

Providence Chapel

Park Lane

Blunham 1842-1992

Thy flock, thine own peculiar care,
Though now they seem to roam uneyed,
Are led and driven only where
They best and safest may abide.

Ambrose Serle

Foreword

The enclosed is by no means as accurate and smooth-flowing as could be desired. It is capable of being improved upon.¹ There is a wealth of material, particularly from the Old Meeting (from which the cause sprang²) which has come to light of recent years, and much of the information containing sermons, obituaries etc. of ministers and members of 'Providence' Park Lane is tucked away in volumes of the *Gospel Standard* and *Christian's Pathway*. Occasionally one comes across them. There should be somewhere a sermon or two of Edward Short, Pastor at the end of the last century. He originated from Ivinghoe and went to Over in Cambridgeshire, either before or after he was at Blunham. Although from a Westoning family of that name, Mr Sidney Short, my father's first wife's brother, married a descendant or relative of Edward Short, who had gone from Ivinghoe to work at Gibbon's shop, forerunner of Evelyn's in Luton, always associated with Strict Baptists. Sidney's only son is named Edward.

The flute that used to belong to the Sims family, and was used to start the singing is, I believe, in the possession of Mr Trevor Scott, General Secretary of the Bethesda Fund, linked with the Gospel Standard Societies.

It is difficult to prepare this account because one cannot just start at 1842 and ignore the roots common to two separate worshipping congregations going back to Bunyan's time. This common history, and the events leading up to the breakaway cause are essential ingredients of any impartial survey. It also cannot be ignored that Mr William Abbott, Pastor of the Old Meeting for 38 years, was a Strict and Particular Baptist. I found this out after typing pages 6&7, which accordingly should be read in the light of this more recent information, already reflected in the comments on page 16 and its footnote. A specimen of his many contributions to the *Gospel Herald* is at page 17. He was evidently a very godly man.

Among personalities I have not dealt with is Mr Daniel Smart of Welwyn (whose pulpit was originally that of Huntington, and which still stands in Welwyn Evangelical Church) who ended his days at Cranbrook, where he preached in a chapel pre-fabricated in London by Huntington's hearers for Isaac Beeman, and taken down [to Cranbrook] by wagon and erected on the spot. Isaac Beeman and Huntington did not see altogether eye-to-eye about the project of building, but finally Huntington said, "Anyhow, Isaac, anyhow, if so be, we do but have a place". Our old Pastor at Westoning, Joseph Field, recounted (in my hearing) as a boy hearing his father say he was present at Daniel Smart's last sermon, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing.' II Tim 4: 6-8. The farm labourers stood in their smock coats leaning upon their staves, and the tears coursed down their cheeks. They knew it was the last time they would hear their Pastor's voice. Daniel Smart was Independent — Huntingtonian — greatly loved and esteemed in Gospel Standard Strict Baptist circles. I would also like to have found out more about Mr Tite of Potton. I am not sure whether he preceded Mr Blackstock (who came from Gadsby's church in Manchester and afterwards settled for a time at Gower Street). A Mr Tite is mentioned along with George Murrell and others, as not being clear in the doctrine of Christ's true, proper, and eternal Sonship, but I am by no means sure that they refer to the same person.

There is a deficiency in the material as to the dates and names of the few Pastors at Providence: Thompson 1842, Fraser 1852, Rickett — no real settlement, and Edward Short — at least until 1894, but when did he commence?

¹ The whole document was revised (with minimal alteration to Thomas Rutt's original text) in May 2002 by Colin Easton, Wallington, Surrey.

² Providence, Park Lane, Blunham.

There is also uncertainty regarding the history of the present building, and what was the doctrinal foundation or trust arrangements for the breakaway church and chapel. The present Trust Deed dates from 1883, based on the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith. John Gadsby headed the list of founder trustees.

Acknowledgement is gratefully made to the Bedford County Record Office, and to the Pastor and deacons of the Old Meeting, for access to and permission to reproduce extracts from old church records.

