell WP “Yesterdays (An Autobiography)” p28

³² This letter was written in 1961 by Miss Lydia Lightfoot, of 61 Holywell Hill, St Albans. Miss Lightfoot was 15 years old when Mr Urwick left St Albans. She died on 2nd January 1963, aged 88

³³ This information was obtained verbally from the late Miss Edith Arnold of 19 Britton Avenue, St Albans. Miss Arnold died in February 1961. She had been connected with Spicer Street Chapel for more than 80 years and her family had been attached for more than a century. The Mr Frank Arnold, who was one of Mr Urwick's deacons, was Miss Arnold's uncle.

³⁴ Congregational Year Book 1906 p240

³⁵ Ibid p241

Chapter 11

THE OUTREACH OF A NEW CENTURY

Ministry of the Rev William Carson

*“...the people that do know their God
shall be strong and do exploits.”
Daniel 11:32*

The Rev William Urwick had desired to retire at the end of 1894 and fittingly enough, as mentioned in the previous chapter, he made his last official, public appearance on the occasion of the Church's Annual Meeting on Monday, 31st December. In his closing address he had said that “he hoped that they would select a sound Christian man as their future minister, one who would be able to take up the work in great spirit and enthusiasm.”¹

During the weeks that followed, several preachers visited the Church “with a view”, as the term goes, and the choice was finally narrowed down to two: Rev J H Brown and Mr William Carson, a student at Hackney College. At a meeting of the Church and Congregation held on 21st March 1895, the sixty-nine persons present gave their unanimous vote in favour of Mr. Carson, fixing the stipend at £200 per annum. An interesting sidelight on the fall in the value of money during the nineteenth century, is furnished by the difference between the amount of the stipend at the beginning, and that paid at the end: £40 and £200 respectively. Although there is always a time lag between rises in prices and rises in wages, the remuneration of ministers of the Gospel has always lagged far behind rises in prices.

An interesting factor begins to be seen, at this point, in the progress of Congregationalism in the City; this was the possibility and advisability of erecting another church on the east side of the City, where a new area was developing rapidly. This factor finds mention in the correspondence between the Church and Mr Carson and possibly was an added reason for his acceptance of the call to St Albans; the natural response of a young man to the challenge provided by the establishment of a new cause.

In accordance with custom, an official letter was sent by the Secretary, Mr Robert Love, under date 5th April 1895, giving Mr Carson the “Call”. Mr Love's letter and Mr Carson's reply are given in full, as examples of the grave courtesy which was accorded to such a situation about the turn of the century, especially where the vital matter of choosing a minister was concerned. Mr Love's letter ran as follows: -

“My dear Mr Carson,
I am requested by the Deacons of the Congregational Church, St Albans to offer you a cordial invitation to become the Pastor of the Church.

¹ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 5th January 1895

The invitation is given pursuant of a unanimous vote taken at a largely attended meeting of the Church and Congregation. The stipend we are prepared to guarantee is £180 per annum, which is made up part by pew rents and the other part by a small endowment; we hope this may be increased from £180 to £200. The whole of the pew rents will go to the fund which constitutes the Pastor's fund, so that any increase in the number of seat holders will augment your salary. The number of Church Members at present on our Roll is 162; many of these are poor but we would not expect you to assist them from your private resources; all our buildings are in good repair, and free from debt. Many young people attend and this we consider a hopeful feature of our work. In our judgment there is a good prospect for Congregationalism in this Town and what is much more important - for the Cause of our Lord. Should your ministry prove successful (and we have every reason to think it will), we shall be delighted to dispose of the present antiquated Buildings in an obscure street and erect modern ones in a prominent position.

We promise you our cordial support in all you may undertake here in the Cause of Christ and humanity. Lastly: our pulpit is one in which whoever accepts it, may speak out all that God gives him to say. If you accept our invitation, we should be glad if you could begin your ministry with our Sunday School Anniversary the second Sabbath in May. May God lead you and us aright.

On behalf of the Deacons,
I am, Yours faithfully,
R. Love"²

Mr Carson, writing from Hackney College on 11th April 1895, wrote as follows:

-

"Dear Mr Love,

According to promise, I hereby send through you my decision to the Church at St Albans.

After much careful thought and earnest prayer, I am conscious that it is my duty to accept the invitation you have so heartily extended to me and among the many things which have appealed to me, I have felt most deeply, unanimity of the Call, and the warmth of spirit you have all manifested in presenting it. Let me further say that I am influenced by the hope that great things lie before us in the future. I want to give the morning of my ministry to hard continuous work in the Kingdom of God; all your promises of help and cooperation I gladly accept.

My faith in your devotion to the work of Christ is strong. We

² Church Book, Independent Chapel Spicer Street

must, brethren, range ourselves strong in each others trust beneath a common banner. There must be a unity of purpose constantly springing from the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and He must lead the van and point to the field of victory. He will be with us and enable us to march with His Church to the grandest victory the world has ever seen. I come then at the call of Christ, as His ambassador and servant. I need your prayers and sympathy in fulfilling His great commission. May Jesus be in the midst of all our work in the Church and in the midst of each house; the origin, agent and object of thought, word and deed. We shall have our difficulties but we shall also have our gracious surprises.

The most difficult road in the Christian Service leads to the King's Country and near to the King's heart. Thanking you all for the invitation, and hoping for happy and prosperous days in the work of Christ,

I remain,
Yours very sincerely,
William Carson"³

This happy, howbeit somewhat formal, exchange of letters, was succeeded by a special meeting of the Church and Congregation on 11th June 1895 "for the purpose of welcoming the new pastor" and of "giving an opportunity of giving to Mr Carson to become more known to the members."⁴ The Chairman at this meeting was the former minister, the Rev William Urwick who, on this occasion, was accompanied by Mrs Urwick. They both appeared to be in excellent health, following a holiday abroad in a sunnier clime, and expressed their satisfaction at being present, once more, among old friends. The meeting foreshadowed a bright future for the Church in St Albans.

Mr. Carson's ordination and induction took place on the afternoon of 17th October, in the presence of several well-known ministers of the Congregational Churches of the day. The Rev William Urwick presided; Principal Cave BA, DD and Professor Bennett MA, both of Hackney College attended, supported by the Rev R.F. Horton MA, DD, of Lyndhurst Road Congregational Church Hampstead, the Rev J Scott James of Watford, the Rev AJ Woods of Bushey, the Rev William Day, formerly of Queensland, Australia, the Rev JS Hoppins of Wheathampstead, the Rev G Garlick of Hatfield and the Rev D Tatton of Hemel Hempstead. Professor Bennett, who gave an address entitled "An Exposition of Congregational Principles", outlined the meaning of Congregationalism and in conclusion, set a very high standard for both Pastor and people. He said: "If Congregational Churches are indeed to fulfill their mission, then must their members walk with God and live in Christ and His Spirit, in all love and meekness, in all enthusiasm and devotion to the world and one another, and to God."⁵

³ Church Book, Independent Chapel Spicer Street

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times 26th October 1895

About this time, the Church Book shows that some persons who had been worshipping with the splinter group in Upper Lattimore Road, were transferred to Spicer Street and Mr SE Buttenshaw, who had led the break-away in 1891 in company with Mr Edwin Nash, came back and his name begins to appear again in the records.⁶ This small congregation of the secession eventually ceased to meet and there is no record after 1895 of any further activity; during the years 1894 and 1895, a Rev W Ireland had been in charge of this small group.⁷

Mr Carson's first completed year, 1896, was a busy one for all concerned. The new minister was married in August, and with his home affairs safely settled, he applied himself with vigour to his pastoral work. In the September following, a special committee was set up to consider certain unsuccessful conditions in the work of the large Sunday School. The trouble was the age-long one of shortage of teachers. An improvement in this direction was later reported. While the Sunday School problems must not be ignored or their importance deprecated, the eyes of the Church were on wider horizons. The Special Church Meeting of 18th November 1896, discussed tentatively, the scheme for a new and larger church building. This matter, of course, had been in the minds of both Church and Pastor, when Mr Carson came to St. Albans; now the idea was beginning to enter the field of practical discussion. Mr Carson advised the deacons that if a new building was to be erected, the site of such should be acquired without delay, in view of rising land values. A committee consisting of the Minister and Messrs John O'Dell, Robert Love, SE Buttenshaw and AE Sheaves was formed, to deal with this matter forthwith.

While plenty of activity is a good thing in church life, it should be activity of a positive kind leading to real spiritual advance. In his report for 1896, Mr Carson speaks thankfully of the keen support given to the Church by many of the members, especially from young people; part of his report, however, has an all too familiar ring to us today: he states: "Notwithstanding what I have just said (concerning the keen support of the membership), I greatly fear we are, as a Church, somewhat lacking in the spirit of prayerfulness, and if this be so, the deficiency is dangerous to our welfare as a church. Prayer is necessary to sustain our spiritual life. I would invite greater interest in our week night prayer service."⁸

On 7th February 1897, the Deacons Meeting received intimation of the death of Mrs Urwick, wife of the former minister. Great regret was expressed and this was embodied in a letter to the Rev William Urwick. Mr Urwick's reply gives a wonderful testimony to his wife: "I may add that whatever I was enabled to do while with you for those happy fifteen years was due to her noble and unselfish generosity...But it pleased the Lord Who gave her to me to take her and I can only thank Him more and more for giving me such a wife and for sparing her to me for so long...thirty-seven years..."⁹ How frequently

⁶ See page 169 supra

⁷ St Albans Almanac and General Advertiser for 1895

⁸ Annual Report of Spicer Street Chapel 1896 p4

⁹ Church Book, Independent Chapel Spicer Street

in the life of a minister does the help and comfort of a good and godly wife, stand him in good stead. Indeed, her price is above rubies.

When Mr. Carson had been in the pastorate about three years, the Church was surprised and nonplussed to receive his resignation. This came in the form of a letter addressed to Mr Love, the Church Secretary, and was read at the Church Meeting of 19th October 1898. In his communication to the Church, Mr Carson stated: "I have felt myself unequal to the task of taking the oversight of nearly every society connected with the Church and at the same time keep up my pulpit and study work generally..."¹⁰ Further complaints mention the burden of the arrangements in connection with the proposed new building and the method of the payment of the stipend. This is the first hint that the Church's financial position was anything but in a healthy state, especially now that an expansion of the Church's work was being contemplated. The Church Meeting of 2nd November was informed that many members were in arrears with their pew rents and a plea for consistency in this direction was put forward. The same meeting earnestly asked the Minister to reconsider his decision to resign and gave him the assurance that not only would his complaints be considered, but also remedied. On this, Mr Carson withdrew his resignation and the matter ended.

The settlement of their differences drew the pastor and his people together in a closer bond and the effect, both spiritually and materially, was at once felt. The Church Meeting of 8th November 1899, received information that steps were being taken to purchase a piece of land on the corner of Victoria Street and Beaconsfield Road, and that Trustees had been appointed by the Deacons.¹¹ Mr Carson spent time in visiting other towns and collected money for the new venture. The members pledged themselves to do as much as possible, locally, to support the Twentieth Century Scheme of the Congregational Union of England and Wales to raise the Sum of £500,000. Side by side with the material advances, the Church's spiritual life was good. Early in 1901, an evangelistic campaign in the town was the means of bringing several young converts into church membership.¹²

The purchase of the site went through without a hitch and the deeds were lodged with the London and County Bank Limited, St Albans on 23rd June 1900. During the year that followed, plans for the actual building itself were laid and the Church Meeting of 3rd July 1901, passed the following resolution: "That the Church to be erected on the building site at the corner of Victoria Street and Beaconsfield Road shall not cost, including organ and architect's fees, more than £7,000 and shall have seating accommodation for 900 persons." It was further resolved that building should commence at the end of March 1902. It proved, ultimately, that these figures were substantially exceeded.

The plans for the new church were prepared by Smee, Mence and Houchin of London and St Albans, and tenders were submitted by several

¹⁰ Church Book, Independent Chapel Spicer Street

¹¹ Appendix XIX

¹² Church Book, Independent Chapel Spicer Street 27th February 1901

firms of building contractors, as follows: -

Whitby and Jervis, St Albans	£8,862
Battley, Sons and Holmes, London	£8,600
Boff Brothers, Park Street	£8,600
Wilmot, Hitchin	£8,300
Mr Ezra Dunham, St Albans	£8,181
Miskin and Sons, St Albans	£8,173

The tender of Messrs Miskin and Sons was accepted and work began. A contemporary announcement gives the following details: "The new Congregational Church shortly to be erected in the Beaconsfield Road, St Albans from designs prepared by Messrs Smee, Mence and Houchin of London and St Albans, is of the Decorated Style in English architecture. The structure will have red brick facings with stone or terra cotta dressings. The roof will be tiled and the spire will be covered with graduated green slates. The interior of the Church is to have a gradual slope towards the rostrum. The roof is to be open framed, with hammer-beam trusses of pitch-pine. The Church will be ventilated by means of exhaust ventilators and tobin tubes. The heating is by the low pressure hot water system and radiators and the lighting by incandescent gas lights. A church parlour forming temporary Sunday School class rooms and various offices, will also be provided under a portion of the main building. The Church will accommodate, when complete, about 900 persons, and the total cost is estimated, approximately, at £6,500."¹³

Work was put in hand at once and it was not long before "The Congregationalists of the cathedral city of St Albans reached an important stage in their great undertaking: the erection of a new church, on Thursday last, when the foundation stone was laid." The stone-laying was a civic affair; the then Mayor, Mr AE Ekins, and Corporation attended in state, support being given by all the town's Free Church ministers. It is recorded that the estimated cost of the building had now risen to £10,000, and that by the date of the stone-laying, about half that sum had been subscribed. By May 1903, the end of the project was in sight as far as finance was concerned, and the Church Meeting of 27th May took powers to raise a sum not exceeding £3,000, to complete the task; the deeds of the land to be charged to the London and County Bank, for this purpose.¹⁴

The question then arose as to the fate of the old buildings in Spicer Street; Mr Carson, at a subsequent meeting, put forward his plan for the two churches.¹⁵ The chief provisions of this scheme were that there should be one membership only and that both congregations should be under the same management. It was further suggested that the old premises should be fully utilised and that there should be no question of the disposal of Spicer Street. The meetings at Spicer Street Chapel were to be under the control of a committee; this committee was also to be responsible for the chapel's pulpit. The schedule of meetings for both congregations, as finally agreed, was as

¹³ Congregational Year Book 1902 p149

¹⁴ Church Book, Independent Chapel Spicer Street 27th May & 24th June 1903

¹⁵ *ibid* 3rd June 1903

follows: -

Spicer Street Chapel

Sunday School	10.0 am
Young People's Service	11.0 am
Sunday School	2.30 pm
Pleasant Sunday Afternoon ¹⁶	3.15 pm
Mission' Service	6.30 pm
Junior Christian Endeavour – Monday	8.15 pm
Band of Hope - as convenient	

Trinity Congregational Church

Sunday School	10.0 am
Service	11.0 am
Sunday School	2.30 pm
Service	6.30 pm
Christian Endeavour - Monday	8.15 pm
Midweek Service – Wednesday	8.00 pm
Band of Hope - as convenient	
Bible Study - as convenient	

By the middle of 1903, the new church, to be called “Trinity” Congregational Church, St Albans,¹⁷ was finished, and plans were laid for “moving in”. At a meeting of the members held on 28th October 1903, Mr AE Sheaves, one of the deacons, “was asked to compile an account of the origin and completion of the new church; the same to be entered in the Church Book”; so ran the minute. It is to be regretted that, although a double folio was allowed for the inclusion of this valuable record, the Church Book remains blank; either the account was never written, or if written, it was never inserted.

An accurate description of the building was, however, written at the time and reads as follows: “The Church, which is designed in the late decorated style of Gothic architecture, has, at the corner where two roads Beaconsfield Road and Victoria Street meet, an imposing octagonal tower and spire, which rises about 110 feet above the pavement. The walls are faced on the exterior, with red brick, having terra cotta dressings relieved with knapped flint diaper work.

“The interior of the church has been arranged in accordance with modern ideas, the floor being inclined and the seating being set out radially. The seats and dado are of orham wood, waxed and polished.

“The general plan is a wide nave with transepts of same width, the organ and choir being placed in a semi-octagonal apse. The rostrum, handsomely carved and erected in orham wood, is placed in the centre of the choir and the chancel arch and upon the semicircular communion platform.

¹⁶ The “Pleasant Sunday Afternoon” was an informal meeting for prayer, praise and song, and became very popular in the early years of the present century. It was introduced to St Albans by Mr Carson early in his ministry. He was enthusiastic for this kind of gathering and began a similar meeting at St James's church, Newcastle upon Tyne, where he ministered from 1906 to 1909. See: L and H Boag's “St James's Past and Present”; Newcastle upon Tyne, 1927 p23.

¹⁷ Church Book, Trinity 1st September 1903

THE OUTREACH OF A NEW CENTURY

The organ is an exceptionally fine and powerful instrument, having three manuals, and has been enclosed in a richly traceried and decorated case. It is played by a console placed in front of the pulpit, and is blown by pneumatic action.

“Over the entrance end a large gallery has been erected, following the radial idea of the seating below, and has a richly paneled front.

“An open timber roof, with a dome-like construction at the intersection of nave and transepts, has been formed in pitch pine.

“A large church parlour to accommodate two hundred, vestries for the minister and deacons, a kitchen etc., and ample lavatory accommodation has been provided.

“The heating is by hot water pipes and radiators.

“The building will accommodate 550 on the ground floor and 220 in the gallery.

“The designs were prepared by Messrs Smee, Mence and Houchin...the contractors were C Miskin & Sons, St Albans.”¹⁸

At last the great day dawned, when Trinity Congregational Church, St Albans, was to be opened. We are indebted to the Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times for a useful and comprehensive account of the festivities.¹⁹ It was stated that Congregationalism in St Albans had taken a tremendous step forward and was beginning “a new era”.

The opening ceremony took place on Thursday, 8th October 1903, the day's events beginning with a lunch in the Town Hall, at which the Church, Town and County were well represented. After lunch, the whole company moved to the new buildings in Victoria Street, where Sir George Williams, president of the Young Men's Christian Association, opened the church door with a silver key. He was supported by representatives of the architects and builders. Within the new church, a service followed, conducted by the minister, the Rev William Carson, the sermon being preached by the famous minister of Whitefield's Tabernacle, Tottenham Court Road, the Rev Charles Sylvester Horne MA, The Revs Brabazon, T Hallows, D Tatton and Mr C Greenwood took part. Mr Horne chose as his text, 1 Corinthians 15:24-25: “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”

The public meeting in the church was “chaired” by the Member of Parliament for St Albans, J Compton Rickett Esq, DL, MP. It was announced at the evening meeting that the total cost of church and organ would be about £11,440, of which about £7,000 had been raised.

¹⁸ Congregational Year Book 1904 p153

¹⁹ Herts Advertiser and S Albans Times 10th October 1903

It has already been recorded that the Rev William Urwick died on 20th August 1905, and this event was marked by memorial services both at Trinity and Spicer Street. Proof of Mr Urwick's abiding affection for his congregation in St Albans is furnished by his bequest of £200 for the general purposes of the church. This sum was ultimately added to the Anne Horn Bequest.

The early years of the present century were a golden time for English Nonconformity - especially the Congregationalists. The year 1906 saw the liberal Party at the top of its career and, if we are to believe the historians, the Party's power was based upon the vote of nonconformist citizens. Indeed, the decline of the Liberal Party seems to have moved side by side with the decline in Nonconformity. Trinity was a flourishing Church and Spicer Street Chapel, away on the west side of the city, continued to perform a useful and healthy spiritual service.

In the spring of 1906, Mr Carson's health became impaired and a rest from the pastorate was found to be imperative, if he was to continue in the Christian Ministry. The strain of now having two churches to oversee, together with the burden of all the work connected with the building and establishment of the new church, was more than he was able to stand; Mr Carson, therefore, wrote to the Church Meeting under date 22nd May 1906, as follows: "As I am no longer able to bear the strain of the work at Trinity, owing to the state of my health, often resulting in serious depression, I have decided to close my ministry on Sunday 22nd July.... A long rest is necessary to restore my wonted vigour before taking up work elsewhere."²⁰ This letter was received, with much regret, by the church on 30th May following, and at the same meeting, a selection committee was formed to consider the appointment of a new minister. As intended, Mr Carson preached his last sermon at the evening service on Sunday, 22nd July 1906, thus concluding a very successful ministry of eleven years.

William Carson was an Irishman, Born at Ballymena County Antrim. In 1868 he became a member of Albert Street Congregational Church, Belfast, in the days of the Rev James Cregan, under whose influence William Carson entered Hackney College, London. That was in 1890. In 1895, he left college and came to Spicer Street to succeed the Rev William Urwick. The eleven years of his ministry were divided into two parts: eight years at Spicer Street and three at Trinity. During that time he much encouraged the work at Bricket wood and Redbourn. From St Albans, Mr Carson proceeded to St James's Church Newcastle, where remained until 1909. Then followed five years at the Camberwell Green Congregational Church, and then a pastorate at Rock Ferry, Cheshire from 1915 to 1920. His pastoral work was interspersed with two periods with the London Missionary Society as Deputation Secretary: 1913 to 1915; and 1920 to 1924. He died on 15th September 1924, and was brought back to St Albans for burial. His biographer states: "He was an eloquent platform speaker, but most of all, his loving and generous nature won

²⁰ Church Book Trinity 30th May 1906

for him the hearts and confidence of all his friends, to whom he was always a tower of strength. He was loved and honoured to the end.”²¹

For some years, prior to the departure of Mr Carson, a retired Congregational minister had been a member of the church, and had been of considerable help both in the pew and pulpit; he was the Rev Brabazon T Hallows BA, chairman of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union in 1890. Mr Hallows was an acceptable preacher and assisted at Bricket Wood and Spicer Street. His death in September 1906 was a great loss. The record runs: “.... His gentle, Christ like demeanour, his uniform courtesy and kindness, his never failing helpfulness and generosity, not only greatly endeared him to us all but will prove an inspiration to us for years to come; while his ripe experience, his sound judgement, his many scholarly attainments, were readily placed at disposal in the service he so much loved, rendered his cooperation invaluable, not only in this church and town, but throughout the county of Hertford and in the wider counsels both of Metropolitan and colonial Congregationalism...it is impossible to say how closely the history of Trinity is identified with his personality...”²²

The departure of Mr Carson in July and the death of Mr Hallows but two months later, left the church in a serious position, and no time was lost in seeking a new pastor. The selection committee already appointed on 27th June got down to work. At the meeting held on 27th June, Mr Carson took the chair; this was his last public appearance at the church. Apart from the veteran secretary of the church, Mr Robert Love, two names were outstanding during this period of change: they were: Rev George Garlick, another retired Congregational minister, and Mr Samuel Ryder. Both men of standing, they used their best influences and considerable ability to continue the building up of the new cause.

Before continuing with the narrative, it will be of interest to add a few biographical notes on some of the men who were behind the new venture. It had already been decided at the inauguration of Trinity, that the premises at Spicer Street should continue to be fully utilised. From the opening of the new church until 1925, the two churches continued under one management. Apart from the minister, Mr Carson, perhaps the most influential layman behind the scheme was Mr Samuel Ryder.²³ Mr Ryder had joined the church soon after Mr Carson's arrival in 1895, and as we have already seen, had commenced his seed business in the old disused chapel in Lower Dagnall Street. Soon there grew up between Mr Carson and Mr Rider a strong friendship – to their mutual advantage. As soon as Mr Ryder became aware of Mr Carson's aspiration to build a new church, he threw in the whole weight of his influence on the side of expansion.