Thomas E Rutt
Westoning
May 1992

Blunham Strict Baptist Chapel 1842-1992

A few members separated from Blunham Old Meeting in 1842. They 'wanted to have a man that preached the doctrines of free and sovereign grace'. Mr Hinds the Pastor would sometimes ask a 'man of truth' to come to preach. They believed him to be a good man, but he 'seldom preached any point of doctrine'. They wanted to hear Mr Septimus Sears, but Mr Hinds would not allow this. The final break appeared to come when the church decided that only the Pastor and deacons should have a voice in deciding who should minister. Mr Hinds left shortly afterwards and went to Mildenhall in Suffolk. Then Cornelius Morrell came for 10 years until 1852, when William Abbott came as Pastor and stayed for 38 years. The Old Meeting House church book contains an interesting history of the church by Mr Abbott written in 1852, and reproduced below:

Mr Abbott's History of the Church (Old Meeting) to 1852

The Gospel was probably introduced into this village in the time of the celebrated John Bunyan, although there is no distinct record of the fact. But from the history of the Church of Christ at the Old Meeting House Bedford, it appears that in 1709, the Rev. Mr. Thompson, a member of the Church, having preached for some time with approbation, was appointed to supply the Meeting at Blunham one Lord's Day in a month. And in 1724 a number of members were dismissed to the newly-formed church at Blunham. And after him seven others supplied, namely Messrs. Wright, Curtis, Moors, Nutter, Percy, Chaplow and Agges. Mr Usley was the first settled Pastor, June 19 1724, when the Church was formed. Eight or ten members were dismissed from the Church at Bedford, and some others from the Church at St Neots, to this newly-formed Church. Also some of the members joining at Bedford were baptised here.

At the time of the formation of the church, the congregation used to meet in a barn on the same spot where the present Meeting House stands: it was fitted up for worship, having partly pews, and partly forms, and was well attended. In Oct. 1725 at the church meeting, Thomas Aspinall, Joseph Farr and Thomas Hubbard were chosen Deacons. Nov. 20 Mr Usley was installed into the pastoral office by fasting and prayer, by the church. At the end of the years 1725, the church numbered 36. It appears to have begun with 21 members. In the three following years, eleven people joined. June 18th 1730, Thomas Spring was chosen Deacon in the room of Thomas Aspinall, deceased. Up to the year 1737, seven more persons joined. Dec. 28th 1736, Thomas Craner of Broming was received into the Church by the mutual consent of the members. June 12th 1739, Mr Craner accepted a call to the pastoral office by the unanimous consent of the church, in the presence of Messrs. Gill — supposed to be Dr Gill — Simson, Boger, and other ministers. At a previous church meeting it was agreed that the Covenant drawn up by brother Craner should be inserted in the church book, and be signed by the Pastor, deacons, and members. This was done on the 6th day of April 1739.

Oct. 10th 1740, Francis Okeley was added to the church; and on the 24th, agreeable to the call of the church, he exercised his gifts before them to their satisfaction; and on the 31st, after a day of special fasting and prayer, he was set apart for the work of the ministry. The first person sent forth by this church into the ministry.

Sep. 28th 1741 the church gave leave to brother Woodward to preach at Cotton End. 1743: two deacons were chosen. Feb. 10th agreed that Mr Craner, the Pastor, should visit the church at Olney once in two months.

In 1751 it was deemed necessary to build a new Meeting House. Before commencing the work, they held a special church meeting, when all agreed to do something in this undertaking. One found the earth for the bricks on a piece of land in the village, and some did the carting; a Mr Perry of Moggerhanger did the bricklaying, and Mr Joseph Usher, grandfather of the present deacon, did the

carpenter's work. He joined the church in the year 1741. They cheerfully and actively set about the good work, and were able to clear the expenses without assistance from other churches. During the time the Chapel was in course of building, the congregation was privileged to meet at the great house in the park, through the Christian kindness of the Lady owning the property, Madam Bromsell, and who had a pew in the chapel, the one against the east window, and opposite the first door.

About February 1755, Mr Craner resigned the pastorate, and settled in London, at Red Cross Street. Mr Craner's ministry extended over a period of 17 years, during which time 46 persons joined and 33 died. £31.13s. were promised for providing a house for the Minister.

After Mr Craner's resignation, the pulpit was supplied by various ministers, till November 11th 1757, the church gave Mr Abraham Clarke a call to the pastoral office. On February 17th 1758, he was solemnly set apart³. He was a useful minister, and beloved by all, especially by the young. He kept a day school in the Meeting House. His prayer often was: "O Lord, keep us from sudden death". It however pleased the Lord to remove him very suddenly. He rose from his bed one Sabbath morning, partook of breakfast, conducted family worship, and about half past 9 o'clock he exchanged time for eternity. He was buried under the Table pew in the Chapel. 16 persons were added during the 11 years of Mr Clarke's ministry.

August 10th 1770 Mr Thomas Thomason after preaching to the people for more than two years, accepted a call to the pastorate. He commenced preaching May 27th 1768 and was settled May 1st 1771 by the assistance of Messrs. Chard, Coles, Davis, James, Hall and Pike. It was a solemn meeting. In 1776, after 8 years' ministry here, he was separated for inconsistent conduct. 20 persons were added during his pastorate and 'two dismissed in the character of a minister' — Jeremiah Lee to Irthlingborough, Northants. (Feb 24th 1771) and Mr Richard Emery to Over, Cambs. (March 14th 1773).