²¹ Congregational Year Book 1925 pp 141 & 142

²² Church Book Trinity 3rd October 1906

²³ For much of the information contained in this and subsequent chapters, as it relates to individuals, I am indebted to Mrs LT Claisen of Harpenden, second daughter of the late Mr Samuel and Mrs Helen Mary Ryder.

The Deacons at Spicer Street were anxious enough to get new premises, but hesitated to commit themselves. Mr Ryder, by his enthusiasm and pertinacity, won them over, and when the decision to build was finally taken, pressed them to seek a suitable site. It was originally planned to build on a vacant plot in Marlborough Road, but upon enquiry, it was found that the Methodist Church, which had been in Upper Dagnall Street since 1841, had acquired it for their own new church. With some chagrin, Mr Carson began to look elsewhere and eventually found the site at the corner of Victoria Street and Beaconsfield Road. Actually, it was a better site than the original one suggested and was nearer the growing district on the east side of the town.

Mr Carson, being an Irishman, was naturally much interested in the Irish Question. It was Mr Ryder's sane advice which prevented the pulpit becoming a political platform. Mr Carson was a brave man and had strong views about the Boer War. His pacific attitude rendered him unpopular with certain of the townsfolk - indeed, more than once he was accused of being a "pro-Boer". In all this, Mr Ryder stood his friend, being himself a man of strong and outstanding principles.

Mr Ryder was an "active" Passive Resister and frequently sponsored meetings connected with agitation against the Education Acts. He was the means of introducing such notable speakers to the town, as Dr John Clifford and the Rev Charles Sylvester Horne. He was sometimes summonsed for the non-payment of rates, and when distraint was made upon his goods, he kept a silver salver ready for removal by the sheriff's officer. The Rev C.M. Hardy of the Dagnall Street Baptist Chapel, is said to have kept a set of fish servers for the same purpose.

The problem of the religious education of children was a lively issue at the turn of the century. Indeed, it had been since the passing of the act of 1876, which made elementary education compulsory, with the consequent disappearance of the British Schools. In St Albans, especially as it was a cathedral city, the gulf between the Church of England and the Nonconformists was a wide one and the difference over education accentuated this dichotomy between the two main streams of religious life. Church of England people dealt with Church of England tradesmen; nonconformist people dealt with nonconformist tradesmen. Recalling this situation a writer states: "It is interesting and surprising to think now of the extraordinary sharp line which was drawn then, between Church and Chapel. We Dissenters were inferior folk (sic), but very proud and supported each other through thick and thin. We even shopped denominationally."²⁴

Later, during the Ministry of Mr Carson's successor, the Rev Frank H Wheeler, Mr Ryder's doctor recommended him to take some form of open-air exercise. Mr Wheeler introduced him to the game of golf. With his usual enthusiasm, he threw himself into his new interest, and the outcome of his keenness for this branch of sport was the "Ryder Cup", which he presented as an award for competition between English and American professional golfers. Mr Ryder died in April 1936 and was survived by his wife, Mrs Helen Mary

²⁴ Letter from Mrs LT Claisen to the author

Ryder, who, in her latter years, was a frequent worshipper at Spicer Street Chapel. She died on 26th April 1955, at the age of 91.²⁵

At the opening of Trinity, one of the questions is to be decided was the appointment of an organist. The organ was a splendid instrument (see appendix XVIII), and a competent organist was sought. The name of Mr RG Thompson was proposed. Mr Thompson, son of one of the trustees, Mr GC Thompson, had been organist at Spicer Street for three years, but was still a young man in his late teens, and his appointment was objected to by several of the officials in view of his youth. Mr Ryder pressed for the young man's appointment, and accordingly Mr Thompson was given the post "on trial". It is a matter of great joy to all his friends, young and old, that Mr Thompson is still the organist at Trinity, and that he was given a civic reception on second November 1957, to celebrate his 50th anniversary as organist.²⁶

²⁵ Accounts of Mrs Ryder's life and death, appeared in the Herts Advertiser of 29th April 1955, and 6th May 1955

²⁶ Herts Advertiser 8th November 1957

Chapter 12

TWENTIETH CENTURY ZENITH

The Ministers of "Trinity"

"One of the greatest changes in the English religious and social landscape has been the decline of Nonconformity."

Professor Brogan

The zenith of Nonconformity, especially of Congregationalism, coincided with the Liberal victory of 1906. In other places, besides St Albans, expansion took place in the first decade of the present century. How far the decline in Liberalism can be linked with the decline in Nonconformity is problematic. Suffice it to say, the two things declined together. The rise of the Labour Party, which to a large extent absorbed the Liberal vote, took less account of religion, notwithstanding that many of the earlier Socialists had graduated from the Methodist pulpits to the political platforms. The Dorchester Labourers were Methodist local preachers; Thomas Cooper, the Leicester Chartist, was a Methodist preacher of exceptional power. So there came a change of emphasis in the preaching of a gospel of good works, rather than the gospel of grace.

Other causes, of course, contributed to the decline of Nonconformity. The war of 1914 to 1918 broke the church-going habit of many; the horrors of war broke the faith of others. By the time war ended, the free churches of England were facing wholesale declension. This decline was assisted by the spread of modernistic views of scriptural doctrines. Dr RJ Campbell of the city temple, and others, became the apostles of "the new theology". This theology was a body of doctrine which endeavoured to rationalise the Christian Gospel. Heresy first, then unbelief soon followed, and many of the older Christians felt that the very foundations of their faith has been knocked from under them. Respect must be paid to the findings of modern scholarship, but one is mystified in trying to understand why modern approach to the gospel must play down the problem of sin, and stifle evangelical zeal. Perhaps this last reason, even more than the war, was responsible for the decline of religion, in the realm, especially in the Free Churches.

This general recession was felt, of course, in St Albans, and although up to 1914 both Trinity and Spicer Street prospered, the war years took their toll. However, let us turn back to the Church Meeting of Wednesday 28th of November 1906, when a decision was taken to invite the Rev Frank Harris Wheeler to become Minister, in succession to Rev William Carson. Mr Wheeler, born in 1878, began his ministry at Lowestoft. He was a man of scholarship, having qualified as an associate of the "Theological". After a year at Lowestoft as assistant to the Rev SB Driver, he went in 1904, to be the assistant minister at Norwich under Rev Dr GS Barrett, a distinguished scholar and the editor of the Congregational Church Hymnal, the book authorised by the Union in 1883. In commending Mr Wheeler to Trinity, Dr

Barrett wrote: “.... he has won the regard and affection of our people and has been most assiduous in the visitation of our congregation and in all the work that I have allotted to him...his preaching is thoroughly evangelical...”¹ Rev Dr Vaughan Price, principle of New College, London, Mr Wheeler’s “alma mater”, wrote: “His character and spirit are excellent. He has a way of preaching which is his own and which has proved attractive and helpful”.² The advent of Mr Wheeler to the pulpit at Trinity was hailed in the local press as “a great day, not only for St Albans Congregationalism alone, but for St Albans Nonconformity.”³

The recognition meeting was held in the afternoon of Thursday, 4th April 1907, and Dr Barrett came from Norwich to preach. A public meeting in the evening followed and Mr Wheeler was given a most enthusiastic reception. In view of the statement made earlier in this chapter regarding liberal theology and “modernism”, it might be of interest to quote a part of the reported speech of welcome to Mr Wheeler, major by Rev Emlyn Jenkins, President of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union. Mr Jenkins said: “There was a suspicion in the Churches about present-day ministers, and how it had risen was easy to see; men in the churches said that pastors had certain reserves and practised the doctrine of reticence. They also said they have certain beliefs up their sleeves. That might be due to the advent of the so-called new theology. A great many people thought they were represented by Mr RJ Campbell, so far as their theological position was concerned.”⁴ The speaker added that as far as he was concerned, they stood where their forefathers stood in the heroic days of Congregationalism when it came to the great varieties of Christian truth.

Mr Wheeler soon proved the truth of the words of his commenders and his preaching began to create a deep impression on the congregation and throughout the city. This is well illustrated by the publication at the expense of a “member of the congregation”, of a sermon Mr Wheeler preached on Easter Sunday, 11th of April 1909. It was from Mark 16 verses 6 and 7: “be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him...” The anonymous publisher of this sermon must have been greatly impressed, as indeed any reader would be, for although the sermon itself followed the classic conventional form, with its “three points”, there indeed was the true “kerugma” and might have been preached in 1662, for the gospel is ageless.

Mr Wheeler’s ministry was spiritually blessed and the Church prospered, but not far away the clouds of war were massing, and, in 1914, in common with other churches, men and later women, began to be drawn into the war effort. Altogether in the two churches, Trinity and Spicer Street,

¹ Church Book Trinity

² *ibid*

³ Herts Advertiser 5th April 1907

⁴ *ibid*

twenty-five men gave their lives for the country.⁵

In 1916, Mr Wheeler felt called to volunteer as a chaplain to the Forces and, in due course, he arrived in France. His photograph in Trinity vestry shows a mature, mustached man, in the uniform of a lieutenant colonel. His army career was a distinguished one and earned high recognition in the award of the DSO. Mr Wheeler remained in the Army until 1919, but did not return to Trinity. Upon being demobilised, he became Moderator of the Southern Province of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, a position he held with distinction until 1945. Subsequently for three years – 1947 to 1949 – he was minister of the Thames Ditton Congregational Church. For Mr Wheeler, however, there was no retirement. Although 71 when he left the regular ministry, he continued to preach; indeed, he had promised to take part in the Trinity Jubilee celebrations in October 1953, but was prevented by illness. He was never able to visit St Albans again and passed away on 15th January 1956, at the age of 78.⁶

In Mr Wheeler's absence on active service, the question of the pastorate was an urgent one. The choice of the members fell on Rev William James McAdam MA, a young and energetic man who came from Mansfield, where he had spent the first twelve years of his career. It fell to Mr McAdam to steer the church through the difficult days of the war's climax and the uneasy post-war period. There are those still living who recall these hectic days and speak well of his energy and diligence. Physically, Mr McAdam was not robust and he found it wise to resign the pastorate in 1923. From St Albans he went to Roundhay, Leeds; from 1925 to 1929 he was secretary of the Yorkshire Congregational Union. In 1930 he became Moderator of the North Eastern Province of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, retiring from that office in 1944. At this time, Mr McAdam was a sick man and after two years of indifferent health occasioned by a weak heart, he passed away on 22nd of May 1946. An obituary notice stated: "he had the human touch. Always approachable and easy to confide in, his personal charm, genial spirit, kindly humour, generous disposition and broad sympathies, endeared him to his friends and made him a welcome visitor wherever he went. A man of deep conviction and wide culture, he was a gifted preacher of the Gospel and his inspiring pulpit ministry during his moderatorship was greatly valued in churches large and small."⁷

In 1924, the Rev Leonard Thomas Hoare MA, was appointed as Minister but, after a few months, difficulties arose between the Minister and the members and Mr Hoare was asked to conclude his ministry on 30th June 1925. From 1926 to 1931 Mr Hoare held the pastorate at South Woodford, Essex, and then withdrew from the ministry and became a schoolmaster at Salisbury.

These crises in the life of the church are unsettling and it was sometime, almost eighteen months, before a new minister was called. In the

⁵ See Appendix XX

⁶ Congregational Year Book 1957 pp 528ff

⁷ idem 1947 pp 466 & 467

meantime, with the help of the former minister, Mr McAdam, Rev Thomas William Hodge MA of Harpenden took the oversight, until the appointment of Rev William Morton Barwell MA In 1927, Mr Hodge became secretary of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union, a position he held until 1936, when the Rev TH Cooper MA of Bushey succeeded to the office. Mr Hodge was an energetic and diligent pastor and, during his short period of oversight, he visited the whole of the membership. In 1937, he took charge of the Luton Road Harpenden branch church, and continued to the end a frequent preacher there. "His sight failed in his later years and his death on 23rd of September 1949 at the age of 89 came as the result of a stumble, and a life of devotion to Christ and loyal friendship to all, has left behind it a radiant light of high courage. He was a good soldier."⁸

Rev WM Barwell had had a distinguished career before coming to St Albans. Trained at Mansfield College, Oxford, he ministered at Morningside, Edinburgh from 1901 to 1910, whence he transferred to Grafton Square, Clapham. In 1913 he went to Harrogate; his ministry in St Albans began in the autumn of 1926 and lasted until 1944, during which time he guided the church through the difficult days of the early war years. One remembers him as a refined man with a cultured mind, greatly respected in the city. His wife, who died in 1939, was a poet of no mean ability. She wrote under the name of Margaret Hay. He went from St Albans to Headgate, Colchester, where he died. His biographer wrote: "The end of his life came suddenly. He seemed full of his usual vigour where he preached his last sermon to his people at Headgate on the morning of Sunday, October 31st 1949. He was resigning the pastorate there (though with the full intention of going on preaching and lecturing when opportunity offered), and there was to be a farewell meeting and presentation in the evening of that day. After shaking hands with his people at the church door he went back alone to the vestry, and was found there a few moments later lying dead. It was discovered that there was serious trouble with his heart, which might have caused his death at any time in the last few years. He took trouble to master German and did great service preaching and lecturing among the prisoners of war. He knew much personal trouble, but by faith and prayer, he turned all his sorrows into strength and returned all injuries with blessings. He was a great exponent and example of the Christian way of life."⁹

Since Mr Barwell's time, Trinity has had two ministers only: Rev Francis (Frank) James Miller and Rev Francis Hope Dixon BD Both these worthy brethren have added their valuable quota to the postwar situation in this large church and the present position, although modest in the light of early days, is hopeful.

Mr Miller was born in 1892, in Walthamstow London, and after training at New College, accepted the pastorate at Plashet Park in 1922, where he remained until 1927. He was slightly known at St Albans, having preached at Trinity during the vacancy following Mr McAdam's removal to Leeds. Then came fourteen years at Hither Green – 1927 to 1941, four at Buckland,

⁸ Congregational Year Book 1950 p514

⁹ ibid p506

Portsmouth – 1941 to 1944, and so to Trinity, where he remained until 1951. During his ministry he encouraged his people to go out to the people. He was somewhat unconventional in his methods and did not always carry his congregation with him, nevertheless, he was an outspoken preacher to the unconverted and took his choir into the streets and public houses. On a few occasions, hymn-singing sessions were broadcast on Sunday nights. During his stay in St Albans, his wife, Mrs Elsie Miller, died of cancer. This was a sad time for both minister and people, for with the death of Mrs Miller, a real sense of loss fell upon all. Just before she died, Mrs Miller sent a message to the church newsletter, as follows: "I am very pleased to be allowed a little space in the magazine to say "Thank you!" to all my friends in St Albans and elsewhere for the many kindnesses, both practical and spiritual, which have come to me during the last twelve months. Those of my intimate friends will know that I'm not just "talking religion", but that it is a very real testimony of the love of God, through your prayers, that has strengthened and helped me these many weeks. Since I have known that I have an inoperable growth and cannot hope to live very long, I have been extremely happy. To say this may seem strange to you, but lying in bed and meditating has given me a sense of serenity and looking forward to a future life. Please let me just say to any of you who are ill or worried over possible illness and know the truth, face up to it and have faith in God and talk to Him. The more you talk to Him the nearer you get to Him and, believe me, the love and strength you will receive will give you an understanding of happiness and peace that is lovely." The death of Mrs Miller, together with his own involvement in a motor accident, undermined his health and so, on 30th of September 1951, Mr Miller left Trinity for Abbey Road Congregational Church, Torquay, where he remained until 1954; then came five years at Rayleigh in Essex -1954 to 1958, and then to Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford, where, up to the time of writing, he still remains.

Mr Miller's successor was Rev FH Dixon. Mr Dixon, like many others, was trained for a business career, spending several years in the bank before hearing the call to the Christian ministry. He finished his course at New College, having gained the bachelor of Divinity degree, in 1940 and accepted an invitation to the pastorate of Bedford Street, Stroud, remaining until 1945. His second pastorate was at Gatley, Cheshire, 1946 to 1953 and finally, the call to Trinity in that year. The church had been without pastoral oversight for fifteen months and thus it was with great enthusiasm that Mr Dixon was received. His welcome well-accorded with one of his character and outstanding ability. The induction took place on Thursday, 29th January 1953, the service being conducted by the Rev CJ Buckingham MA, moderator of the Eastern Province of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. The Moderator was assisted by the Rev TH Cooper MA, secretary of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union, Rev Maxwell O Janes B.A., B.D., General Secretary of the London Missionary Society, the Rev RE Taylor, Minister of Coverdale and Ebenezer Church, Stepney, and the author. Mr Dixon stated publicly: "The extreme warmth of your desire that I should come among you was the deciding factor."¹⁰

Mr Dixon's first year was crowned by the Jubilee celebrations held in

¹⁰ Herts Advertiser 6th February 1953

TWENTIETH CENTURY ZENITH
The Ministers of Trinity

October 1953, when a whole week was devoted to commemorating the 50th anniversary of the church's opening. To mark the occasion, the Deacons of Trinity presented the congregation of the parent Church in Spicer Street, with a silver communion cup; Spicer Street responded by giving Trinity an illuminated address of congratulation, signed by the Minister and Deacons. The organising of the Jubilee celebrations was a difficult task and required much hard work, the bulk of which fell upon the shoulders of the indefatigable Church Secretary, Mr AP Burnet.

For some years it had been the hope of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union, and especially of its secretary, Rev T.H. Cooper, that work should be begun on the outskirts of St Albans, on the main road to Watford, where a large number of houses were being built, and where soon, great arterial roads were to be constructed. Largely due to the enthusiasm of the Rev FH Dickson Mr AP Burnet, secretary and Mr Stanley Paul, treasurer, a site was secured and, as a preliminary to building, services were commenced in the Killigrew School with the help of Mr L Killick, Mr A Rose and others. Slowly but surely, a congregation was built up under Mr Rose's leadership, and Mrs Rose took charge of the Sunday School with help from the teachers of Trinity. Success attended the efforts of the small band, and at last a building was put up. On 27th June 1962, the congregation of the Chiswell Green Congregational Church, St Albans ("in process of formation"), entered its new premises for the Act of Dedication to be conducted by the Moderator of the Eastern Province Rev CJ Buckingham MA. After the dedication, Rev Howard S Stanley MA, Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, preached the inaugural sermon, his subject being "The whole Gospel to the whole World." Others taking part were Rev JK Antrobus, Secretary of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union, Rev FH Dixon of Trinity, and the author, representing Spicer Street Chapel. Thus the opening of Chiswell Green Church made Trinity a parent, and Spicer Street a grandparent.

Chapter XIII

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL

The last sixty years

*“Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain;
so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give
them showers of rain, ...”*

Zechariah 10:1

The opening of Trinity in 1903 removed a substantial part of the congregation from Spicer Street, but as has already been recorded, it was the intention of the new church to use the old premises to full capacity. This policy had not been without its opponents, who had wanted the old chapel sold to pay off the debt on new. However, a useful and promising work was being done among young people and children, together with a well-attended Sunday evening mission type service. These facts kept the chapel open. Mission services of the type held at Spicer Street at this time, were exceedingly popular in the early days of the century, chiefly through the influence of the Evangelistic activities of the Americans, Moody and Sankey, during the last two decades of the 19th century and those of Torrey and Alexander in the first decade of the present.

Spicer Street was now, in effect, a branch of the larger church, carrying on an extension of its work, the Rev William Carson having pastoral oversight. The work seems to have prospered in spite of the large exodus to Trinity, especially among the younger children. The number of teachers as at 31st March 1910 was 26 and the number of children on the roll was 262, with an average attendance of 224.¹ The war of 1914-1918, however, had it's adverse effect, not only in St Albans but throughout the country, and the habit of Sunday school going was broken, never, so far, to be fully restored. The figures for Spicer Street Sunday School show that at 31st March 1918 only seven classes were functioning, with the staff of 11, some of whom were junior assistants, and 35 scholars.

The decline in numbers and shrinkage in activity following the war years did not unduly dismay the small congregation. At a Church Meeting held on 5th June 1919, the Rev WJ McAdam presiding, the membership was reorganised and new deacons appointed. The names of 62 persons were entered in the records, and from that number, the following were elected as deacons: - Messrs IH Ironmonger, H Hussey, E Mitchell, J Henshaw, A King and J Davies – Mr Ironmonger to be senior deacon. At this meeting a resolution was passed as follows: “That in all fundamental matters the final authority shall rest with the United Church Meeting of both Trinity and Spicer Street.”² The leading spirit behind this reorganisation was the new senior deacon, Mr Ironmonger, whose family had, for more than the century,

¹ The Sunday school register Spicer Street

² Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL
The Last Sixty Years

exercised a powerful influence in the congregation; indeed it is largely due, humanly speaking, to the far-sighted policy of Mr Ironmonger and the unremitting labours of his daughter, Miss Alice Crosby Ironmonger, that the present satisfactory state of Spicer Street is due.

As a logical outcome of this important church meeting, the vacancy in the pulpit became an issue of moment. In due course, an invitation was sent to the Rev GH Haydock MA, to accept the pastorate of Spicer Street and to act as assistant to the Rev WJ McAdam at Trinity. Mr Haycock was a young man and had been student pastor for two years at Witney, Oxford, where the Congregational cause goes back to 1662, and had served in France for three years with the British forces.

Mr Haydock accepted the appointment and was ordained to the Christian ministry and inducted to the pastorate at Spicer Street on 21st July 1919, the Rev WJ McAdam presiding. In his address, Mr McAdam pointed out that the work at Spicer Street had been faithfully carried out, though not without difficulties, chiefly owing to the fact that there was no settled minister there.³ The charge to the incoming minister was given by the Rev Dr W B Selbie, Principle of Mansfield College, Oxford. The Rev Nathaniel Micklem (who succeeded Dr Selbie at Mansfield) also took part in the service.⁴

Although Mr Haycock entered upon his new duties with zeal and sincerity, it soon became evident that the work was too much for him. His war service had seriously undermined his health, and on the 13th September 1920, he wrote to the Church Secretary, Mr Buttenshaw, in the following terms: "I keenly regret that I am so soon compelled to send you my resignation. I believe that this cannot come to you as a surprise. You know my health has not been equal to the task. It has been a painful and disquieting revelation to me that not yet, after more than three years, am I fit to carry on my responsible or trying work."⁵

It is during this difficult and disappointing period that Mr I H Ironmonger emerges as a leader and guide to the little congregation at Spicer Street. Three years almost passed away before the question of the pastorate was settled, during which time, by agreement of the church meeting of 14th December 1921, Mr Ironmonger was appointed "deacon in charge".⁶

So we pass to 24th January 1923, when it was proposed to the Church Meeting that an invitation be given to the Rev Thomas Johnson of Wilton, to become minister. Mr Johnson had entered into the ministry as an evangelist in 1904 and had seen service in several West Country pastorates.⁷ The arrangement by which the Minister of Spicer Street was to be assistant to the minister of Trinity still obtained, although by resolution of a special Church

³ Herts Advertiser 26th July 1919

⁴ Idem

⁵ Letter from the Rev GH Haydock to the Church Secretary

⁶ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street

⁷ The Rev Thomas Johnson was still living at Stroud in 1963. His name was transferred from the list of Evangelists to the Roll of Ministers in 1958. See 'Congregational Year Book 1963/4 p 355'

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL
The Last Sixty Years

Meeting held 8th June 1921, the older congregation was to have the right to elect their own minister, subject to the confirmation of the Trinity Church Meeting.⁸

Mr Johnson was duly inducted on Thursday 26th April 1923, but again, there was to be no real, permanent settlement. One year and ten months after his induction, Mr Johnson removed to Wheathampstead and became the minister there. Some mystery surrounds his sudden and unexpected withdrawal. Very little is recorded in the books. In his letter to the Church Meeting, Mr Johnson merely states his reason for going to be “serious enough to necessitate my removal from your circle.”⁹ Mr Johnson was inducted to the pastorate at Wheathampstead Congregational Church on Thursday 12th February 1925.

The Deacons of Spicer Street lost no time in seeking a successor to Mr Johnson, and on 25th January 1925, it was decided to seek and call another minister forthwith. Several preachers were invited to visit Spicer Street “with a view”, and in due course, the choice fell upon the Rev Alexander Snape of Canterbury. Mr Snape was inducted to the pastorate on 21st January 1926, the service being conducted by the Rev TW Hodge, temporarily in charge of Trinity Congregational Church during the vacancy between the short stay of the Rev TH Hoare and the Rev WM Barwell’s appointment. The charge to the Minister was given by the Rev John Eames of the Kent Congregational Association, and the charge to the Church was given by the Rev SM Howard, chairman of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union. Mr Snape said: “Whatever honours may come to me in this world, there never can come one greater than to be a Congregational Minister. Great are the ties of King and Country, Statesmen and Constituency, Teacher and Pupil, but none is so high as is suggested by the relationship of a minister with his people, and we realise that, only by this bond, this attachment, this mutual regard and life of high esteem, can we hope to do what is our joint task – to strengthen the bond between ourselves and the Lord.”¹⁰ Mr Snape’s ministry began auspiciously, and for four years he worked exceedingly hard, but early in 1929 he became very unwell and it was reported to the Church Meeting of 28th November 1929, in a letter from Mrs Snape, that the minister’s doctor had advised him to retire. The end came suddenly and unexpectedly, for Mr Snape passed away on 1st December following, and thus brought to an end a faithful ministry and an honourable career, at of the comparatively early age of fifty-five. Entering the ministry in 1908, Mr Snape served at Barnstable (1908 to 1911); Hindhead, Beacon Hill (1911 to 1918); Canterbury, Watling Street (1918 to 1925) and St Albans, Spicer Street (1925 to 1929). He was buried in St Albans Cemetery on 5th December 1929. Prior to the internment, a funeral service was held at Spicer Street Chapel, conducted by the Rev H Ross Williamson, Moderator of the Eastern Province of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. Many ministers of the city were present, including the Rev TW Hodge, secretary of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union; Rev WK Brice of the Baptist Tabernacle, and the Rev WM Barwell of Trinity. Members of “Toc H”

⁸ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street 8th June 1921

⁹ *ibid* 7th January 1925

¹⁰ Herts Advertiser 23rd January 1926

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL The Last Sixty Years

were present and took part in the service. An appreciation of Mr Snape in the church magazine for January 1930, by an unnamed contributor, states; "In that county (Devon) he was much used by the Wesleyans and Bible Christians...He was then led to give himself entirely to the ministry and begin to study in earnest." The article goes on to tell of his influence with soldiers stationed at Frensham and afterwards at Canterbury, during the war years. "In St Albans he has been a useful and influential man – beloved by all, especially the young people." It was freely stated that, as a result of Mr Snape's ministry, the Church took on a new lease of life.

One interesting and important event marked the year 1929 and that was the election of senior deacon, Mr I H Ironmonger, to be the Mayor of the City during the civic year 1929/1930. His daughter, Miss AC Ironmonger, graciously consented to act as Lady Mayoress to her father. The congregation of Spicer Street were delighted that such an honour had come the way of their friend and leader, and at a church meeting held on 28th November 1929, presided over by the Rev W Morton Barwell, the following resolution was passed: "That it be recorded in the Minutes of the Church Meeting that one of its members who is also the Senior Deacon, ie Mr I H Ironmonger, has the honour of Mayor of St Albans during the civic year 1929 to 1930, and that the Church does congratulate him and hereby tends its best wishes during his year of office and that the Church pledges itself to support him with its prayers during his term of office."¹¹

Mr Snape had known about the election and had hoped that he might act as Mayor's Chaplain, but this was not to be. His place was taken by the Rev W Morton Barwell. To commemorate his year of office, Mr Ironmonger caused a New Year's service to be held at Spicer Street on Sunday 5th January 1930. This service was conducted by the Mayor's Chaplain and was attended, as befitted the occasion, by members of the St Albans City Council, the magistrates, officials and representatives of the public bodies. Mr Barwell took as his text a verse from Hebrews 11: "For he looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God."¹²

Mr Ironmonger's duties as Mayor took him away from the Church a good deal, especially during the week, and there being no settled minister in charge, some of the burden of leadership began to fall on the shoulders of Mr Ernest A Hickling, whose loyal service to Spicer Street had begun much earlier. Coming to St Albans in 1909, Mr Hickling and his family joined Trinity, but subsequently transferred to Spicer Street, where he had already been assisting in the Sunday School. Later he became the indefatigable secretary of the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Society. He became a deacon in 1929, thus commencing a long and honourable connection with the Diaconate, which ended only with his death on 23rd July 1954, at the age of 73, as a result of a motor accident.

Mr Snape's short but effective ministry had built up the Church and it was soon felt that a successor should be sought. The name that came before

¹¹ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street 28th November 1929

¹² Herts Advertiser 10th January 1930

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL The Last Sixty Years

the Deacons was that of the Rev Isaac Hartill, an esteemed Congregational minister who had recently retired from the pastorate of Orange Street Chapel, Leicester Square, and the Free Church Chaplaincy of two large West End hospitals. At this time, the Rev Isaac Hartill was in his sixty-sixth year and very actively engaged in lecturing and writing on various literary subjects. Isaac Hartill was born at Gornal in Staffordshire and entered the Hackney Theological College in September 1885, where he stayed for four years, distinguishing himself in theology and philosophy. On leaving the college his diploma was endorsed: "Special commendation of the Professors." On 3rd September 1889, he was ordained and inducted to the pastorates of Lombard Street Church, Newark.

After two years at Newark, Mr Hartill was invited to become assistant to the famous Dr William Tyler of Mile End. A sick man, Dr Tyler died before the appointment was completed and Hartill found himself in sole charge of the church. This was a wonderful appointment for a young man but two years out of college, for Dr Tyler had been minister at Mile End for fifty-six years and, even today, his name is still honoured and his work cherished in religious circles. His church, known as Trinity Church, Mile End, was later transferred to Lauriston Road, Victoria Park, where a robust and keen evangelical work continues, chiefly through the efforts of Mr FH Wintmore, of the London City Mission, who was honorary pastor there from 1939 to 1961 - a remarkable ministry. In his Autobiography the Rev Isaac Hartill wrote: "I knew but little of Dr Tyler as a preacher but his worth and work as a pastor I can testify and I question whether in this department he has often been excelled."¹³

It must be frankly admitted that Mr Hartill was not a man of the calibre of Dr Tyler and lacked his evangelistic zeal. In his Autobiography one notices the frequent emphasis laid on "good works", cultural achievement and "uplift", but little on "grace" and "salvation". East London is a hard place for Christian work and it is not surprising that Mr Hartill left Mile End after four years. There followed a further six years at St John's Wood (1895 to 1901). In 1901, Mr Hartill began his work as a hospital chaplain and continued this work until his retirement in 1931. The chaplaincy left him a good deal of free time and hence he was able to re-engage in other pastoral work after leaving St John's Wood. However, for sometime Mr Hartill engaged in supply preaching and lecturing and did not seek a settled pastorate until 1908, when he became minister of Offord Road, Islington, Congregational Church, a position he filled for over four years. In 1913, the pulpit of Orange Street Chapel, Leicester Square, became vacant, Mr Hartill accepted an invitation to become minister. This old chapel, an old Huguenot foundation, had had many famous people connected with it, including such people as, Toplady, Halley, Swift, Addison and the Burney family. Next door to the chapel, there was an old house, once the residence of Sir Isaac Newton, part of the chapel property; this Mr Hartill tried to preserve, but owing to its poor state of repair, the local council had no option but to order its demolition. Mr Hartill however, while not being able to save the building, preserved its memory in his little book "The House of Memories". His researches registered his interest in Sir Isaac Newton, whose life and work became Mr Hartill's absorbing study, leading eventually to his

¹³ Hartill I "An Autobiography" p7

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL The Last Sixty Years

publishing a life of Newton which had a wide circulation, and also opened up the way to his being invited to broadcast a talk on Sir Isaac Newton in more recent years. In addition to the two works already referred to, Mr Hartill wrote and published: "A History of Orange Street Chapel"; "Lectures on Immortality"; "Work among the London poor"; "The Ascension of our Lord"; "Lead Kindly Light (a meditation)"; "The Literary greatness of the Bible", and a short life of the late GK Chesterton. Many of his writings reached a wide circle and it is not surprising that honours came to him, both from English and foreign sources. He received the fellowship of the Royal Society of Literature, the Royal Historical Society and the Philosophical Society of England; of the last mentioned he became first vice president and, during the second world war, president. These honours were genuine and well deserved; Mr Hartill was undoubtedly a man of letters. Awards were accepted by him in good faith and in the spirit in which they were tendered, and among them was the Doctorate in Divinity of the so-called Intercollegiate University of Chicago. He described to the author the impressive ceremony in 1913 when he, with many other people, some well-known clergy of the Church of England among them, received his degree – a degree which he saw no reason to refuse. He was not to know that this University, founded in America respectably enough in the 1880s as an association of church organists, was now but a diploma awarding committee and that its ultimate discrediting in 1943, or thereabouts, was to bring great sorrow upon him in his closing years. It was the opinion of his friends however, that as he had enjoyed the title of "doctor" for so many years, having thoroughly believed in the genuineness of the award, he should continue to be so addressed out of respect, in spite of the lack of recognition on the part of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. The members of the County Union conceded him the privilege of using "DD" after his name; so the Rev Dr Isaac Hartill came to Spicer Street, a charming and kindly man his middle sixties.

Recognition services took place on 15th January 1931, and Dr Hartill began his ministry. According to the church record, there seems to have been no outstanding happening for a few years; indeed, it would appear that there was some declension in the work of the church. Controversy between Spicer Street and the daughter church, Trinity, over the allocation of the income from the Anne Horn and Urwick Trusts investments, marred and strained relations between the two churches and must have had an adverse effect on the spiritual life of both congregations. In addition, during the first years of Dr Hartill's ministry, substantial sums of money had to be found for the installation of a new heating system and the partial re-roofing of the premises. This drained the financial resources of the church and the low state of the funds caused the secretary, Mr AH Vause, to call a special church meeting, which met on 13th May 1935. The meeting was asked to consider two things: the low state of the funds, and the expiration, at the end of the following November, of Dr Hartill's term of office. After much discussion, it was decided to write to the minister and put the facts before him, inviting him to remain in the pastorate until further notice, but pointing out that the church could not guarantee a minimum stipend. The actual wording of the minute was "With the maximum stipend the church can afford."¹⁴

¹⁴ Church Book Independent Chapel Spicer Street 13th May 1935

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL The Last Sixty Years

Dr Hartill's reply was, characteristically, restrained and charming. He thanked the church for its continued confidence in him and stated that he thoroughly understood the position, but that, as the period of this pastorate ended on 30th November, he will preach his farewell sermons on the twenty-fifth of that month. It speaks well for the relationship between pastor and people, that both Doctor and Mrs Hartill continued to reside in St Albans and continued in membership at Spicer Street; indeed, from this time until within a few months of his death in 1948, he preached frequently and conducted mid-week meetings for the church.

In spite of the very generous help Dr Hartill was willing and able to give, further assistance was necessary, so the Church Meeting on the 30 January 1937, considered asking Mr HG Willis (afterwards the Rev HG Willis BA BD) to undertake a student pastorate. Mr Willis was a promising student at New College, Finchley Road, and was available. Mr Willis took up his duties in the autumn of 1937 and continued until October 1939, when the need for full-time study recalled him to college.

The Second World War broke out on 3rd September 1939 and immediately Mr Rushton, the minister at Wheathampstead, joined the Forces. The Rev TH Cooper, the secretary of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union, suggested to both Wheathampstead and Spicer Street that they should endeavour to get one minister to take the oversight of both churches. Conversations to this end were held, but nothing came of it. The war brought other difficulties also. As a result of the evacuation of children from the large towns and coast resorts, the boys of the Hastings Grammar School for Boys came to St Albans and occupied part of the church premises. The buildings were used by the school authorities until the ending of evacuation.

Towards the end of 1941, the Rev AW Hatfield, who was a master at the St Albans Grammar School for boys in Brampton Road, became available for a part time ministry. Mr Hatfield had preached several times with acceptance to the congregation, so the Church Meeting of 8th February 1942, extended an invitation to him to become minister. The invitation was accepted and Mr Hatfield was inducted to the pastorate on 11th April following. For several months progress was made and the church settled down to a regular ministry. The first difficulty arose with the resignation of the Church Secretary Mr AH Vause, after fourteen years in office. Mr Vause's resignation came before the Church Meeting on 11th August 1943, and a year later, both Mr and Mrs Vause left the town. The severity of this blow was lessened a good deal by the fact that Miss CK Catton, who was acting as treasurer at the time, was ready and willing to take over the duties of secretary, a task she performed with efficiency and success until her own resignation in December 1962. In the meantime, Mr Hatfield, who had entered on his work in the church with great zeal and enthusiasm, now found that the dual positions of schoolmaster and minister of the gospel, running together, were too much for him and he was compelled to relinquish the pastorate. It was with mutual regret that the Church Meeting received Mr Hatfield's notice of withdrawal, to take effect on 30th September 1944. It is small wonder that Miss Catton, in her annual report for that year, said: "The year 1944, the fifth under war conditions, proved a

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL The Last Sixty Years

very difficult one.” This was the general opinion of many of the members, for it has been stated since that this year was the lowest point in the church’s life within living memory; on more than one occasion, the question of closure was discussed unofficially. Mr Hatfield was later appointed to a post at Eltham College, a Congregational foundation, but as he did not take up his duties until 1945, the church was able to retain his services as an auxiliary for a little longer, Dr Hartill continuing to preach once a month and conduct any week-night activities.

The church records show that, at this time, increasing help was being received from the Rev TH Cooper, the secretary of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union. Mr Cooper seems to have become attached to the little congregation in Spicer Street, and after the departure of Mr Hatfield, paid a monthly visit to the pulpit. This arrangement continued until Mr Cooper’s sudden death in 1954.

If 1944 had been a difficult year, 1945 began in tragedy, at least, for old Dr Hartill, now in his eighty-second year, for his wife, Mrs Lizzie Hartill, died on 1st February after fifty-three years of married life. The doctor continued to fulfil his preaching engagements, but his other outside activities had to be drastically curtailed. He was now spending most of his time alone in his home, writing. In the autumn following, another severe blow fell upon the Church; this was the death of Mr I H Ironmonger, at the age of seventy-nine. Earlier in the year Mr Ironmonger had felt unwell and it was decided to go with his daughter, Miss AC Ironmonger, to Hastings for a change. While at Hastings, in July, Mr Ironmonger became gravely ill and passed away on 31st October. The church records contain the following tribute to him, written by the secretary, Miss CK Catton: “Those who were privileged to work with him on the diaconate knew how deep was his trust and belief in God and in Bible truth. He had the courage of his convictions and always remained loyal to his principles.” Thus passed one who had been born into the Church, brought up in the Sunday School and who, for more than fifty years, had had a leading part in the church’s life.

Although the year had been overshadowed by these two deaths, indeed there were others also, 1945 seems to have been a turning point in the recent history of the church. This turning point can almost be pin-pointed to one event: the holding of a conference and series of group discussions on Saturday 13th October, when the following subjects were introduced and discussed:

- a. Victorious living
- b. Winning a world

A team of people gave testimony to their experiences under these heads and then the whole company present, about eighty persons, resolved themselves into small groups, discussed and then pooled their findings. The outcome of this gathering was the inauguration of a weekly meeting for prayer and the study of the scriptures. The first of these meetings took place on Thursday 8th November 1945 and have continued regularly ever since. It is a matter for thankfulness to God that there are still several persons attending these weekly meetings who were present at the first one.

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL
The Last Sixty Years

It was during this time that the author became interested in the work at Spicer Street Chapel. For some years previous to this he had known Dr Hartill, to whom he had been introduced by an old Methodist friend, Mr Alfred Angel. As a result of his friendship with the Doctor, the way was opened for him to become a member of the Church and to help with the post-war reorganisation. The author recalls with pleasure, the ultimate result of his friendship with Dr Hartill: the invitation of the Church Meeting in January 1948, to become their leader. It should be stated that the honour conferred by the Church was greatly prized by the recipient, and that he continues to feel a deep sense of gratitude to Dr Hartill for bringing him into the Church, and to the Rev TH Cooper for help and encouragement in assisting him to satisfy the requirements, academic and otherwise, for entry into the ministry of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

Chapter 14

CONCLUSION

THE PRESENT PASTORATE

"Thou hast set my feet in a large room"

Psalm 31:8

To write an account of one's own ministry is a task of some delicacy and one which the author does not wish to attempt; in order however, that this history should be brought up-to-date, this last chapter is given in the form of a chronology.

An analysis of the facts indicates that the adoption of a spirited evangelical policy has led to revival in the life of the Church. It would not be too much to say, that in the twentieth century church as a whole, the only hope of success lies in a return to bible preaching and teaching. Faithfulness to the Word of God will bring its own blessing and spiritual prosperity.

1948 February 19. The author was inducted as Minister of the Independent Chapel (Congregational), St Albans.

November. The National Young Life Campaign, led by Mr Marshall Shallis, held a crusade in the City. Several Spicer Street young people converted.

December 28. Death of Rev Dr Hartill.

1949 January 3. Funeral of the Rev Dr Hartill.

June 19. First of the Guest Night services. Several persons present decided for Christ.

1950 February 13. The minister, having completed two years, was invited to stay for a further similar period.

June 11-18. A special series of meetings was held to mark the 300th anniversary of the establishment of the first Congregational Church in St Albans Abbey in 1650, under the Ministry of the Rev Job Tookey MA.

1951 February 25. Pastor Stephen Wang, founder and director of the Chinese Overseas Christian Mission, introduced to Spicer Street by the Minister.

February 28. Mr EA Hickling presented with a cheque and an illuminated address on being made an honorary life deacon of the Church and in recognition of his long and faithful service.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

1951 April 8-15. "Christian Challenge" meetings, led by Mr Marshall Shallis of the National Young Life Campaign, and Mr WH Ellis of the London City Mission.

May 2. The minister's name put on the official list of evangelists of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

May 14. Scheme of house-to-house visitation inaugurated. This has been repeated from time to time since.

June 29. General meeting of the PSA society considered closing down through lack of support. A trial period of three months decided upon. At the expiration of this period, the society ceased to meet.

July 15. Visit of Miss Gladys Aylward, the famous "lone" Chinese Missionary.

September 1. Brief history of the Church published in the "Hertfordshire Countryside".

October 15. The Minister's second period of two years expiring in the early part of 1952, an invitation was extended to him, and accepted, to stay for an unspecified time.

1952 April 6 to 8. A series of convention meetings was held and the meetings were addressed by the Rev DM Russell-Jones of Cardiff.

April 17. A meeting concerning the Congregational "Forward Movement" was held at Trinity, when the special speaker was the Rev Howard S Stanley MA, Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. At this meeting, Mr Stanley made the following, memorable statement: "Anyone who imagines that the winning of the industrial and the social and political struggle is going to land us where we want to get, is living in a fool's paradise. What is needed is a revival of religion."

June 15. Second visit of Miss Gladys Aylward. Her visit was characterised by crowded audiences.

September 15-17. An autumn convention for the deepening of spiritual life, entitled: "Revival", was led by the Rev John D Drysdale, principle of the Emanuel Bible College, Birkenhead.

October 28. First of three lectures arranged by Mr LT Read entitled "The Preacher Prepared". These were talks by experience preachers to Christian workers.

November 23. Visit of Mr Frederick P Wood, Director and co-founder of the National Young Life Campaign.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

1952 November 25. Second visit of the Rev John D Drysdale. During this visit a service of "Anointment for Healing" was held. This has become a frequent practice in the Church with great effect.

1953 January 29. Induction of the Rev Francis Hope Dickson BD, to the pastorate of Trinity Congregational Church.

March 9 to 14. United Bible Week meetings at Christ Church, Verulam Road, arranged by the Rev RW Francis.

April 4 to 6. Easter Convention, led by the Rev Duncan Campbell of the Faith Mission, Glasgow, famous for his connection with the revival in the Hebrides in 1947 and after.

June 21. Visit of the Rev Ian Tait of Welwyn Free Church and the North Africa Mission.

September 11. The church's trusty friend the Rev TH Cooper, visited the Church Meeting and was presented with a briefcase in recognition of his help to Spicer Street and his presidency that year, of the Hertfordshire County Union.

September 25. Second anniversary meetings at "Bethel" of Pastor John C Webster's ministry. A strong link was formed from then on between Spicer Street and "Bethel". Several members of Spicer Street, desiring adult baptism, have been baptised at "Bethel" from time to time.

October 4 to 11. Trinity celebrated its 50th Anniversary and a week's meetings, arranged by the secretary, Mr Burnet, drew large congregations.

October 17 to 19. Return visit of the Rev Duncan Campbell.

December 13. Bible Sunday. Special visit of the Rev WH Hudspeth MA, formerly British and Foreign Bible Society agent in Shanghai; an old friend of the minister.

December 16. On this Wednesday evening, a public meeting was held to hear an address by a friend of the minister, the Rev Joe W Blinco, a Methodist preacher. Mr Blinco was to become world-famous as an associate of Dr Billy Graham.

1954 March. The interior of the Church was completely redecorated, under the direction of Mr Ritchie, advisor on decoration to the Hertfordshire County Council Education Department. The work was carried out by Messrs Hammonds of St Albans.

During this time, the Billy Graham Crusade meetings were going on at Haringey, and several decisions were advised to the Minister.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

1954 August 11. Death of Mr EA Hickling, our senior life deacon, as a result of a street accident on 23rd July previous.

October 3 to 11. "Need of the Hour Crusade" led by Mr Marshall Shallis, of the National Young Life Campaign, and based on Spicer Street.

October 12. Death of the Rev TH Cooper, at the age of eighty-two. Mr Cooper, until the time of his death, was still the very active secretary of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union, and had preached a few days before he died.

October 21. Minister began a series of Sunday morning sermons on the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.

November 14. Visit of Mr SF Cupples, of the Mission to Mediterranean Garrisons. Mr Cupples announced that the day was the fiftieth anniversary of his conversion.

1955 March 19. Crowded audiences to see the Billy Graham film "Oiltown USA".

April 20 to 23. Billy Graham "All Scotland" crusade relayed to Trinity Congregational Church. Well-attended meetings gave several decisions and many enquiries. Means continually being sought to further evangelism.

April 26. Death of Mrs HM Ryder at the age of ninety-one. Widow of the late Samuel Ryder, Mrs Ryder, a member of Trinity, was a staunch friend also, of Spicer Street.

1956 February 13 to March 12. Four more lectures for preachers arranged under the title of "The Preacher's Preparation".

February 18. "The Wembley story". This was a graphic representation by film-strip and tape recording of the Wembley meetings of 1955, led by Dr Billy Graham and his team.