After the above painful occurrence, a more than ordinary spirit of prayer was poured out upon the people, and they were encouraged to hope that the Lord would appear for them, adopting the words 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise, when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.'

The people were supplied by the neighbouring ministers: Messrs. Evans of Biggleswade; Ward of Spaldwick; Bodger of Willingham; Emery of Staughton; Knowles of Rushden; Clayton of Steventon; Pyke of Ridgmont; Coles of Maulden; King of Southill. It was remarked how appropriate their subjects were to the peculiar circumstances of the church.

Mr John Beales, sent out from the church at Ringstead, was invited to supply, and continued to do so from month to month for 7 months, but not seeing his way clear to accept a further invitation, discontinued his services.

After this, Mr Cromwell, formerly Pastor of the church at Cheny, Bucks., supplied about 7 months, but his settlement not being desired by the major part of the church, he left about May 1778.

After being supplied by various ministers during the summer, hearing that Mr Martin Mayles of Cottenham, sent out by the Willingham Church, and who had previously supplied by us, was at liberty to accept a call, we agreed to invite him. In a visit amongst us in August he intimated his intention to accept our invitation. Mr Mayle's ministry was very acceptable; a spirit of affection prevailed in the hearts of the people towards him; and peace and harmony abounded amongst them, and their prospects were encouraging. The Lord however was pleased to try the patience of the people, Mr Mayle being several times laid aside by severe illness previous to his settlement, which took place April 18th 1780. Messrs. Evans of Biggleswade; Robinson of Cambridge; Dickens of

³ That is, he passed away.

Keysoe; Bodger of Willingham; Sutcliffe of Olney; Emery of Stoughton; and Ward of Spaldwick were present, and took part in the services.

Mr Mayle's ministry commenced Michaelmas 1779, and he resigned about Midsummer 1806. According to these dates, he was minister here nearly 28 years. During the first 20 years his ministry appears to have been very useful. He baptized and received into the church 64 persons, and baptized for other churches 54 persons. The number of members when he came was 29, and when he left was 37. 44 members died, 10 were separated, and 2 dismissed.

May 8th 1808: 8 persons including our present deacons (Messrs. W B Usher and W Skilleter) were baptized by Mr Vorley of Carlton while the church was destitute of a Parson.

About this time the people were supplied by a Mr Kite and Mr John Tandy, living at Turvey, a builder.

May 21st 1809 Mr Solomon Hawkins of Keysoe, member at Stoughton, applied for one Sabbath, after which the church gave him repeated invitations till Lady Day 1811, when they further invited him to the pastorate. The day of his public settlement was may 8th 1811. Messrs. Vorley of Carlton, Peacock of Rushden, Knight of Staughton, Rootham of Willingham, Chapman of Potton, Skilleter of Gransden, Pruden of Over, took part in the services of the day. Mr Hawkins exercised his ministry here during a period of ten years, and appears to have been very useful, as he baptized 36 persons, and received 2 by dismission. Some unpleasant circumstances arising, Mr Hawkins left, and became minister at Wilden.

In 1822 Mr John Beetham from Hook Norton, formerly of Bradford, a student of Dr. Steadman's, after supplying for 3 months, accepted an invitation to the pastorate, and was publicly settled October 23rd 1822, Messrs. Holloway of Cotton End, Middleditch of Biggleswade, Knight of Staughton, and Hargreaves of London, took part in the service, and also Messrs. Vorley of Carlton and Manning of Gamlingay. For some time during the latter part of his ministry, it was not generally acceptable, and he also appears to have had some captious hearers. He left by mutual agreement Lady Day 1832. During the period of his ministry, 10 persons were baptized, 12 separated, 2 dismissed. Number of members in 1830 were 32. Mr Beetham left and preached at Sandy for a time and afterwards went to America, where he died in 1849.

After Mr Beetham left, the pulpit was supplied by various ministers until 13th May when Mr Thorn of Ipswich was invited to supply, and did so for 17 weeks, during which time he was invited for 12 months with a view to the pastorate, to which call he gave no direct reply at the time, but eventually made some objection about complying unless the Meeting House was put in repair and the roof raised. To this the people agreed. And just as the roof was off, Mr Thorn wrote declining the invitation. The people still agreed to erect three galleries, and to proceed with the general repairs. The chapel was reopened Jan. 8th 1883, preachers on the occasion being Messrs. Vorley of Carlton, Rowland of Baldock and Middlemitch of Biggleswade: congregations were good, the day pleasant, and most of the neighbouring ministers were there.