April. "The Need of the Hour Crusade". This was, by far, the best and most successful of the evangelistic crusades based on Spicer Street. Those taking part were: Mr David Shepherd and Mr Jack Ward, both of the National Young Life Campaign; Mr Charles Potter, the converted Communist leader; Mr George Figgett, the gospel singer and Miss Pauline Nash, a convert from Haringey. This crusade had a lasting impact on the church life.

October 6 to 13. Missionary exhibition supported by many prominent missionary societies. After the successful evangelistic effort of the spring, it was felt that enthusiasm should be directed towards missionary enterprise.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

1956 October 14. A group of the young people went, as a team, to South Down Road, Harpenden, Methodist Church and conducted an evangelistic service. Much good “spadework” had been done prior to visit, as on the actual night, there were seventeen decisions. It was felt that our own crusades were bearing fruit.

1956 November 2. Two good friends of Spicer Street, who had helped the church with various evangelistic efforts since 1949, Mr RH Hetherington and Miss Patricia Andrews, became engaged to be married and offered jointly for service in Peru with the Evangelical Union of South America.

December 15. A section of the London Crusader Choir, under its conductor, the Rev Douglas B Gray, visited Spicer Street.

1957 April 14. Mr FH Wrintmore, editorial secretary of the London City Mission, was introduced to Spicer Street. It is interesting to note that, at this time, Mr Wrintmore had been the honorary minister, for eighteen years, of South Hackney Congregational Church, Lauriston Road, known as Trinity Church. The late Rev Dr Hartill had been minister there and the famous Dr Tyler before him; the latter being a great personal friend of Matthew Arnold the poet.

May 5. Rev JC Webster of Bethel, Mr WH Ellis of the London City Mission and the author, carried through a short evangelistic campaign at Wheathampstead Congregational Church.

June 2. Visit of Dr Leland Wang of the Chinese Foreign Missionary Union. We owed this visit to our friend, pastor Stephen Wang, of the Chinese Overseas Christian Mission.

June 16. Special services were conducted by Mr TJ (“Tim”) Buckley of the London Bible College

June 20. Baptismal service held at Bethel Baptist Chapel when two of our members were baptised by immersion, at their urgent request.

June 28. The minister was invited to preach for Mr Wrintmore at South Hackney.

August 28. The minister was invited to give an address at a large evangelistic meeting held at Ventnor (IOW) Congregational Church in connection with a united “Hour of Decision and Song” crusade. This visit brought Spicer Street in touch with the Rev Frank Glover and the Rev George Young, both of whom have served Spicer Street with acceptance.

September 22. Harvest Thanksgiving services were conducted by the Rev Thomas Jarratt MA, of Sevenoaks Congregational Church.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

1957 November 23 to 25. A further visit of Mr David Shepherd, the Welsh evangelist. As usual, Mr Sheppard's meetings were very well supported.

1958 January 12. Youth Sunday: services were conducted by Mr Ian Cory of Hildenborough Hall, an associate of Mr Tom Rees.

January 17 to 19. New Year Conference at "The Links", Eastbourne, arranged by Mr and Mrs MG Young, leaders of "The London Team." The author was asked to lead the conference. The London Team is made up of about 400 "prayer partners", some of whom, from time to time, unite to carry on evangelistic work in various country areas, notably in and around the town of Huntingdon.

February 22 and 23. The minister's Tenth Anniversary. A rally of Lay Preachers was held. At this time, there were ten attached to the Church.

April 27. Visit of the Rev Gilbert Kirby MA, secretary of the Evangelical Alliance.

May 2 to 4. Felden Lodge Conference sponsored by Mr and Mrs LT Read of Spicer Street. This conference, of young people for the most part, was attended by about forty-five persons. The guest speaker was Mr Gordon Dixon, President of the Prudential Christian Union. He spoke on: -

The Christian's Calling.
The Christian's Equipment.
The Christian's Commission.

He summed up the whole in one phrase: - "Come! Stand! Go!"

The chaplain of the conference was the Rev JC Webster.

May 23. The 164th Sunday School Anniversary was conducted by the Rev DW Lambert MA, principal of the Lebanon Missionary Bible College, Berwick-on-Tweed. Mr Lambert was a friend of the late Rev Samuel Chadwick of Cliff College. Mr Lambert was a lecturer there.

June 1. Services conducted by the Rev John Rigley of Stirling, Scotland; a retired Baptist minister of great power in preaching.

June 27 to July 1. Series of meetings conducted by a party of "Trekkers" from the London Bible College under the direction of Mr Michael Horn - later the Rev Michael Horn of the Bible Churchman's Missionary Society in India.

November 28. Announcement that Mr AE Simmonds, a member of the church for six years, and a deacon for three years, had qualified as a Congregational minister and had received an invitation to become the minister of the church at Harwich Road, Colchester.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

1959 January 24. Mr AE Simmonds inducted at Colchester.

January 30. The death of Mrs FM Hickling (widow of Mr EA Hickling, who died 11th August 1954).

February 1. Visit of Rev Bill Bathman, a young American evangelist and Director of National Evangelistic Teams.

February 15. Memorial service for the late Mrs FM Hickling.

May 10. The Sunday School anniversary was conducted by Mr Carey Oakley MA, formerly classics master at the City of London School and now senior Greek lecturer at the London Bible College. Mr Oakley is the son of the late Rev Henry Oakley, one of the founders of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches.

May 16 to 18. (Whitsun). Team of Spicer Street young people assist the evangelistic weekend with the London Team in Huntingdonshire.

July 5 to 9. Visit of Mr Frank Gonzales of USA.

July 15. Mr Arthur Rixon of Bedmond introduced Mr Juan Torus Vila, the pastor of an evangelical church in Valencia, Spain.

July 26. Visit of Mr Ted West, an independent missionary in India on furlough. Mr West is sponsored by Rye Lane Baptist Chapel, Peckham.

September 3. The author, while staying at Ventnor, was asked to take part in a service of healing, the subject being his friend, the Rev JH Stringer, a Methodist minister living in retirement and suffering from serious disability. The service was carried through in the terms of James 5:14. It will be recalled by many that anointing for healing has been carried out several times at Spicer Street, with markedly beneficial results.

October 7 and 8. Return visit of Mr Frank Gonzales.

October 11 to 18. "Into all the World" a missionary exhibition arranged at Spicer Street. The concluding messages were given by the Rev F Bourlet of the Unevangelised Fields Missionary Society.

1960 March 19 to 27. A return visit of the Rev Bill Bathman of Network Evangelistic Teams. There were twelve decisions during this series of meetings.

April 22 (Good Friday). A united rally of Christian witness was held at Bricket Wood under the direction of Mr LT Read.

April 27. Mr Rixon of Bedmond introduced Pastor Samuel Vila of Barcelona, leader of an evangelical group in Spain.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

1960 May 8. Sunday School Anniversary services were conducted by Mr John Goddard, a schoolmaster, and a director of "Fact and Faith Films".

May 14. Mr LT Read, a deacon of Spicer Street, was inducted to the lay pastorate of Bricket Wood Congregational Church by the Rev John Farrar, chairman of the Hertfordshire Congregational Union, and minister at Bishops Stortford. This was the Union's Triple Jubilee year.

June 24. The Church Anniversary services were conducted by the Rev Frank Glover, Baptist minister from Ventnor, I of W.

September 24 and 25. Visits of Pastor AE Pokorny, of the Austrian Evangelisation Society.

October 28 to 31. Conference at "Elfinward", Haywards Heath, arranged by the London Team and directed by Mr and Mrs MG Young, members of Spicer Street. The guest speaker was the Rev Bill Bathman. Several of our own young people attended.

1961 March 10 to 13. Spring Convention led by the Rev John Rigley of Stirling. This was a well attended a series of meetings and it was felt that the life of the church had been much influenced for good.

May 14. The Sunday School Anniversary services were conducted by Mr Eric Cook of the Scripture Gift Mission. He showed the great help of "visual aids".

May 19 to 22. The author joined the London Team for a visit to Huntingdonshire. He was accompanied by one of the deacons, Mr Geoffrey Outlaw.

June 4. Visit of Miss Charlotte Teubner, a young German lady who had been a missionary in North Africa, now studying in London at the Missionary School of Medicine for service in Central America. (Miss Teubner went, subsequently, to Panama, under the auspices of the New Tribes Mission).

June 11 and 12. A prayer conference was held as part of the Anniversary Services, led jointly by the Rev JC Webster and the author.

June 12 to 16. Spicer Street United with other evangelical churches in arranging relays from Manchester of the Billy Graham Crusade there. These meetings were held in Marlborough Road Methodist Church, and were exceedingly well attended. There were some outstanding decisions.

1961 July 2. Our friend and neighbour, the Rev JC Webster, was inducted to the pastorate of the Earls Barton Baptist Church, Northampton.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

1961 October 2 to 5. A Bible Exhibition was held to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the founding of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Societies represented were those more especially concerned with the distribution and reading of the Scriptures. These included: -

The Gideons International, The Pocket Testament League,
The Scripture Union, The Scripture Gift Mission,
The Victory Tract club, The Wycliffe Bible translators.

December 4. Mr LA Herbert accepted nomination as "Assistant to the Minister." Later confirmed by the Church Meeting as from 1st January 1962.

1962 February 18. Annual Church Meeting. Miss CK Catton informed the meeting that there had been a swing over in Sunday attendance from evening to morning.

At this meeting the usual election of officers takes place. Both Miss CK Catton and Miss AC Ironmonger were elected as secretary and treasurer respectively. These ladies had occupied these offices for many years and had worked diligently and trustworthily. They now informed the meeting that this was the last year they would stand, and gave a years notice of retirement. (This took place at end of 1962 and suitable presentations were subsequently made).

March 12. Mr William Stevens, honorary life deacon, reached his 80th birthday. This event was suitably recognised.

March 20. Intensive house-to-house visitation began. Eight hundred houses visited.

May 13. Sunday School Anniversary; the special preacher was Mr Peter Liddelow from the Sunday School Department of the Scripture Union.

May 20. Visit of Prof JW Fairbairn, a member of the council of the Chinese Overseas Christian Mission.

August 24. A special meeting was held at Spicer Street to commemorate the passing of the Act of Uniformity 1662 (24th August). The lecturer was Dr Morris West, minister of Dagnall Street Baptist Church and former lecturer in history at Regents Park College.

August 31. The church's oldest member, Mrs Annie (Granny) Barnes, died in her ninety-seventh year.

October 20 to 22. Meetings conducted by Mr David Shepherd.

1963 For over six weeks, from Christmas Eve 1962, the weather was harsh and bitter; Snow, ice and continuous frost. The hardest winter, it is said, for eighty years.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

1963 January 21. Annual Meeting of the church. Miss CK Catton and Miss AC Ironmonger ceased to be secretary and treasurer respectively. This was in line with notice given twelve months previously. The withdrawals were received with regret, but with understanding, and suitable acknowledgements were made, both verbally and tangibly. Mr WA Chapman BA was elected secretary and Mr ER Baker, treasurer. It has to be reported with regret, however, that Mr Chapman was compelled, for reasons of ill-health, to resign after two weeks, and Mr GC Morton was appointed in his place.

February 18. The minister's fifteenth anniversary was marked by gifts to himself and Mrs Harding.

April 6. The Billy Graham film "Touch of Brass" was shown. This was the story of the Manchester Crusade.

April 7. Guest Night service, when four young people gave their testimonies a married couple and an engaged couple. The title of the service was: "Men Women and God."

April 28. At Trinity Congregational Church there was a special Commissioning Service for Johnston and Christine Nicholl, who had offered for work with the London Missionary Society in Papua.

May 12. The 169th Anniversary of the Sunday School. The preacher was Mr AG Ling, the Bible Reading and Overseas Secretary of the Scripture Union.

May 17. Publicity "dead-line" for the "Lake Shore Crusade". The meetings of this crusade were planned to take place in a large tent by the lake at Verulamium.

June 1 to 17. "The Lake Shore Crusade". This began with a march through the town from St Peter's Church to the lake. About 150 persons took part. It was a silent parade – no talking. The chief slogan exhibited on the hoardings was – "Make for the Lake". This "caught on". The evangelists were Messrs Peter Anderson and Douglas Barnett, of the National Young Life Campaign, and the soloist was Mr Steve Driscoll. This crusade proved to be a great help to unity among the Churches of the City.

June 29. A prayer conference was held at Mr H Barlow's house. Two sessions were held: afternoon and evening. There was a good attendance. Speakers were Mr LA Herbert and the Minister.

July 6 to 8. Visit of Mr David Shepherd, now with the Movement for World Evangelism. These meetings were exceedingly well attended. At 8pm on the Sunday evening about 150 persons were present and on the Monday evening about 200.

CONCLUSION-THE PRESENT PASTORATE

1963 September 15. Visit of the Rev Frank Glover (Now of Sevenoaks).

September 16. Harvest Supper. This was a new departure. About 90 persons attended and after the supper was over, the film of the building of Coventry Cathedral was shown, by permission of Sir John Laing and Company Limited.

September 29. Visit of the Rev DRD Patterson, of the "Come back to God Campaign". Mr Patterson showed slides of his work, and we were able, through the kindness of friends, to give him a substantial donation for the work.

October 13. The Minister was invited to preach at the usual quarterly service of remembrance at the West Hertfordshire Crematorium, Garston.

November 23. The Rev AE Simmonds of Colchester was inducted to the pastorate of Roker Congregational Church, Sutherland. The Minister was invited to attend and give the charge to the incoming minister.

November 28. The Rev Bryn Rees, Vicar of Christ Church, announced to a gathering of Christians in the St Albans Town hall, that a committee had been formed to further evangelistic work in the City and it was to be known as the "Mid-Herts Christian Outreach". The officers to be: Chairman: Rev Bryn Rees, Christ Church: Treasurer: Mr H Barlow; and the secretary: Mr LA Herbert, Spicer Street.

This group had been formed as an outcome of the "Lake Shore Crusade" held in June previously.

It is a far cry, humanly speaking, from 1650 to 1963, but it is a matter of thankfulness to Almighty God that the robust testimony of 1650 is manifest today and that, in spite of setbacks and times of difficulty, blessing continues, men are still being converted and the Kingdom of God is still spreading. God will never allow himself to be without a witness.

APPENDICES

- I List of Ejected Ministers - 1662
- II The Westminster Assembly and the Clarendon Code
- III Philip Doddridge's Ordination Certificate
- IV The Doddridge Memorial Tablet - Northampton
- V Ministers of the Dagnall Lane Chapel
- VI Dr Samuel Clark - Memorial Stone in St Peter's Churchyard
- VII Rev Jabez Hiron - Memorial Stone in St Peter's Churchyard
- VIII Mural Tablet in St Peter's Church to the memory of Dr Robert Clavering and composed by Dr Nathaniel Cotton
- IX Deputies of the Protestant Dissenters
- X Appeal for funds to build the chapel in Spicer Street
- XI Declaration entered in the Church Book 11th February 1818
- XII List of works of the Rev William Urwick MA
- XIII Illuminated address presented to Rev William Urwick 14th September 1891
- XIV Independent Chapel Spicer Street - organ specification
- XV List of Trustees appointed in 1893 - Independent Chapel
- XVI Rev William Urwick's letter of resignation 1st December 1894
- XVII The Independent Chapel Spicer Street - the clock
- XVIII Trinity Congregational Church - the organ specification
- XIX Trinity Congregational Church – list of original trustees
- XX List of members of Spicer Street & Trinity killed in the war of 1914 - 1918
- XXI Independent Chapel Spicer Street – burial ground

APPENDIX I

Nonconforming ministers ejected in the St Albans area 1660 – 1662

Draper, Joseph MA	Sandridge
Eeles, Nathaniel MA	Harpenden
Haworth, William MA	St Peter's, St Albans
Loeffs, Isaac MA	Shenley
Partridge, Nathaniel MA	Abbey Church, St Albans
Withnell, Edward MA	St Stephen's, St Albans

Ministers of St Albans ejected elsewhere

Newton, George MA	Taunton
Richards, Robert MA	Coulsdon, Surrey
Tookey, Job MA	Yarmouth

Ministers ejected elsewhere, who came to St Albans

Richards, Robert MA	From Coulsdon, Surrey
Scott, Oliver	From Parliamentary Army chaplaincy
Staunton, Edmund DD	From Kingston upon Thames

APPENDIX II

WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY

The long Parliament, having in 1641 deprived the bishops of their votes, summoned an assembly of one hundred and twenty-one divines, together with thirty persons, other than the clergy, from the Lords and Commons. This body was set up to examine the possibility of, and ultimately to inaugurate, a Presbyterian establishment for England and Wales. The meetings were held in Westminster Abbey from 1st July 1643 to 22nd February 1648 and numbered 1,163 meetings in all. On 25th September 1643, the Assembly adopted the Solemn League and Covenant which the Scottish Churches had drawn up protesting against the religious interference of Archbishop Laud, minister of Charles I. The Assembly submitted to Parliament: A “Directory of Public Worship” to supersede the Book of Common Prayer, 20th April 1644: a “Confession of Faith” (which still represents the faith of the Church of Scotland), and two catechisms, a “shorter” and a “larger”, both in 1647. In 1647, Parliament ordered that Presbyterianism be tried for a year, bishops having been abolished previously, 9th October 1646.

The Clarendon Code

Corporation Act 1661, ordered all holders of municipal office to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant (see above), and take the sacraments according to the Established Church Form.

Conventicle Act 1664, forbade assemblies for worship other than those of the Established Church.

Five-Mile Act 1665, forbade ejected ministers, except those who were willing to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity of 1662, to reside within five miles of any corporate town.

APPENDIX III

Philip Doddridge's Ordination Certificate

"We, whose Hands are hereunto Subscribed, do here by certify to all whom it may concern that Mr Philip Doddridge, of Northampton, having addressed himself to us Ministers of the Gospel, desiring to be ordained a Presbyter. We being sufficiently assured of the Unblamableness of his conversion, and Proficiency in his studies, proceeding solemnly to set him apart to the Office of the Ministry and the Pastoral care of the Church at Northampton aforesaid on the nineteenth day of March 1729/30, and therefore esteem and declare him to be a lawful and sufficiently authorised Minister of Jesus Christ, and heartily recommend him and his Ministry to the Divine Blessing.

"Witness our hands.

"Present and Consenting,

J BROGDEN, Wigston,
ROBT. DAVIDSON, Hinckley
J MORRIS, Welford,
S CLARKE, (sic), St Albans,

JA WATSON, Leicester,
EDW. BROADBENT, Birmingham,
THOS. SAUNDERS, Kettering,
J DRAKE, Yardley,

JNO. HUNT, Newport"

(See: Arnold T and Cooper JJ "The History of the Church of Doddridge", Kettering, 1895 page 84)

APPENDIX IV

The Doddridge Memorial Tablet drawn up by his friend, Dr West, and at present, over the pulpit in the church at Northampton:

TO the memory of Philip Doddridge DD twenty-one years pastor of this church, Director of a flourishing academy, and author of many excellent writings, by which his pious, benevolent, and indefatigable zeal to make men wise, good and happy, will far better be made known, and perpetuated much longer, than by this obscure and perishable marble; the humble monument, not of his praise, but their esteem, affection and regret, who knew him, lov'd him and lament him; and who are desirous of recording, in this inscription, their friendly but faithful testimony to the many amiable and Christian virtues that adorned his more private character; by which, though dead, he yet speaketh, and still present in remembrance, forcibly, though silently admonishes his once beloved and ever-grateful flock.

He was born Jan. 26, 1702

Died Octob. 26, 1751

Death is swallowed up in Victory

APPENDIX V

List of ministers of the Dagnall Lane Chapel as given by Evans GE: “Vestiges of Protestant Dissent”, Liverpool 1897 page 215

“St Albans – Lower Dagnall Street

Date of Congregation 1662

Date of Chapel 1697

Ministers

Edmund Staunton DD	1662 - 1671
William Jenkyn MA	1664 – 1672
Isaac Loeffs MA	1669? – 1680?
Jonathan Grew DD	1698 – 1711
Samuel Clark DD	1712 – 1750
Jabez Hirons	1750 – 1812
William Marshall	1813 – 1835
John Mitchelson	1835 – 1837
Philip Vincent Coleman	1837 – 1868

Evans notes:

“Chapel sold, 1895, by order of Charity Commissioners and proceeds handed to Provincial Assembly of London and the South Eastern Counties”.

(Author's note:

Jabez Hirons adopted Unitarian principles during his ministry, resulting in a split in the congregation (see section v). The Manchester Socinian Controversy of 1825 completed the separation of the Unitarian elements from the Presbyterian and Independent factors, both of which were present in Dagnall Lane Chapel. FAJH)

APPENDIX VI

The inscription on the memorial stone of Dr Samuel Clark, buried in St Peter's Churchyard 16th December 1750.

"In memory of the Reverend and learned, candid and pious, Samuel Clark DD, thirty-eight years Pastor of a Dissenting congregation in this town, who having enforced the most judicious, animated and engaging instructions, by the practice of every virtue and grace which could adorn public and private life, met sudden death with firmness and serenity, secure of that divine approbation to which he had resolutely sacrificed every other regard. Ob. 4th December 1750, aet. 66. Here also lyeth the body of Sarah, his wife, who dyed 4th February 1757, aged 56. 'Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' Here lies the body of Thomas Clark, the son of Samuel Clark DD, and Sarah his wife, who died 10th November 1748, in the 12th year of his age. 'The flower fadeth.'"

(See: Clutterbuck R, "The History & Antiquities of the County of Hertfordshire", London 1815, page 72 of volume 1)

APPENDIX VII

The inscription on the memorial stone of Rev Jabez Hirons, buried in St Peter's Churchyard 29th December 1812.

"In memory of the Rev Jabez Hirons, who succeeded the Rev S Clark DD, in the pastoral care of a Dissenting congregation in this town, over which he presided full sixty-one years. He died, as he had lived, in full dependence on the mercies of God, through Jesus Christ his honoured Lord, 12th December 1812, in his eighty-fifth year. Also, Anne, his amiable and beloved wife (second daughter of the above Rev Dr Clark), who departed this life 18th October 1804, in the seventy-second year of her age."

(See: Cussans JE, "History of Hertfordshire" London; vol iii (1881) Hundred of Cashio, page 304)

Added to the above memorial is the following:

"The Rev Philip Vincent Coleman, for 30 years minister of the Dagnall Lane Chapel in this town.
Died August 8th 1868, Aged 76."

APPENDIX VIII

An example of the work of Dr Nathaniel Cotton, the poet, could be seen formerly on a mural tablet in the nave of St Peter's Church St Albans. It was an epitaph to the memory of Cotton's young friend and fellow physician, Robert Clavering MB, of Christ Church, Oxford, who died in June 1747 at the early age of twenty-nine. The lines ran as follows:-

Oh! come, who know the childless parent's sigh,
 The bleeding bosom, and the streaming eye;
 Who feel the wounds a dying friend imparts,
 When the last pang divides two social hearts;
 This weeping marble claims the generous tear:
 Here lies the friend, the son, and all that's dear.
 He fell full-blossom'd in the pride of youth,
 The nobler pride of science, worth, and truth:
 Firm and serene he viewed his mouldering clay,
 Nor feared to go, nor fondly wished to stay;
 And when the King of Terrors he descry'd,
 Kissed the stern mandate, bow'd his head, and dy'd.

(Scatcherd and Letterman, proprietors:
 "London and its Environs; or, the General Ambulator, and Pocket
 Companion".
 The Ambulator section; p8).

APPENDIX IX

DEPUTIES OF PROTESTANT DISSENTERS OF THE THREE
 DENOMINATIONS (PRESBYTERIAN, INDEPENDENT, AND BAPTIST)
 APPOINTED TO PROTECT THEIR CIVIL RIGHTS; known briefly as the
 Dissenting Deputies.

"This Association originated in a general meeting of the Protestant Dissenters of London, held in November 1732, called to consider an application to Parliament for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. The want of a permanent body to superintend the civil concerns of Dissenters being strongly felt, it was resolved at a subsequent meeting held in January 1735-36, that Deputies from the several congregations in London should be chosen for that purpose. The first meeting of the Deputies was held at Salters' Hall on January 12th 1736-37, Dr Benjamin Avery in the chair. The present duties with which the Deputies charge themselves are, to see that the civil and religious Rights of Dissenters are not infringed, and to help in forwarding Parliamentary measures which will promote the interests of Nonconformists. The Dissenting Deputies have the right to accompany the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations (Congregational, Presbyterian and Baptist), when that body exercises the right of personal approach to the Throne."

Congregational Year Book 1961, Page 97.

APPENDIX X

The appeal for funds to build the chapel in Spicer Street, sent out by the Minister and Officers of the chapel in Sweet Briar Lane.

“The small size and incommodious form of the building (Sweet Briar Lane) have for some years been a just cause of complaint: but of late many people have been obliged to go away, more have been deterred from coming who were well inclined, and those who are admitted, suffer so much from heat, etc, as to unfit them for the solemnities of divine worship. As the place could not be enlarged, it became a matter of imperative duty to erect a new one, the dimensions of which should be answerable to a large and increasing population. A building has accordingly been erected, the area of which will contain 400 persons. Expenditures:- The sum necessary to complete the whole, including the purchase of the ground, etc, and which is engaged to be paid by Lady Day, 1812, will amount to £1,500.

The church and congregation (who do not exceed 150 persons) have agreed to furnish £600. There remains to be collected £900.”

Centenary memorial (W Urwick) Page 25.

A footnote adds: “Size of the Chapel, 46 feet by 36 feet in the clear. Ceiling, 23 ½ feet high. Cove 2 feet. Mr William Jenkins, Architect. Rev Jas Woods, 12 Broad Street, Bloomsbury.”

APPENDIX XI

The following Declaration is recorded in the Church Book, Wednesday 11th February 1818. This declaration was confirmed with some modifications, on Monday 21st April, 1862.

A DECLARATION of the principles on which this Church was originally formed, and according to which it has been re-organised and established.

i. That the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are our soul standard and authority all matters of Faith and Discipline.

ii. That our doctrinal sentiments are in accordance with those of the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.

iii. That our order of Church Discipline is what is usually called and known by the name of Independent or Congregational.

iv. That we require of those who would be admitted into Church Membership with us, that they give satisfaction to the Church of their being likely to promote those ends for which we conceive these Societies, according to the New Testament, are formed.

v. That the points on which we seek satisfaction are such an accordance of religious sentiments with those we profess to hold, and such a spirit, conduct, and character as we conceive calculated to exemplify and promote real religion.

vi. That the mode in which we seek this satisfaction is ordinarily through the medium of the Minister, and the conversation and enquiries of two or more members approved and deputed by the Church for this purpose.

NOTE. A written or verbal Communication from the Candidate to the Church, expressive of his or her religious views and feelings, and reasons for wishing to join the Society, we deem desirable, but do not insist upon.

vii. That we admit members of other churches of similar Faith and Discipline upon their presenting a letter of dismissal and recommendation from the Church of which they have been members.

viii. That while we require the above qualifications for Church Membership, we cheerfully admit to occasional communion and the Lord's Table, Members of other Churches (though they may differ from us on some minor points) whom in the judgement of charity we conceive to be true and consistent disciples of Jesus Christ.

“APPENDIX XII**LIST OF WORKS OF THE REV WILLIAM URWICK MA**

- 1864 - "Historical Sketches of Nonconformity in the County Palatine of Chester" (A collection of papers by Urwick and other ministers and laymen)
- 1870 - "Life and letters of William Urwick DD" (his father).
- "Ecumenical councils". (Six parts)
 - "Errors of Ritualism", Manchester (lectures)
- 1872 - "The Nonconformist and the Education Act"
- 1874 - "The Papacy and the Bible", Manchester.
(In controversy with Kenelm Vaughan)
- 1877 - "The Servant of Jehovah" (a commentary on Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12)
- 1881 - "Indian Pictures"
- 1884 - "Nonconformity in Herts"
- 1888 - "Bible Truths and Church Errors" (The published accounts of several lectures delivered at St Albans, including one on John Bunyan and another on Day School Education in St Albans).

WORKS EDITED BY THE REV WILLIAM URWICK MA

- 1868 - His father's "Biographical Sketches of JD Latouche"
- 1893 - TA Urwick's "Records of the 'Family of Urwick"

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GERMAN BY THE REV WILLIAM URWICK MA

- 1868 - J Muller's "Christian Doctrine of Sin" (2 vols)
- 1869/70 - F Bleik's "Introduction to the New Testament" (2 vols)
- 1872 - H Cremer's "Biblio-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek"
- 1886 - H Martensen's "Christian Dogmatics"

APPENDIX XIII

An illuminated address presented to the
Rev William Urwick MA

Reverend and Dear Sir, - We, the members of the Church and Congregation worshipping at Spicer Street, St Albans, under your pastoral care, are desirous at the present moment of expressing to you our continued and increased affectionate esteem and prayerful regard. We place upon record our thankfulness to God for the faithful ministry exercised by you in our midst during the past more than eleven years; for your pastoral work in the homes of the people so diligently performed, and for your generous kindness to the poor, the sad, and the suffering. Your ripe scholarship consecrated to the Master's use, the unfaltering witness you have born to the history and principles of our glorious Nonconformity, and, above all, the influence of your life and character upon those who know you, constrain us to gratitude to the great Head of the Church, who "has received gifts for men."

Our prayer is that you may long labour in the Redeemer's service, and that among us your influence may continue to be worthy of the description:

"He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

We are, reverend and dear sir affectionately and respectfully, on behalf of the church and congregation,

ISSAC IRONMONGER,
ROBERT LOVE,
GEORGE SLADE,
JAMES SLIMMON,

GEORGE KIFF
JOHN ODELL,
CHARLES SHARPE
SAMUEL CHERRY

JAMES H CAMPBELL

14th September 1891

(Urwick W 'Centenary Memorial' p 81)

The above letter throws a good deal of light on the character and capabilities of the Rev William Urwick, and no doubt, was meant to encourage him after the regrettable secession of Mr Edwin Nash and Mr SE Buttenshaw.

FAJH

APPENDIX XIVTHE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL SPICER STREET
ORGAN

Installed 13th October 1892 by Messrs C Lloyd and Co. of Nottingham.

Officially opened like Mr Arthur T George, who gave a recital and acted as choirmaster for some time.

Rebuilt in 1923 by Messrs T Fraser and Son of Bedford.

Reconditioned in 1956 by Rest, Cartwright and Son Limited, of Camden Town, London.

Specification:Great

Harmonic Flute 4'

Principal 4'

Keraulophon 8'

Stopped Diapason 8'

Open Diapason 8'

Pedal

Bourdon 16'

Swell

Salicet 2'

Principal 4'

Oboe 8'

Dulciana 8'

Violin Diapason 8'

Couplers

Swell to Pedal

Swell to Great

Great to Pedal

APPENDIX XV

List of new trustees of the
Chapel and Sunday School
appointed in 1893.

Samuel Cherry	George Samuel Myers
Isaac Ironmonger	George Lightfoot
Robert Love	Cornelius Waller
George Kiff	Charles Allin
John Odell	John Slimmon
Charles Sharpe	Thomas Hunter Urwick
Edward Newell	Joseph King
John Hamilton Campbell	William Slimmon
George Charles Thompson	Isaac Harvey Ironmonger

APPENDIX XVI

Letter read by the Rev William Urwick MA from the pulpit on the morning of Sunday 2nd December 1894.

To the Church and Congregation worshipping in Spicer Street, St Albans:

Brethren dearly beloved,

It must be obvious to you that for sometime past my strength and vigour have hardly been what heretofore they were for Pulpit and Pastoral services or for undertaking fresh plans of usefulness. Indeed I am advised as a means of restoration to seek a warmer climate during the winter months. I therefore feel it my duty to place my resignation in your hands. From my heart I thank you one and all for your unvarying kindness to me and mine and for your cooperation in the successive undertakings to which we have been called. The centenary year now closing has been one of blessing and the prospect for your future is bright and rich in promise. During the fifteen years that I have been with you, my aim has been to see that you should not suffer any disadvantage from my now residence, but pastoral visitation as well as pulpit services should be attended to with the same diligence as if I were living in the city. You have made from time to time, a series of efforts for the due efficiency of the Church and School. The repewing of the Chapel, the enlarging of the Schoolrooms, are so many milestones in our journey together from 1880 to 1894.

More than these material things, there is a series of common joys, sorrows and bereavements in personal and family life, that have knit our hearts together in the most sacred and tender ties. Many who were scholars in the Sunday School when first I came are now useful members of Christ and Teachers either here or in other parts. You have a goodly band of Deacons, men of piety and wisdom, who have been invaluable friends and helpers to the Pastor and for whose loyalty he will ever be grateful. You have able and devoted helpers in Church and School and Mission, some lately come amongst us, not behind yourselves in zeal and self-denial. From year to year, there have been additions to our Church to fill the places of those who have been taken from us so that the Roll of Membership is now higher then ever before during the term of my Pastorate. There is a fair company of young men and maidens of our Sunday School and Mutual Improvement Society, ready to confess Christ and follow Him. We have an efficiently conducted Band of Hope and an Infant Class of one hundred little ones. While thus there is abundant reason for gratitude to God, Who is the Author and giver all good things, for myself I cannot but feel how many have been my shortcomings and how imperfect my endeavours.

My prayer is that greater prosperity in the best sense may be in store for you and that the Head of the Church may send you a man full of grace and wisdom able to put new energy into his work and to lead you on to higher things. To this end let me exhort you to united prayer and loyalty to the

Church to which you belong. Let brotherly love continue; remember that union is strength, and desert not the place and Cause whose history in the past is a sacred legacy committed to your trust. In the words of Paul to the Ephesian elders, Acts 20:32, "I commend when you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified."

Outside our immediate fellowship, in Sister Churches of this City of St Albans, in which I have spent so many happy days and in whose welfare I have felt an ever-growing interest, there are many from the Salvation Army barracks to the great Abbey, among all classes of the citizens, specially among the Pastors and the poor whom I esteem highly, with whom it has been my privilege to unite in educational and temperance movements and the remembrance of whose friendship I shall ever cherish.

My prayer is: God bless St Albans. The City has an inspiring history in the struggles for civil and religious liberty in the past; may it still have a more noble record in the future! Be worthy of your ancestors in love of justice, piety and goodwill to men. May the voice of the Lord Jesus be realised here: 'I have much people in this City.'

And now, most kind and affectionate friends, a few more weeks only remain before the close of the year when I must bid you farewell. I hope not to lose but to retain, the friendship so long enjoyed. Opportunities doubtless will occur when we may see one another from time to time. We can always remember each other in our prayers and seek daily to become more like our heavenly Master and more fitted for the home above where there will be no more partings.

Believe me ever,
Your faithful servant in Christ,
William Urwick

Church Crescent
St Albans
Dec 1, 1894

APPENDIX XVII

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL, SPICER STREET
CLOCK

The clock, mounted in the gallery immediately opposite the pulpit, was installed in 1817 when the gallery was built. The clock bears the name of its maker JOHN GALER, being inscribed simply:

John Galer - St Albans

The Galer family were well known tradesmen in St Albans during the first fifty years of the last century.

John Galer, the clockmaker, carried on business in Holywell Hill. The last mention of his name in the Hertfordshire Directory is in 1829 - page 579.

APPENDIX XVIII

The organ of Trinity Congregational Church, St Albans

Built and installed by Messrs Bishop and Son of London and Ipswich in 1903

GREAT

Double Diapason	16'
Large Open Diapason	8'
Small Open Diapason	8'
Stopped Diapason	8'
Clarabella	8'
Dolce	8'
Trumpet	8'
Hohe Flute	4'
Principal	4'
Harmonic Flute	4'
Twelfth	3'
Fifteenth	2'
Mixture, 3 ranks	

SWELL

Double Diapason	16'
Contra Fagotto	16'
Open Diapason	8'
Stopped Diapason	8'
Keraulophon	8'
Voix Celestes	8'
Trumpet	8'
Oboe	8'
Clarinet	8'
Clarion	4'
Open Flute	4'
Principal	4'
Twelfth	3'
Fifteenth	2'
Swell Tremulant	
Mixture, 3 ranks	

CHOIR

Keraulophon	8'
Suaba Flute	8'
Lieblich Gedact	8'
Dulciana	8'
Celestine	8'
Horn	8'
Gemshorn	4'
Sauba Flute	4'
Gambetta	4'

PEDAL

Accoustic	32'
Trombone	16'
Sub Bass	16'
Open Diapason	16'
Trumpet	8'
Octave	8'
Violincello	8'
Super Octave	4'

COUPLERS

Swell to Pedal
Swell to Great
Swell to Choir
Choir to Pedal
Great to Pedal
Swell to Super Octave
Choir to Great Sub Octave

SWELL

Balanced

COMBINATIONSSWELL

1 (Open Diapason	8'
(Principal	4'
2 (Open Diapason	8'
(Keraulophon	8'
(Oboe	8'
(Principal	4'

3 (Contra Fagotto	16'
(Trumpet	8'
(Open Diapason	8'
(Clarion	4'
(Principal	4'
(Twelfth	3'
(Fifteenth	2'
(Mixture, 3 ranks	

APPENDIX XVIII (cont.)

The organ of Trinity Congregational Church St Albans

Combinations (continued)

GREAT

1 (Clarabella	8'	
(Hohe Flute		4'
2 (Small Open Diapason	8'	
(Clarabella	8'	
(Hohe Flute		4'
3 (Large Open Diapason	8'	
(Small Open Diapason	8'	
(Clarabella	8'	
(Hohe Flute		4'
(Principal	4'	
(Twelfth		3'
(Fifteenth	2'	

Note: The "Great to Pedal" coupler is operated by both stop and foot pedal

APPENDIX XIX

The original Trustees of Trinity Church, St Albans

Adams, Harry	Phillips, Thos
Brown, Tom	Phillips, WH
Buttenshaw, SE	Ryder, Samuel
Campbell, JH	Sheaves, AE
Dean, A	Sinclair, John
Faulkner, A	Sinclair, William
Hallowes, Rev BT	Slimmon, John
Ironmonger, IH	Slimmon, William
Love, R	Straker, EC
O'Dell, J	Thompson, GC

(The Hertfordshire Congregational Union Incorporated were appointed Trustees in 1943).

APPENDIX XX

The following are the members of Trinity and Spicer Street who were killed in the war of 1914 to 1918

Austin CE	Hobbs FW
Atkins PAC	Howe CA
Butterfield RGP	Howe C
Buttenshaw LH	Hozier W
Caldicot F	King H
Calder HG	Laughland S
Cousins EAJ	Oakley S
Curnick H	Pope P
Edwards CG	Ryan HP
Ephgrave B	Searle HB
Faulder A	Waldock E
Hillman H	Waldock W
Ward H	

Each church has a copy of these names engraved on a brass plate

APPENDIX XXI

SPICER STREET CHAPEL BURIAL GROUND

Most of the burial records have been lost. The ground came into use in 1838, when it was purchased, but the earliest recorded entry in the Church Book is 12th August 1862. The last burial which appears to have taken place is that of S Cherry, who was interred in the Cherry Family Vault in April 1897.

It is to be regretted that for the last sixty years, the burial ground has been neglected and that when recent attempts were made to tidy it up, it was discovered that many stones were broken or had fallen down, and that most of the inscriptions had become illegible. From what records are available, the following list of persons buried in the yard, has been compiled. The original plan shows sixty-one plots, each one containing for graves.

- Plot No 1 a. Mrs Jane Inwood; died 4 October 1868; age 83
 b. Mrs Sarah Oakley; died 25 March 1870; age 68
 c. Richard Oakley; died 27 August 1873; age 73
- Plot No 2 a. Annie Stone?
 b. Grace Johnson; died 25 January 1876; age 8 months
 c. Ernest Edward Ward; died 17 April 1878; age 5 months
- Plot No 3 a. Unknown
 b. Mary Small; died 18 September 1872; age 25
 c. Emily Jane Ward; ? 1873; age ?
 d. Arthur Edward Ward; died 19 August 1875; age 10 months
 Henry Jesse Hulks; died 17 October 1875; age 17 days
- Plot No 4 a. Joseph Sharp; ?
 b., c., and d. not used
- Plot No 5 a., b. and c. unknown
 d. Henry Morley; died July 1870; age 4 months
- Plot No 6 a. and b., unknown
 c. Sarah Mardel; died June 1869; age 3 years
 d. Kate Elizabeth Ward; died 25 February 1871; age 9 months
 George Mardell; died 15 July 1870; age 7 months
- Plot No 7 a., b., and c., unknown
 d. Alfred Edward Ward; died 24 May 1869; age 5 weeks
- Plot no 8 a., and b., unknown
 c., and d., empty

APPENDIX XXI (cont.)

- Plot No 9 a. Unknown
b. Judith Young; ?
c. Peggy ?; ?
d. Empty
- Plot No 10. All unknown
- Plot No 11 a. Unknown
b. Ernest Samuel Roberts; died 23 April 1864; age 1 year
c. Unknown
d. Edward George Fitzgerald; died 3 February 1870; age 7 mths
- Plot No 12 All empty
- Plot No 13 a. Mrs Elizabeth Parrott; died 24 March 1873; age 62
b. Abraham Parrott; died 6 November 1880; age 81
c. Charles Henry Parrott; died 28 April 1890; age 52
d. Empty
- Plot No 14 a. Marval Sarah Pelly; died 12 January 1846; age 25
b. Elizabeth Wheatley; died 21 December 1863; age 49
c. Thomas Wheatley; died August 1865; age 59
d. Minnie Sophia Cain; died 13 May 1870; age 3 years
- Plot No 15 a. Susan Lawrence; died 15 August 1866; age 52
b. Edmund Augustus Craske; died 6 August 1870; age 6 months
c. George Mardell; died 21 June 1871; infant
d. William Bruin; died 19 May 1872; age 8 months
- Plot No 16 a. William John Brunt; ?
b. Lydia Brunt; died 7 February 1868; age 56
c. George Germany; died 2 August 1871; age 45
d. Sophia Brunt; died 25 April 1877; age 52
- Plot No 17 a. Richard Manlove; died 8 March 1864; age 76
b. Hannah Manlove; died 27 January 1870; age 80
c., and d., empty
- Plot No 18 a. Martha Grimston; died 10 January 1873; age 67
b., c., and d., empty
- Plot No 19 All unknown
- Plot No 20 a. Katherine Jewel Parsons; died 2 December 1850; age 61
b. Mary Anne Parsons; died 10 November 1870; age 19
c. Jonathan Parsons; died 29 December 1871; age 77
d. Sydney Parsons; died 15 October 1872; age 10
Montague Parsons; died 10 April 1875; age 5 years 10 months

APPENDIX XXI (cont.)

- Plot No 21 a. William Thompson; died 22 November 1875; age 70
b. Archibald John Thompson; died 14 July 1887; age 11 months
c., and d., empty
- Plot No 22 a. Elizabeth Brown; died 28 August 1843; age 46
b. William Brown; died 14 December 1844; age 67
c., and d., empty
- Plot No 23 a. Henry Lewis; died 17 December 1873; age 6 weeks
b., c., and d., unknown
- Plot No 24)
25) The Cherry Family Vault:
26) Anne Cherry
Luke Cherry; died 29 January 1895; age 82
William Cherry; died 5 May 1864; age 65
Mark Cherry; died 20 February 1866; age 48
Eleanor Cherry; died 11 April 1869; age 80
Jesse Cherry (Junior); died 1 September 1877; age 35
Jesse Cherry; died 8 March 1883; age 79
S Cherry; died ?; buried April 1897; age ?
- Plot No 27 a. Mary Ann Murray; died 9 March 1840; age ?
b. Frederic George Allin; ?
c. Alice Emily Allin; ?
d. Catherine Lucy Allin; ?
- Plot No 28 a. Richard Mills; ?
b. Mary Mills; ?
c. Catherine Chamberlain; ?
d. Unknown
- Plot No 29 a. Anne Harris; ?
b. Rev John Harris; died 31 July 1871; age 88
c. Mary Anne Harris; died 16 June 1871; age 60
d. Empty
- Plot No 30 a. Mary Bourne; ?
b. Mason?; ?
c., and d., unknown
- Plot No 31 a. Maria Louisa Ironmonger; 1860; ?
b. Joseph Ironmonger; died June 1865; age 64
c. Matilda Ironmonger; died 21 December 1866; age 52
d. Unknown
- Plot No 32 a. Jennett Coote; died 5 January 1867; age 82
b., c., and d., empty

APPENDIX XXI (cont.)

- Plot No 33 a. John Rowe; died 12 August 1862; age 63
b. Emily Twichell; died 14 June 1863; age 15
c. William Adams; died February 1867; age 1 year
d. Unknown
- Plot No 34 a. Harriet Eliza Blow; died 3 June 1873; age 49
b. Decima Blow; died 15 June 1875; age 76
c. George Fordham Blow; died 7 June 1877; age 77
d. Unknown
- Plot No 35 All unknown
- Plot No 36 a. Ann Holt; died 24 June 1875 (or 23 October 1875); age 70
b., c., and d., unknown
- Plot No 37 a. Mary Crawford; died 29 May 1872; age 10½
(Family grave; b, c and d unknown)
- Plot Nos 38 & 39 Empty
- Plot No 40 a. John Wallace (or Wallace John) Tettersington; died 23
November 1883; age 46
b., c., and d., empty
- Plot No 41 a. Barbour Peter Love; died 21 January 1883; age 13 days
b. Andrew Love; died 18 April 1885; age 6 months
(Family grave; c., and d., unknown)
- Plot No 42 a. Emma Whisson; buried 27 December 1881; age 72
(Family grave; b., c., and d., empty or unknown)
- Plot No 43 a. (Mr).... Henson; died 30 December 1873; age 80
b. William Brunt; died 13 June 1881 (buried 20 June); age 81
c. Miss.... Brunt; died....1882 (buried 16 September 1882) age ?
d. Empty or unknown
- Plot No 44 a. Edward Anstee (or Anstey); Died 22 August 1880; age 68
b., c., and d., empty or unknown
- Plot No 45 a. Isabella W Hall; died 24 May 1878; age 78
(Family grave; other occupants, if any, unknown)
- Plot No 46 a. George and William Mercer; died 27 June 1877; infant twins
b., c., and d., empty
- Plot No 47 a. Ann Westell; died 12 June 1868; age ?
b., c., and d., empty

APPENDIX XXI (cont.)

- Plot No 48 a. Christina McAdam; died 24 July 1876; age 55
b. Thomas McAdam; died 2 February 1889; age 45
c., and d., empty
- Plot No 49 All empty
- Plot No 50 a. Jesse Hulks; died ... March 1886; age 21
b., c., and d., empty
- Plot No 51 a. Mrs Elizabeth Allin; died 17 October 1862; age 39
b. Laura Allin; died ...March 1865; age 2 years
c. Howard Frederic Allin;...March 1865; age 4 months
d. Unknown
- Plot No 52 a. (The old record marks this plot as "GA"
Could this be the "Allin Family Grave?")
- Plot No 53 a. Comfort Kernahan; died 17 March 1867; age 7
b. Comfort Kernahan; died 1875; (Presumably a female born
after the first Comfort Kernahan and named after her. The
latter could be seven when she died).
c., and d., empty
- Plot No 54 a. Philip Nathaniel Wilkin; died 24 October 1870; age 28
(Family grave; no record of further burials here.)
- Plot No 55 a. Thomas Joseph Ironmonger; died 20 Dec 1867; age 1 year
b. Sarah Elizabeth Ironmonger; ?
c. Thomas Ironmonger; ?
d. No record, presumed empty
- Plot No 56 Edith Mary Feesey; died 16 September 1872; age 3 months
(Family grave; no further burials here.)
- Plot No 57 a. Susannah Marion Ironmonger; died 6 September 1875;
age 18 months
b. Kate Sarah (or Sarah Kate) Ironmonger;
died 10 August 1885; age 21
c. Sarah Elizabeth Ironmonger; died 7 November 1887; age 59
d. ? Thomas Ironmonger; buried 29 July 1890; age ?
- Plot Nos 58, 59, 60, 61 all empty

APPENDIX XXI (cont.)

The following names appear in what records there are, but no record of graves is available:

Peter Barbour; died 2 July 1888; age 73

Mary Arnold; died 22 August 1888; age 69

*William Mardell; died 28 August 1888; age 56

George Allen; died 21 November 1888; age 70

Elizabeth Kiff; died 4 November 1889; age 82

Thomas Thomson Purves; died 22 June 1883; age 31

*Probably Plot No 6, grave a or b.

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PLATES

- I St Albans Abbey
- II Rev Nathaniel Partridge
- III St Michael's Church
- IV St Peter's
- V Rev Isaac Watts
- VI Chapel of the Old Presbyterian Meeting
- VII The same from a drawing by FG Kitton
- VIII The same - west face
- IX Title pages of the printed accounts of the Ordination Sermon
and Questions at the ordination of Rev Samuel Clark
- X Title page and dedication of the Sermon and Questions at the
ordination of Rev Samuel Clark DD
- XI Rev Daniel Williams DD
- XII Rev Philip Doddridge DD
- XIII Leaders of the Evangelical Revival: Rev John Wesley MA, and
Rev Charles Wesley MA
- XIV Leaders of the Evangelical Revival: Rev George Whitfield BA
and Rev John William Fletcher
- XV Castle Hill Church, Northampton
- XVI Dr Nathaniel Cotton and the Collegium Insanorum
- XVII Two portraits of William Cowper
- XVIII William Hayley
- XIX A village Choir
- XX The Cotton Mill
- XXI Rev Samuel Burder DD
- XXII An early Methodist Plan
- XXIII Rev John Leifchild DD
- XXIV The Leifchild memorial DStone
- XXV Rev John Hayter Cox
- XXVI The Conder Family Vault
- XXVII The Independent Chapel, interior
- XXVIII Rev John Harris and the memorial Tablet
- XXIX Cross Street Infant School
- XXX Rev William Upton

XXXI	Rev William Braden
XXXII	Rev William Urwick MA
XXXII	The British School, Spencer Street
XXXIV	The Diaconate of the Independent Chapel circa 1887
XXXV	Sunday School Extension Memorial Stone
XXXVI	The Independent Chapel, decorated interior, circa 1890
XXXVII	Portrait of Rev William Urwick and the Memorial Tablet
XXXVIII	Rev William Carson
XXXIX	Trinity Congregational Church, exterior and Architects' original drawing
XL	Trinity Congregational Church, interior views
XLI	The same
XLII	Bricket Wood Congregational Church
XLIII	Chiswell Green Congregational Church
XLIV	Central St Albans in 1962 (map)
XLV	South West view of St Albans Abbey circa 1911 and a close up view of the neighbourhood in 1962
XLVI	Map of St Albans 1822



ST ALBANS ABBEY

The first Congregational Church met
in the Abbey about the year 1650.

(From an old print in the possession of
the Independent Chapel.

Engraved and printed by J Hassell)

Plate II

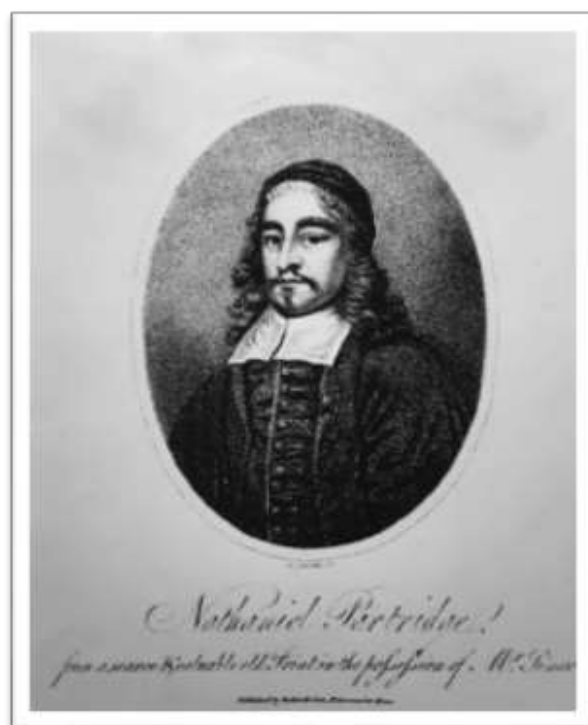


Plate III



ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, ST ALBANS

Rev Nathaniel Partridge ministered
here from 1657 to 1662



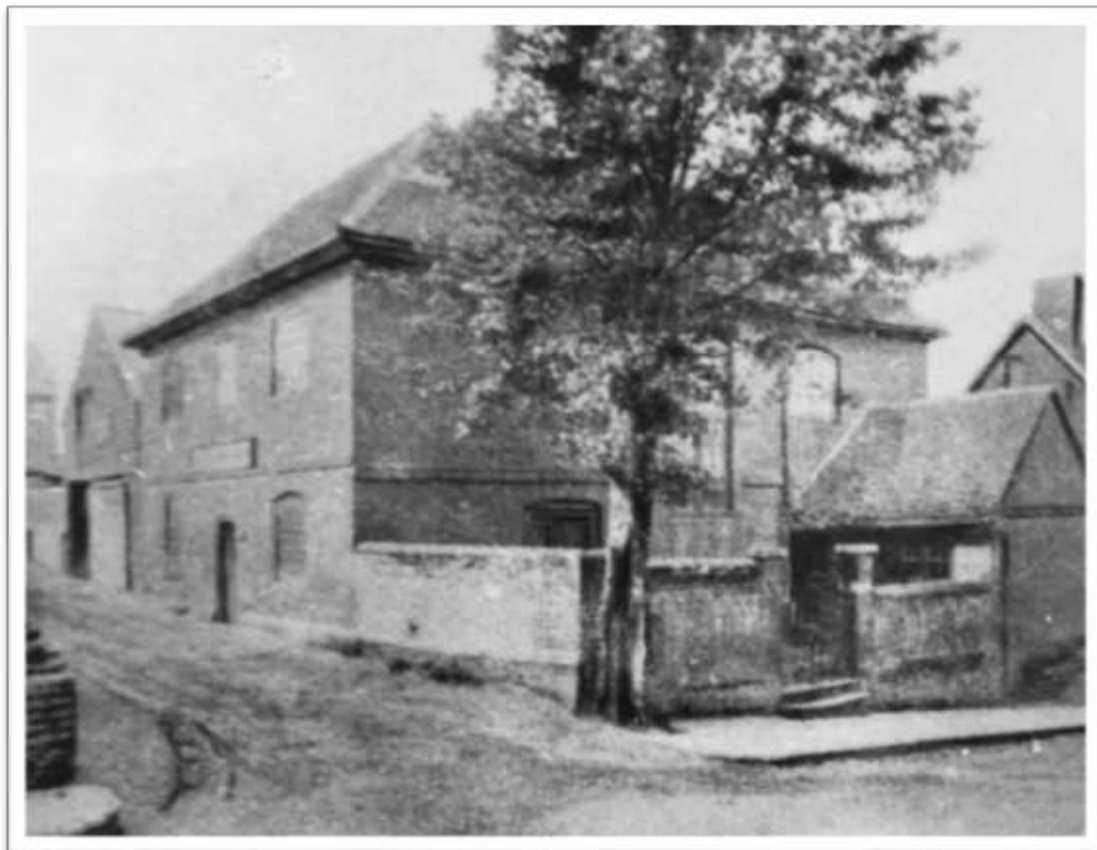
ST PETER'S CHURCH



REV ISAAC WATTS DD

Engraved by Robert Sears, 53, Paternoster Row,
from the original painting in the possession of
Mr Edward Smith, Finsbury Square...1834.

As a man of learning, preacher, teacher
and hymn-writer, Isaac Watts
was probably the most
influential of the early
nonconformist divines



Chapel of the Old Presbyterian Meeting
Dagnal Street.... erected 1697
(From an old photograph in possession of the
Independent Chapel, Spicer Street)

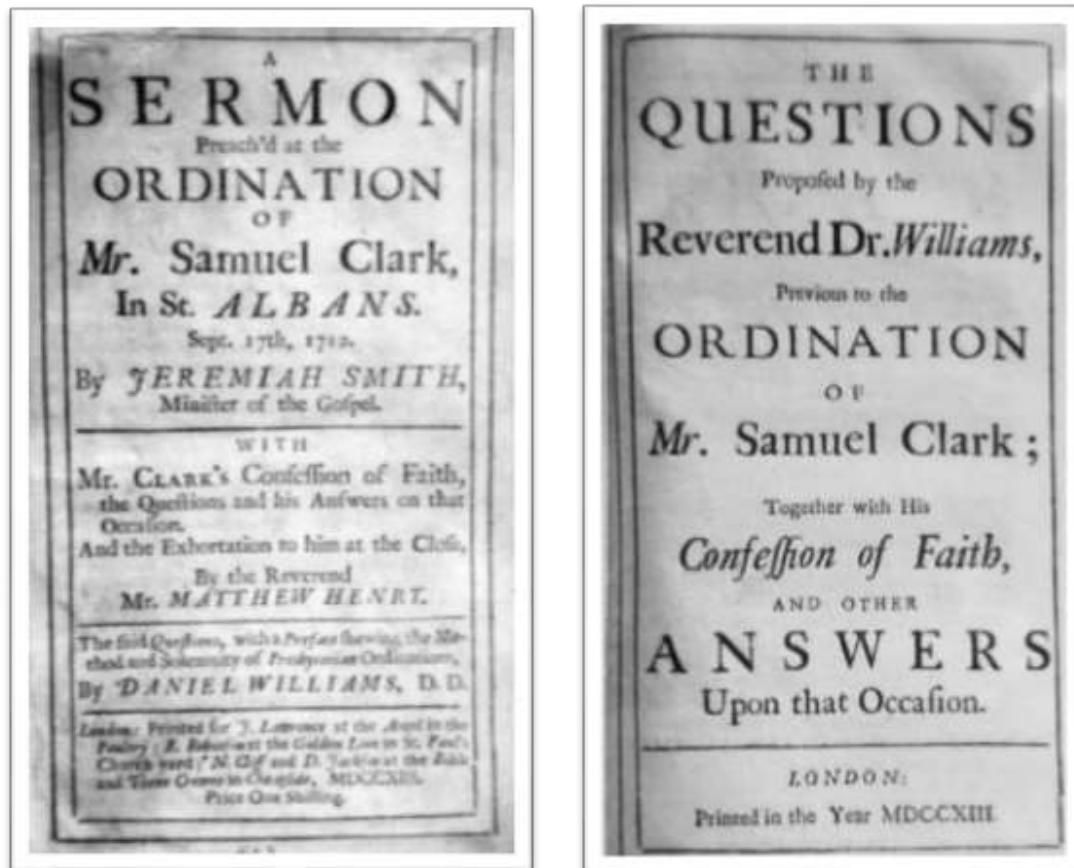


The old chapel, from a drawing made
by FG Kitton and published in the
Herts Advertiser & St Albans Times,
9th May 1896

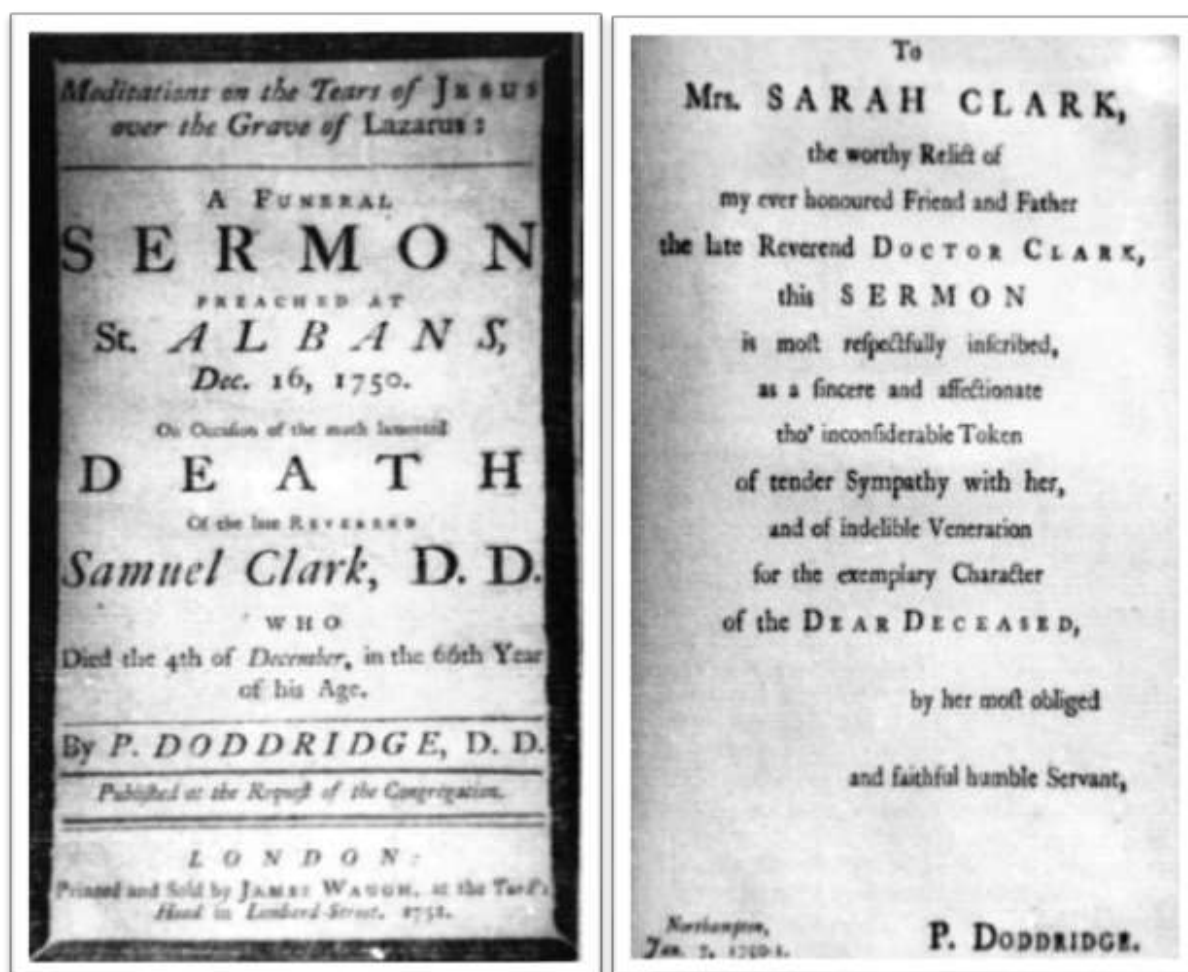


The Old Chapel In Lower Dagnall Street
showing its west face, as seen from
the burial ground behind the
Independent Chapel
Spicer Street.

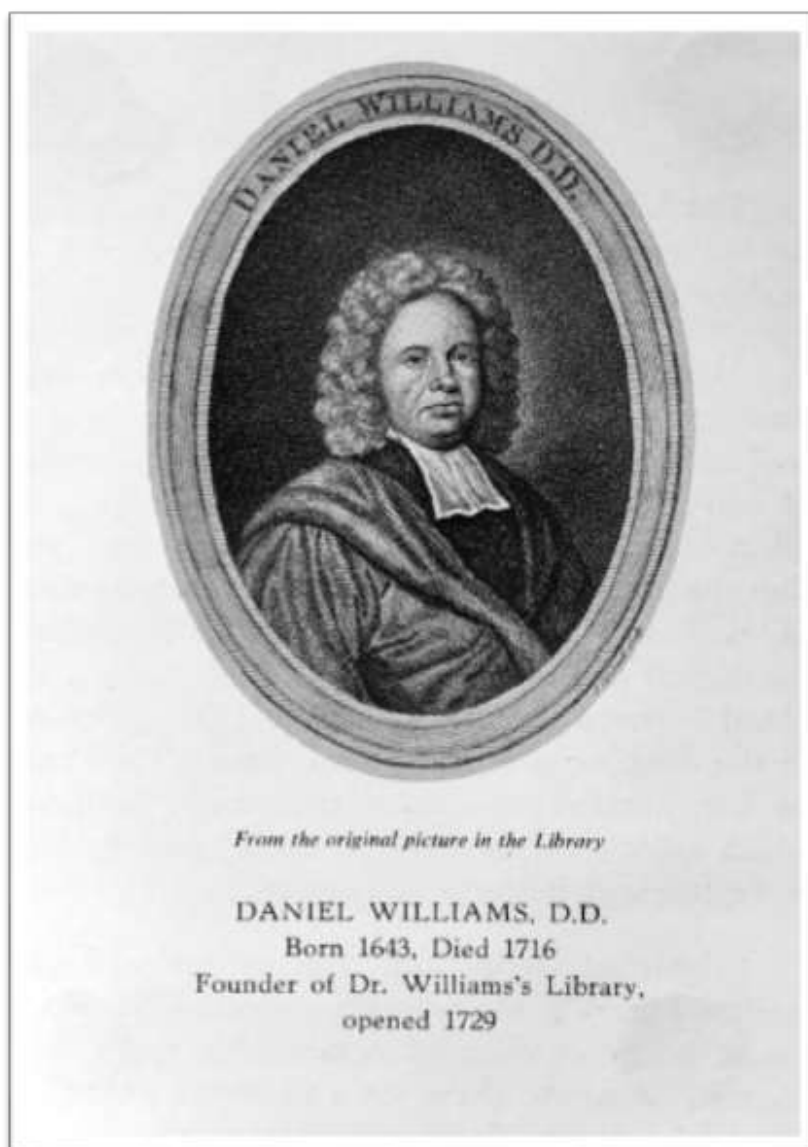
(Note the old cottages on the left)



A full account of the ordination service of the Rev Samuel Clark was published in 1713; this account included the sermon preached by the Rev Jeremiah Smith and the questions asked by the Rev Daniel Williams DD.



Facsimile of the title page of the
sermon preached by Rev Dr Doddridge
on the occasion of the funeral of
Rev Dr Clark, together with the preacher's dedication



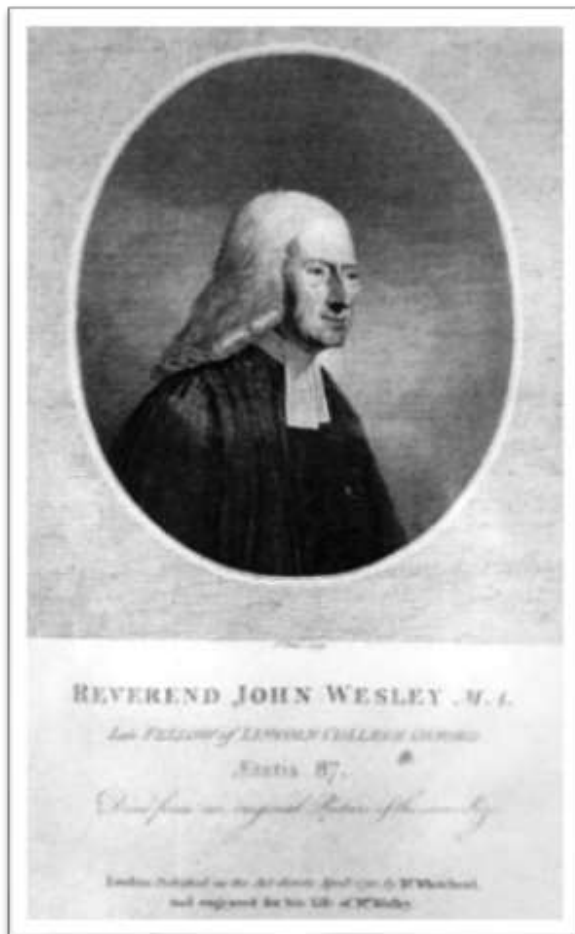
Dr Williams put the questions at the
ordination service of Samuel Clark,
17th September, 1712.



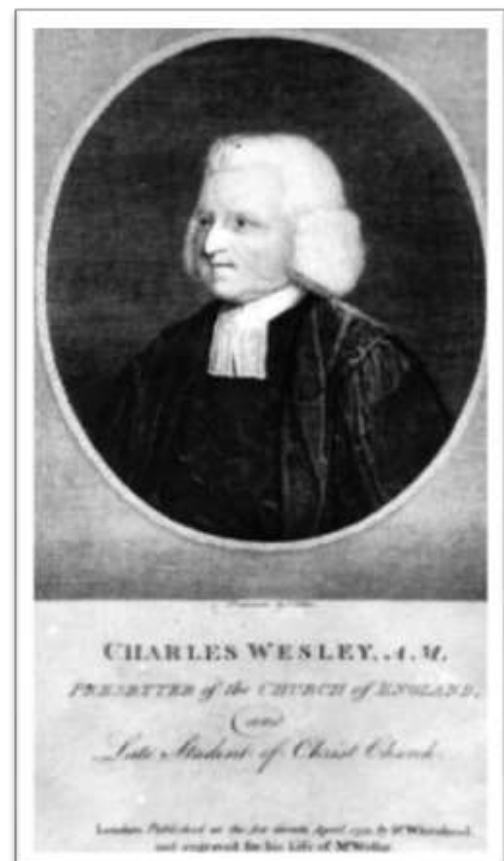
DR PHILIP DODDERIDGE

(From an old print in the St Albans Library.
Engraved by Josh Baker, Islington)

LEADERS OF THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL



These portraits of the
Wesleys were specially
engraved by I Fittler
for Dr J Whitehead's
"Life of the Rev John Wesley, MA"
London 1793



LEADERS OF THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL



The Rev George Whitefield BA
1714-1770
(Engraved by J Cochran)

The Reverend
John William Fletcher
(born: Jean Guillaume de la Flechere)

Vicar of Madeley, Shropshire

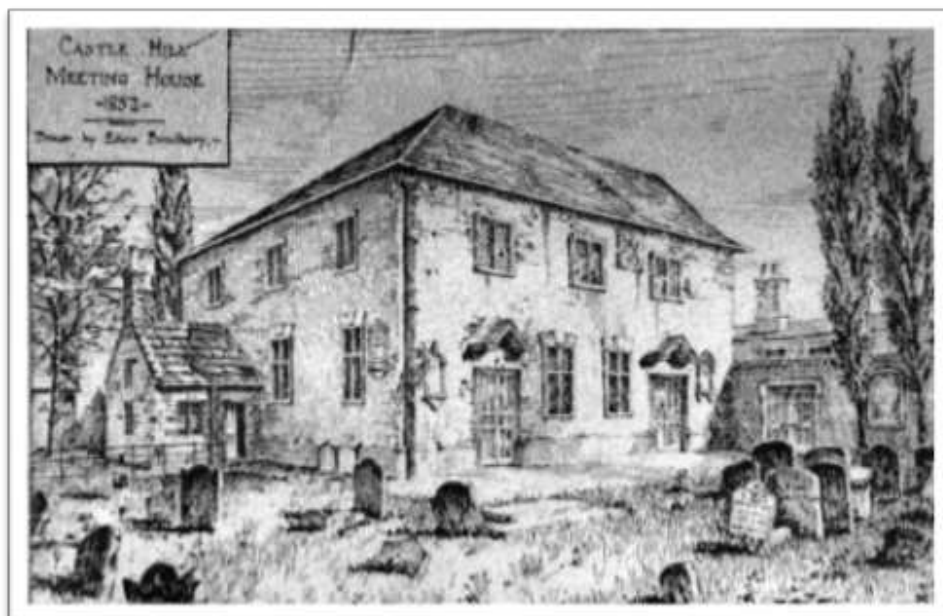
Wesley's designated successor

1729 -1785

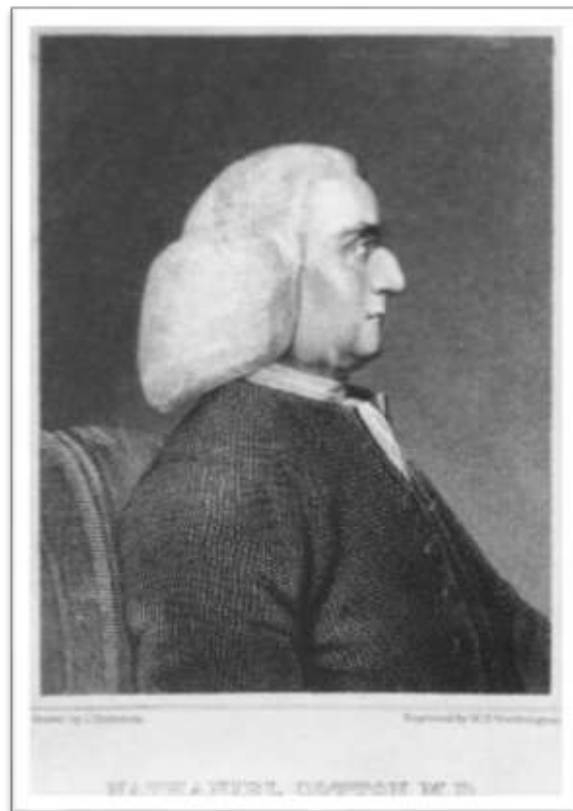




Castle Hill Church - 1961



A similar view of the chapel
from a drawing made by
Edwin Bradbury in 1852



The "Collegium Insanorum" as it appeared in 1910.
This was Dr Nathaniel Cotton's private hospital.
(Photo: E Stanley Kent)



WILLIAM COWPER

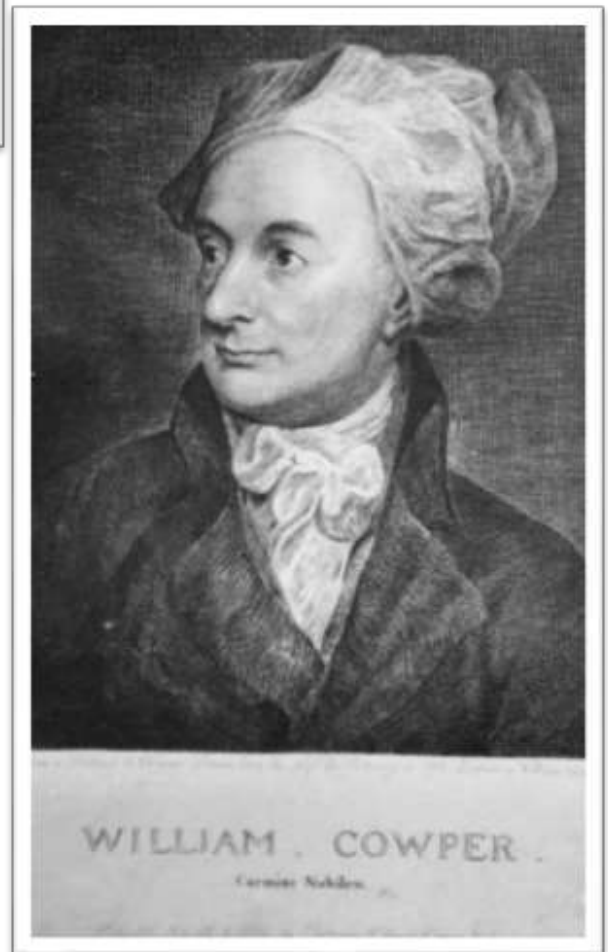
Drawn from life by
T Lawrence RA in 1793
and engraved by
W Blake in 1802

WILLIAM COWPER

From a portrait in crayons drawn from
life by Romney in 1792

Engraved by W Blake 1802

Published 5th November 1802 by J
Johnson,
St Paul's Church-Yard, London





William Hayley

William Cowper's Biographer

(Engraved by Thos Holloway)



A VILLAGE CHOIR

by
Thomas Webster
(1800 – 1886)

This picture, painted about 1840, could well represent
Dagnall Lane Chapel in the time of
the Rev Philip Vincent Coleman

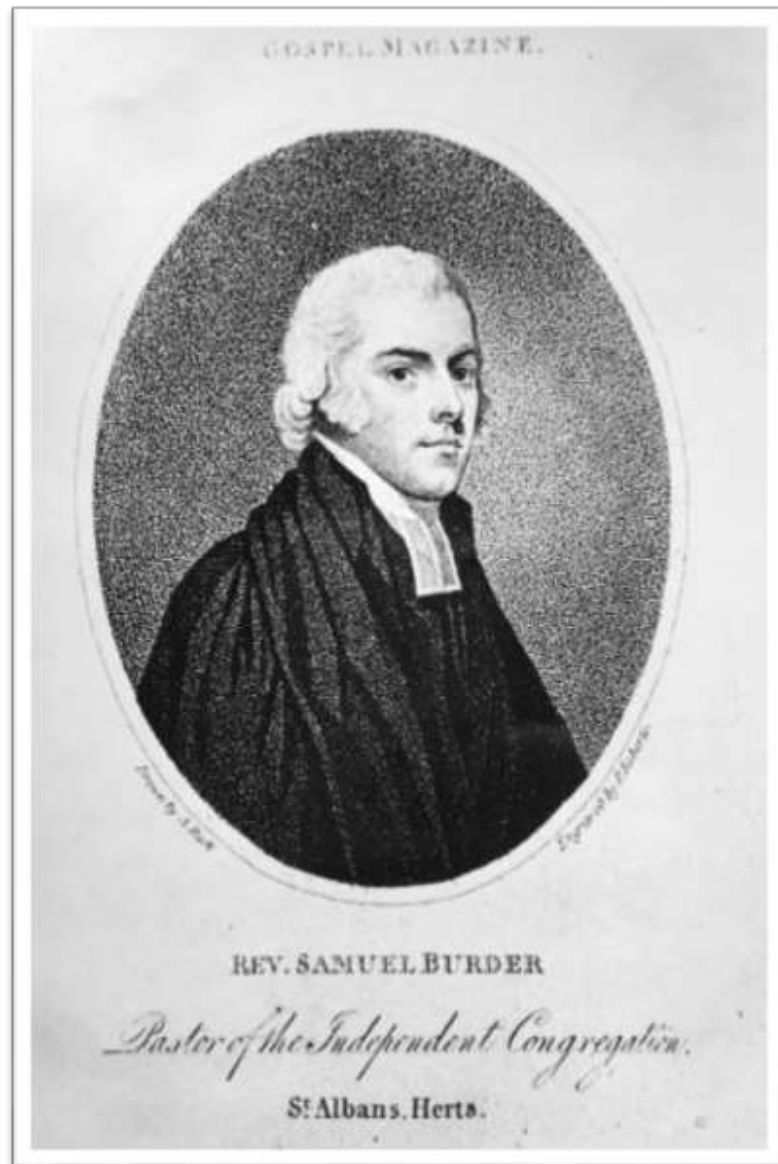
The original painting is in the Victoria & Albert Museum



THE COTTON MILL

The Church met in this building
for a few months during 1794/5
The mill was demolished in 1860

(From a sketch by M Evans
in the possession of the Independent Chapel,
Spicer Street)



REV SAMUEL BURDER DD

Minister of the congregation in
Long Butt Lane from 1797 to 1808

(From an old print in St Albans Library
Drawn by A Buck and engraved by P Roberts for the Gospel Magazine)

A

Plan for the Preachers in the Luton Circuit.

From October 24, 1813, to April 3, 1814.

1813-14.		Oct.	November.	December.	January.	February.	March.	Apr.	Preacher's Name.																
Names of Places.	Hours of Preaching.	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	31
Luton	10 1/2 x 5 1/2	3	12	2	3	1	5	7	11	1	3	1	3	1	11	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3
Market Street	10 1/2 x 6	10	1	11	2	12	1	6	3	7	2	9	1	5	3	11	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	
Harpden	10 1/2 x 5 1/2	13	1	5	1	6	2	12	1	11	3	10	4	8	1	12	1	7	1	13	1	5	1	3	
St. Albans	10 1/2 x 6	2	6	3	8	1	14	10	13	1	5	3	6	3	7	10	12	1	8	1	10	2	13	4	
Tetworth	10 x 2	2	14	1	13	3	12	2	5	6	4	3	11	1	12	1	7	14	13	2	6	1	4	5	
Dunstable	2 x 6	14	13	1	12	1	11	13	5	3	14	2	11	1	14	4	6	12	13	1	12	3	11		
Dagnall	9 1/2	3	12	2	4	5	13	3	6	1	14	1	12	4	6	2	13	1	14	3	4	12	6	1	
Hathall	2	3	12	2	4	5	13	3	6	1	14	1	12	4	6	2	13	1	14	3	4	12	6	1	
Hempstead	6	3	12	2	4	5	13	3	6	1	14	1	12	4	6	2	13	1	14	3	4	12	6	1	
Charlton	2	12	2	13	2	11	1	14	1	12	4	6	2	13	1	14	3	4	12	6	1	5	1		
Longrave	9 1/2 x 6	15	2	7	1	13	3	7	2	12	1	11	3	14	2	13	1	5	3	14	2	7	1	11	
Keworth	2	3	12	2	4	5	13	3	6	1	14	1	12	4	6	2	13	1	14	3	4	12	6	1	
Watford	10 1/2	9	4	10	8	5	4	9	1	10	5	4	9	1	10	8	5	4	9	1	10	8	5	4	
None	11 1/2	8	5	9	10	8	5	9	1	10	5	4	9	1	10	8	5	4	9	1	10	8	5	4	

N. B. N. used for Kingswood Collection.

c. for extra Collection.

s. for Sacrament, and
t. for Love Feast.

Quarterly Meetings,
January 4th, and
April 5th.

An early Methodist plan showing the name of
John Leifchild
(pere)

(Taken from the photograph of an old plan in
"Methodism in the City of the Proto-Martyr
and the St Albans circuit" – 1907,
by the late Rev J George Greaves,
circuit minister)



REV JOHN LEIFCHILD DD

From a drawing by Baugniet 1854
engraved by W Dickes



The Leifchild Memorial Stone

in Abney Park Cemetery

Stoke Newington

Grave No 18328



REV JOHN HAYTER COX

Minister of the Independent Congregation
in St Albans from 1809 – 1814

Spicer Street Chapel was built
during his pastorate

(From a photograph of an old
print in the possession of the
Hadleigh, Suffolk, Congregational Church)



THE CONDER FAMILY VAULT
Abney Park Cemetery, Stoke Newington
Grave No 14852

UNDERNEATH ARE LAID IN SURE AND BLESSED HOPE OF
THE RESSURECTION UNTO ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST THE MORTAL REMAINS OF

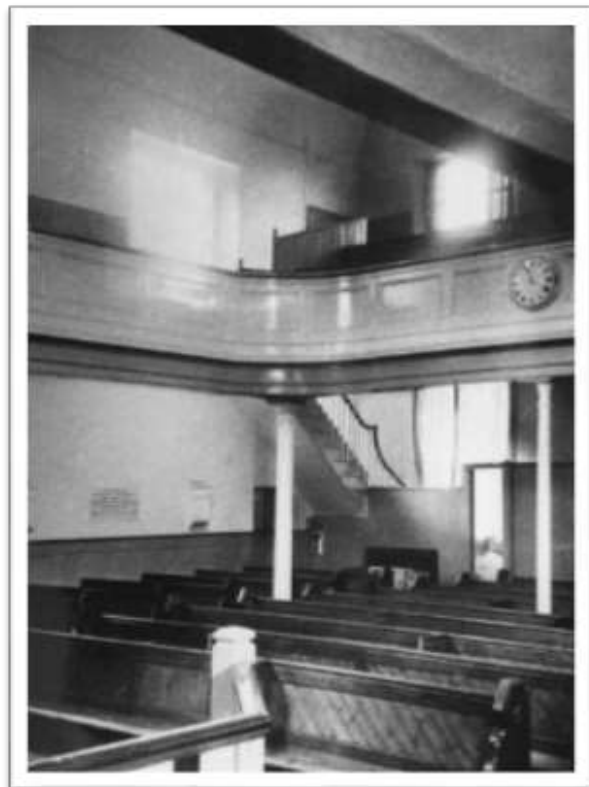
JOSIAH CONDER

AUTHOR OF THE MODERN TRAVELLER AND OF NUMEROUS
WORKS IN THEOLOGY POETRY CRITISISM AND GENERAL
LITERATURE EDITOR FOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS OF THE
ECLECTIC REVIEW AND FOR A STILL LONGER PERIOD THE
PATRIOTIC NEWSPAPER TO A STEADFAST CHAMIONSHIP OF THE
PRINCIPLES OF EVANGELICAL NONCONFORMITY HE JOINED AN
ENTIRE CATHOLICITY OF SPIRIT AND HIS LABORIOUS PEN
AND VERSATILE TALENTS WEWRE CONSECRATWD TO THE CAUSE
OF TRUTH HIS COUNTRY AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST
THIS MONUMENT IS ERRECTED BY ATTACHED FRIENDS
TO COMMEMORATE HIS CHARACTER AND LABOURS

BORN SEPTEMBER 17 1789 DIED DECEMBER 27 1855
"YE SERVE THE LORD CHRIST" Col 3:24

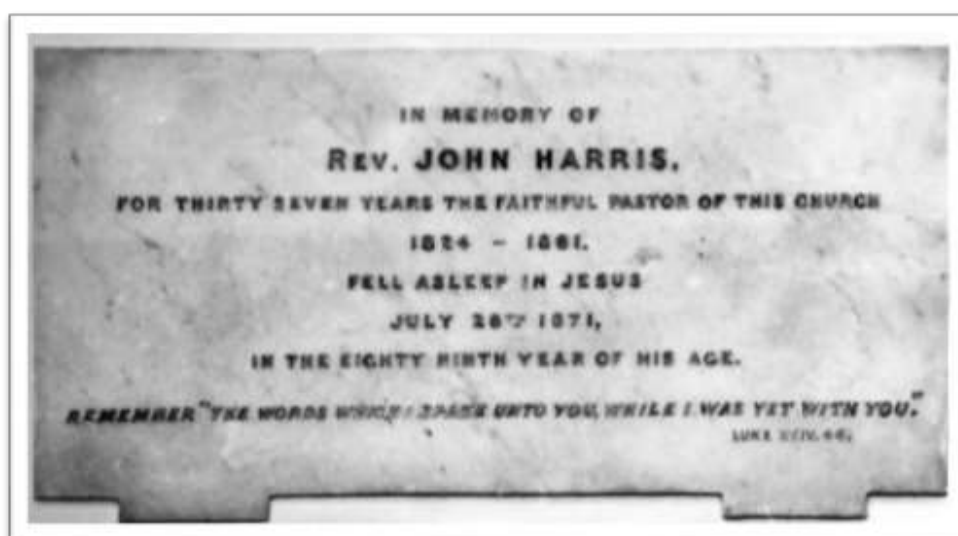


THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL
Spicer Street
Interior views





REV JOHN HARRIS
Drawn by JH Buckingham 1855
(From an old print in
the possession of the
Independent Chapel
Spicer Street)



The Mural Tablet in the Independent Chapel, Spicer Street



CROSS STREET INFANT SCHOOL

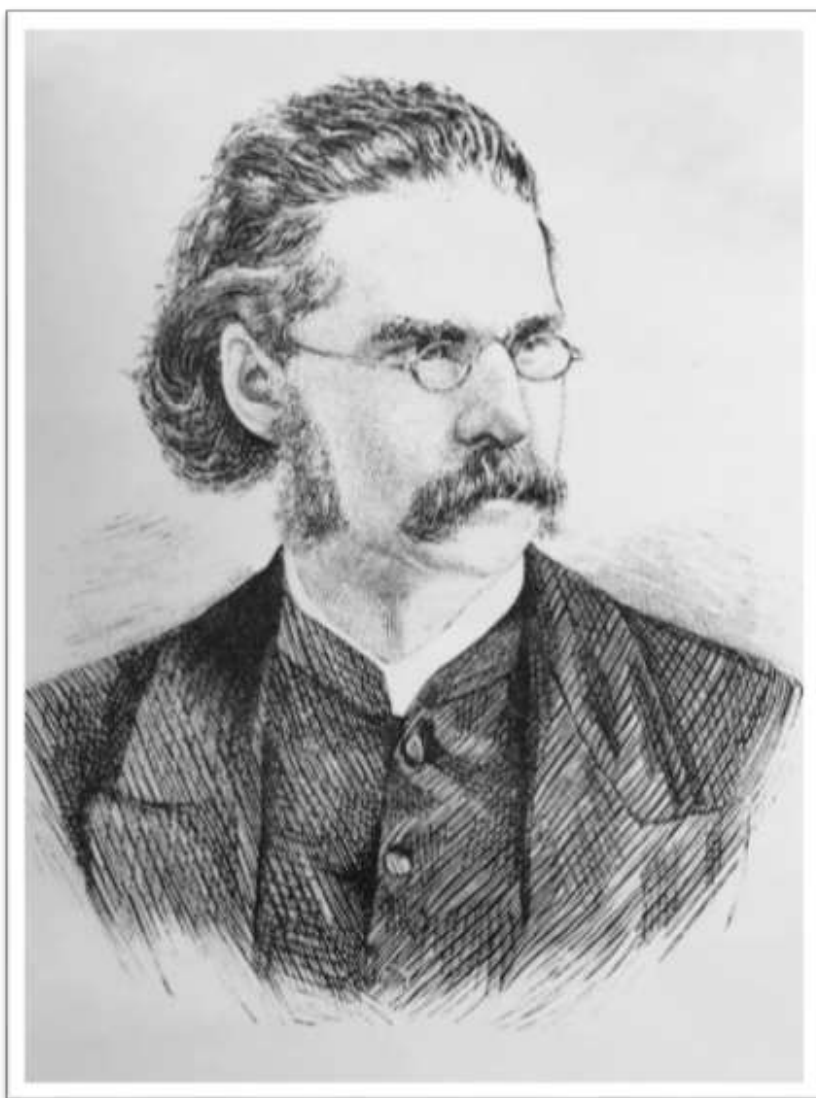
This institution functioned
from 1836 to 1888



REV WILLIAM UPTON

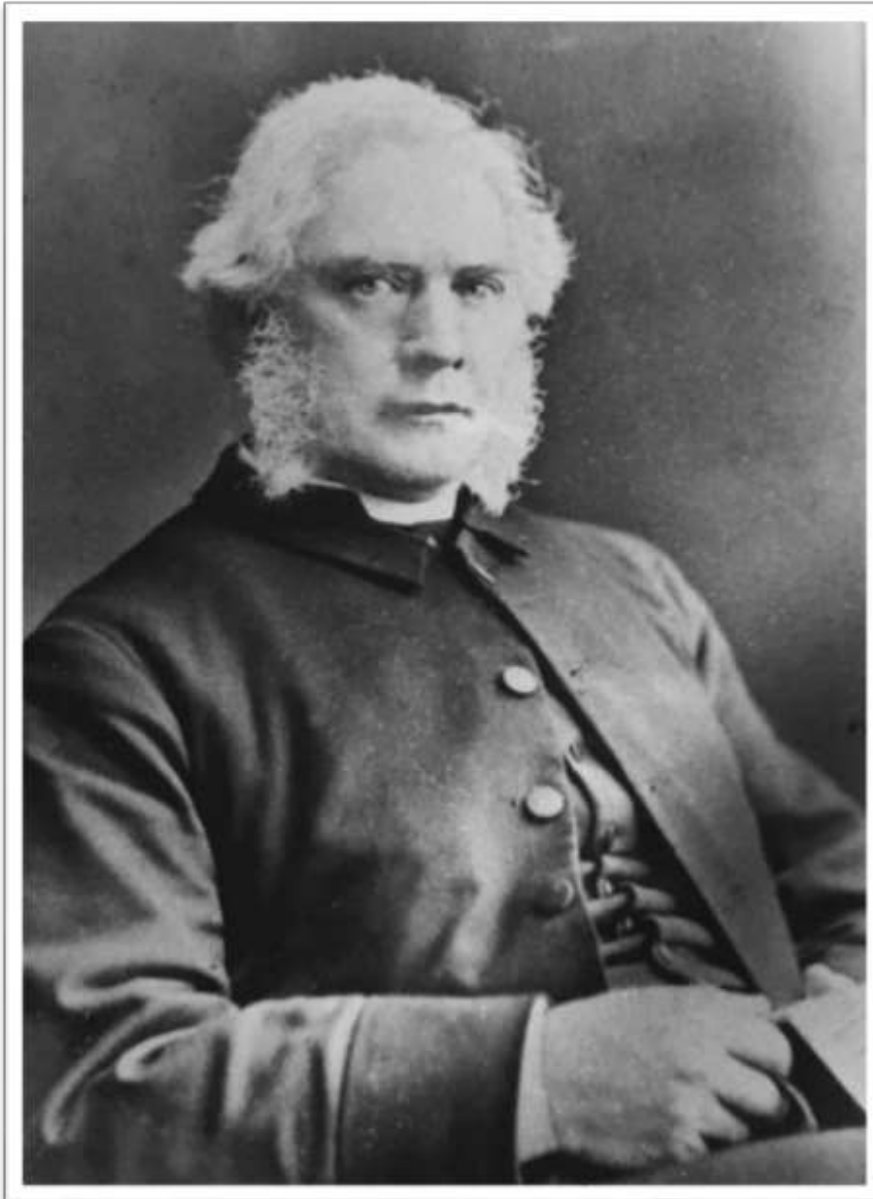
Minister of the Baptist Church in
Upper Dagnal Street
(1821 – 1865)

(From a photograph kindly
lent by the Deacons)



REV WILLIAM BRADEN
(1861 – 1866)

From an old print in the possession of
the Independent Chapel
Spicer Street



REV WILLIAM URWICK MA
(1880 – 1895)

From a photograph in the possession of
the Independent Chapel
Spicer Street



THE

BRITISH SCHOOL
Spencer Street

The small white mark to the left
of the door is a stone bearing the
following inscription

THIS STONE WAS LAID BY
R KENTISH ESQ, MAYOR
AUGUST 27th 1846

(This building has recently been altered
substantially, the stone having been removed
and the doorway changed)



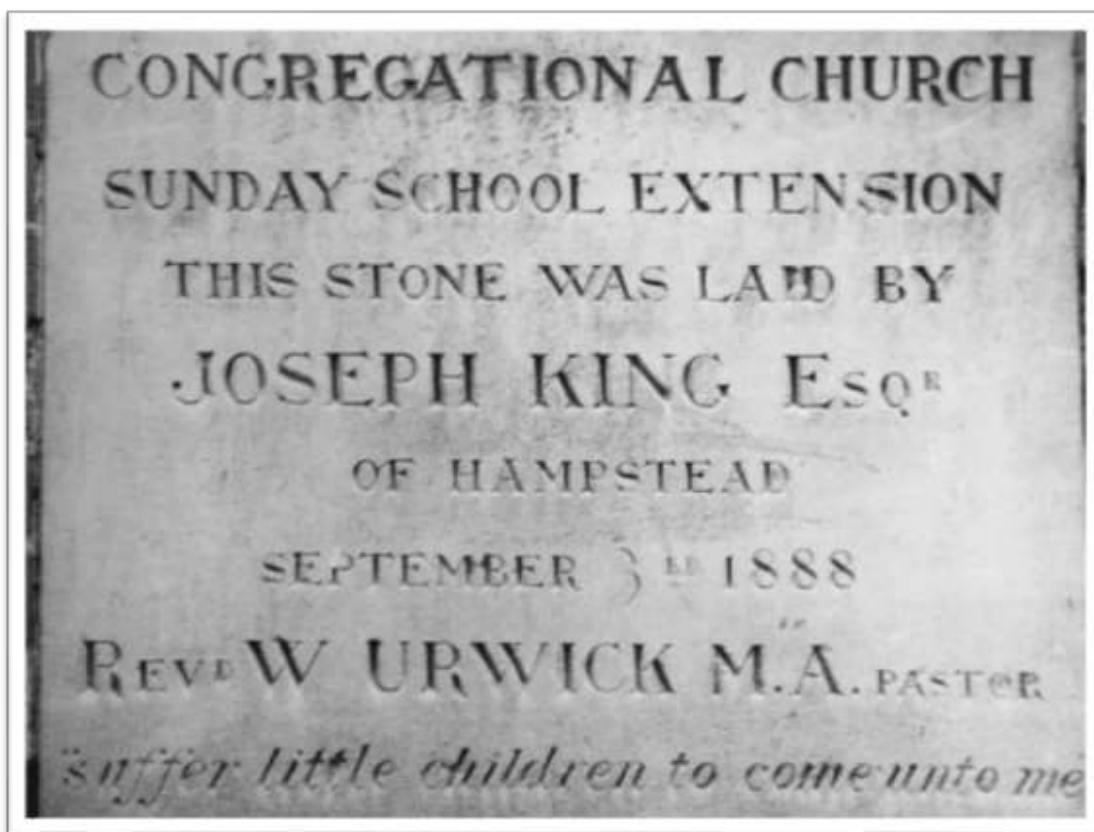
THE DIACONATE (c.1887)

Back row: George Slade, Robert Love,
Frank Arnold, Isaac Ironmonger

Front row: George Kiff, John Slimmon, Rev Wm Urwick,
George Allin, Edward Nash

(From a photograph in the possession of
the Independent Chapel)

SPICER STREET CHAPEL
SUNDAY SCHOOL EXTENSION 1888



In accordance with the custom of the times,
Mr King was presented with a trowel. The trowel bore the inscription:-

Congregational Sunday School, St Albans.
Foundation Stone of enlarged Buildings
Laid by JOSEPH KING ESQ, Hampstead
Sept 3 1888
Mark 10:14*

(See Urwick W "Centenary memorial 1894" page 75)

“

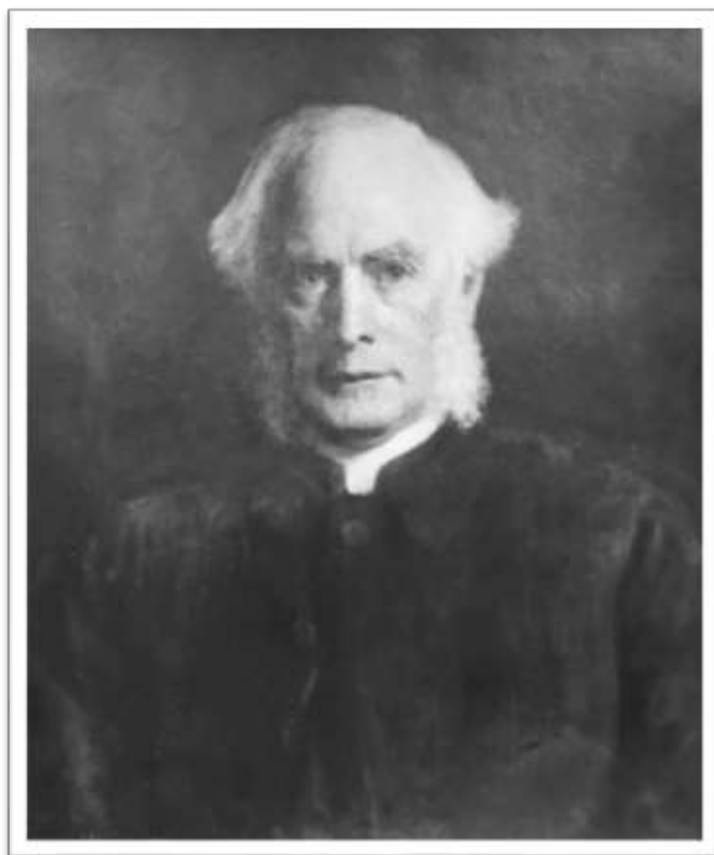
* "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and
forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."



An interior view of the Independent Chapel
Spicer Street, about 1890

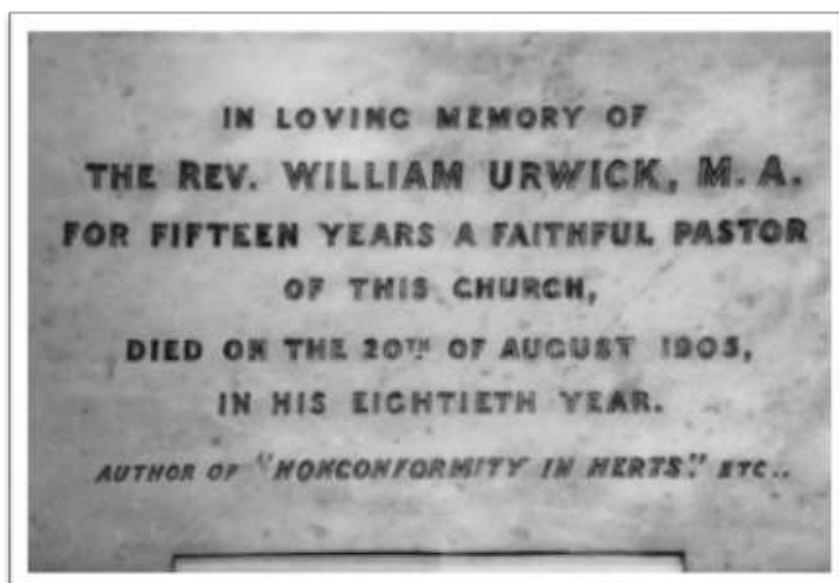
The original photograph, taken by Mr Barnard, is in possession of the Independent Chapel. It was taken for, and presented by, Mrs Patterson. The original photograph is inscribed:-

“Decorating superintended by Mrs Campbell of Argyle house, Manor Road;
grapes presented by Mr McIlraith of Campbellfield, St Stephens”

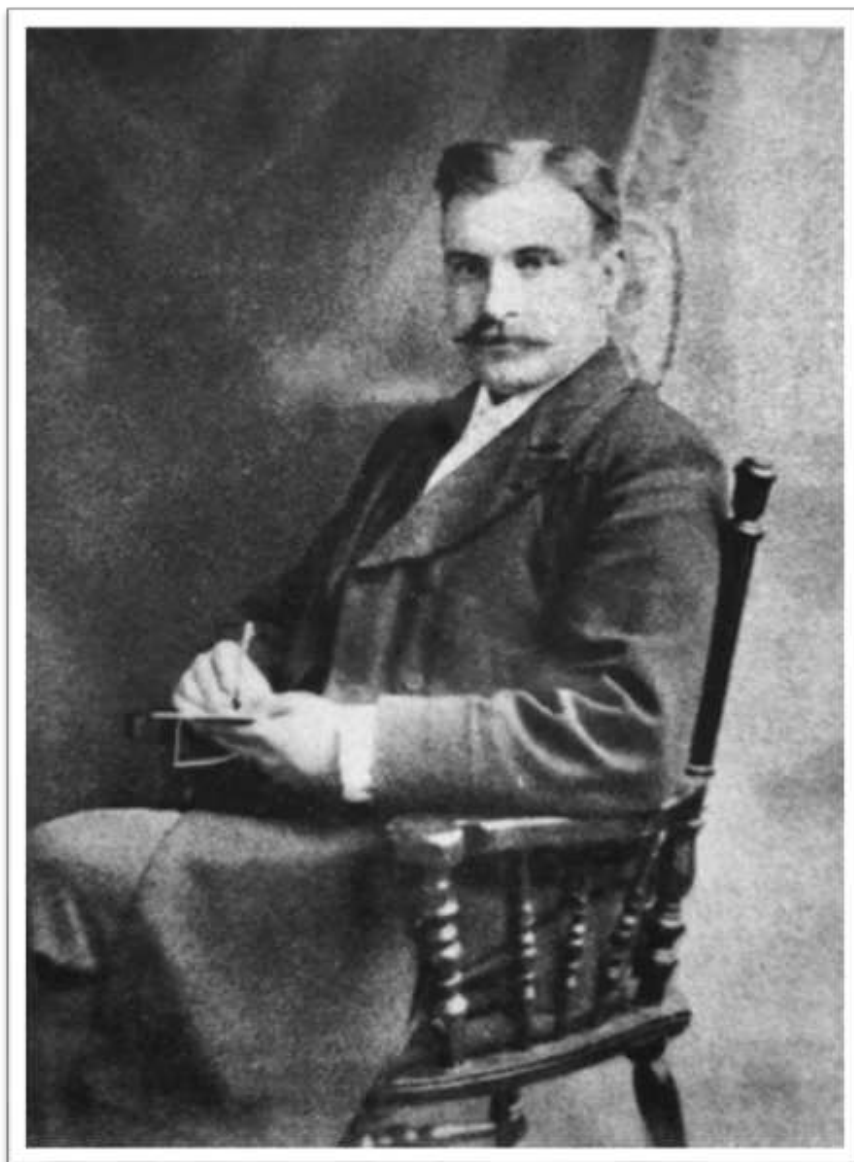


REV WILLIAM URWICK MA

(From a portrait painted in 1890 by his nephew, Mr Walter Urwick)



The Mural Tablet in the Independent Chapel, Spicer Street



REV WILLIAM CARSON

Spicer Street	1896-1903
Trinity	1903-1906

Rev William Carson "built"
Trinity Congregational Church

TRINITY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH ST ALBANS

Trinity Congregational
Church The architects'
original sketch

From a print in the
St Albans Library

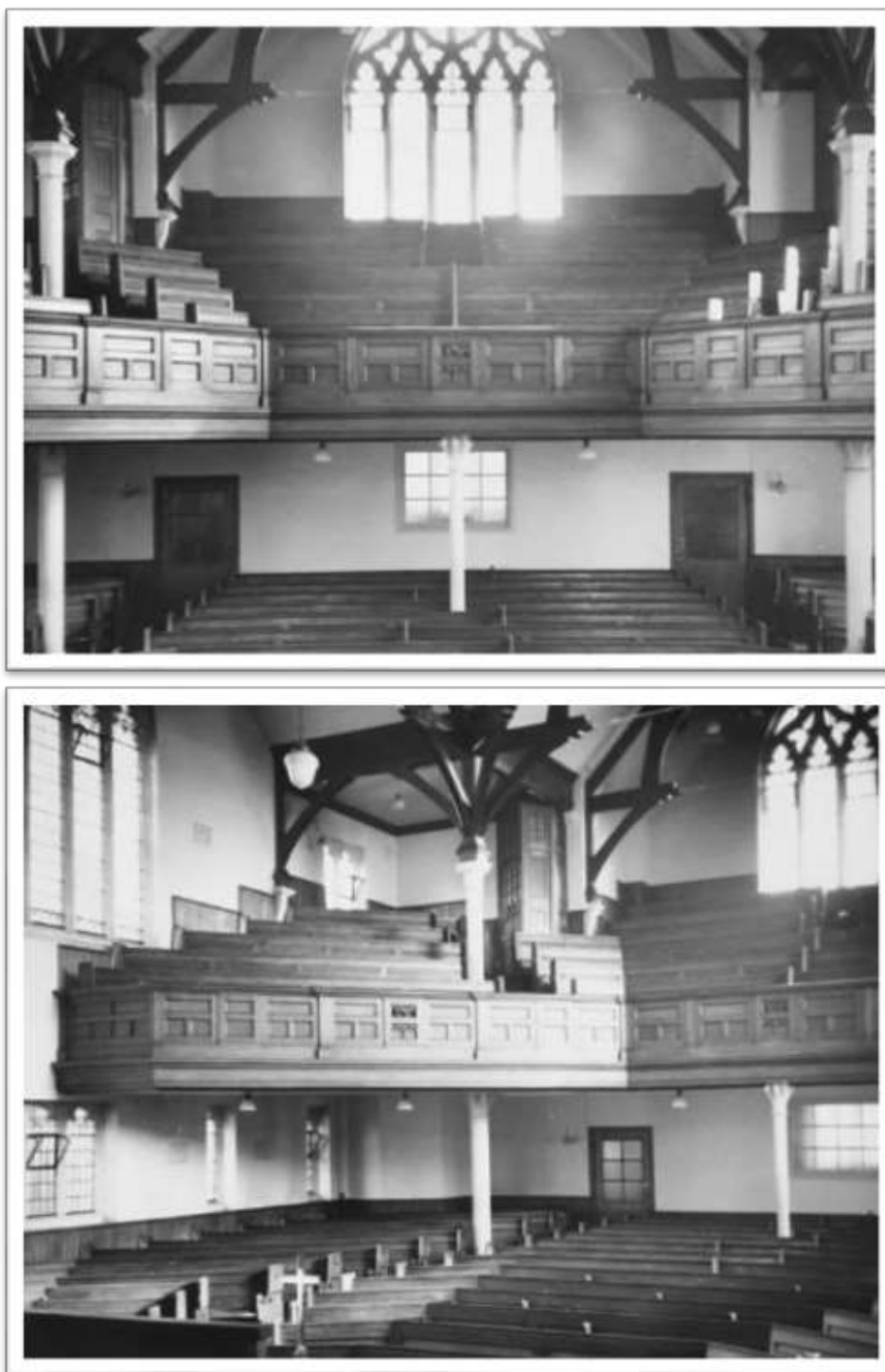


Opened 1903
The Rev William Carson
Minister



TRINITY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
ST ALBANS

Interior views



TRINITY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
ST ALBANS

Interior views



BRICKET WOOD CHAPEL

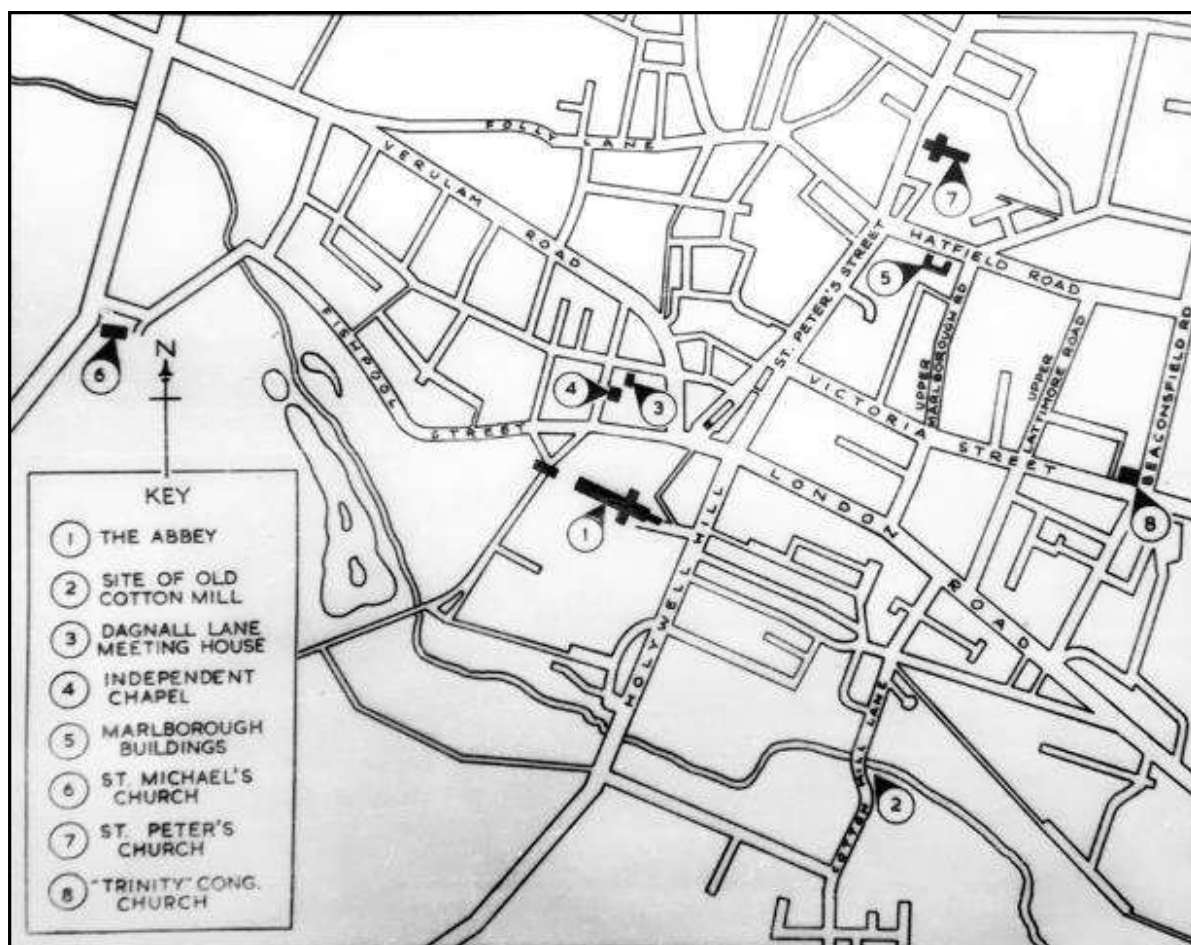
Opened for worship on Sunday
10th November 1895, by the
Rev William Carson



CHISWELL GREEN

Founded 1957 and sponsored by Trinity Congregational Church

Opened for worship – 27th January 1962



Central St Albans in 1962

Drawn by KJ Townsend

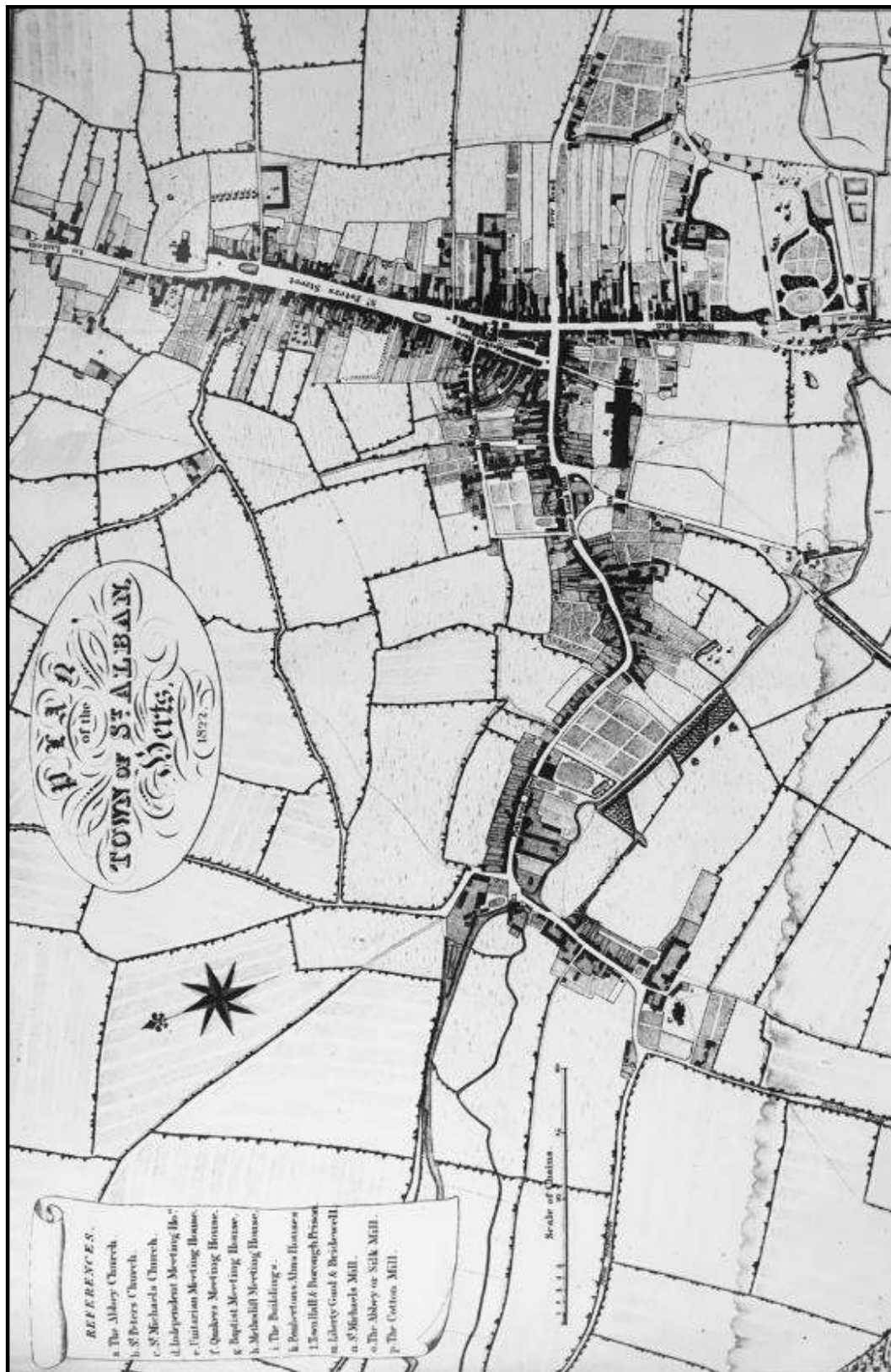


The small building in the foreground to the left of the picture was the original Methodist chapel which was opened for worship in 1794.

Dr Leifchild states "In the evenings I attended the little Methodist Chapel near the end of the Abbey"



A closer view of the neighbourhood today shows that the outer wall of the chapel and steps are still to be seen but the building itself has been demolished



Map of St Albans 1822