Having heard Mr Hinds, formerly of Sharnbrook, but then of Tittleshall in Norfolk, was movable, the church and congregation agreed to invite him for some weeks. On the Sabbath after the opening and also the following he supplied, after which he was invited for 12 months with a view to the pastorate. In August he accepted an invitation, and became Pastor. As already noted at the commencement of this short history, circumstances arose unfavourable to the union of the church and the continuance of Mr Hind's ministry. He therefore left in April (4th) 1842, and went to Mildenhall in Suffolk and thence to Marham in Norfolk where he died. During his pastorate 13 persons were baptized, one received, 2 dismissed, 3 excluded.

Mr Cornelius Morrell came for 10 years until March 1852. Then Mr William Abbott (*the author of this short history*) Pastor for 38 years.

Events leading to partition of the Church at The Old Meeting House and the beginnings of Providence Chapel, Park Lane, Blunham

In the new church book events leading to the split were recorded in May 1843. One interesting fact which is not recorded in the minutes of the Old Meeting House is that Mr Hinds asked a Mr Thompson to preach.

‘He was very unwilling to come, but God was pleased to bless his labours to the comfort of many souls. When they saw that the minds of the people was very much for Mr Thompson, they would not let him come any more. This we believe was the means in the hand of God of making a separation the second Sabbath of May 1842’.⁴

The minutes continue:

‘Thos. Battle, Jno. How – with several more friends (non-members) – Joseph Sutton, John Usher of Tempsford, met at John How’s house to hold a prayer meeting in the afternoon. The house was full the next Sabbath. Our congregation increased. Mr Rutland and Richard Leavecock from Cople met with us and I believe I can say the Lord was with us. The house was too small & when Mr Tite of Potton came on the Tuesday evening, some were obliged to stand in the yard. Mr Hunt from London came with him, and they wished us to have the house licensed. We licensed ‘a building on the premises’. There was a large barn in the yard, so we met in that. The overruling hand of God brought Mr Thompson amongst us on the second Sabbath in June 1842: Owing to opposition from the landlord, Mr Judd said he would build a place. We continued meeting in the old barn whilst⁵ the 13 of December 1842 and had a good congregation. On the 18 of December the chapel was opened – Mr Smart from Welwyn morning – Mr Tite in the afternoon and evening. The services were well attended.

Mr Thompson continued with us until the Lord was pleased to remove him to the Church Triumphant.’

One naturally wonders what could have led to a breach of this magnitude as to result in the building of a separate place of worship.

Mr Solomon Hawkins left after a 10 year pastorate. A whole page has been torn out of the church book. Mr Abbott in his history refers to ‘unpleasant circumstances’.

It is perhaps appropriate at this stage to record the fact that to page 234 of the church book of the Old Meeting House, is pinned a copy of the Registration on 20th March 1861 by William Abbott of Blunham, Baptist Minister, of the Old Meeting House, Blunham, as a Place of Meeting for Religious Worship by a congregation of persons calling themselves Particular Baptist.

So that years after the separation they still regarded themselves as subscribing to the ‘particular’ rather than the ‘general’ view of redemption. They may still have held to the open communion position as against closed or ‘strict’ communion. Dr Gill appears to have been present at the settlement of Thomas Craner as Pastor in June 1739, but the seceders complained that by 1841 ‘men of truth’ were being shut out in order to bring in ‘Fullerites’ implying that the Revd. Andrew Fuller’s sentiments in his *‘Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation’* and his strictures of so-called hypercalvinism were taking root.

The storm clouds appeared to gather in full strength soon after John Beetham was appointed Pastor in 1822. A deacon was appointed, then excluded along with several other members. Most were restored after Mr Beetham left. In 1829 Mr Beetham records:

‘I was aware when I settled here as the Pastor of this church that it would undergo a revolution. I hope now the worst is past and that now, whether I be taken away soon or late that no...Hypercalvinist minister will give satisfaction here...’

⁴ Although from a separate entry the new church was formed in March 1842.

⁵ Until.

At a meeting in January 1830, attended by only one member other than the Pastor and his three deacons, it was decided to exclude any members absenting themselves without proper cause from the Lord's Table on three successive occasions. A note in April 1830 records that 5 were excluded by this law.

(A reproduction of the handwritten account from The Old Meeting House Church Book can be seen on the following page.)

Although John How by July 1831 had excluded himself under this law by an absence of 12 months from the Lord's Table, he was formally excluded at a meeting appointed for that purpose on 15th July that year. As acknowledged head and representative of a 'disorderly party' he attended church meetings on 10th June and 8th July and made 'disturbances' declaring first that if Mr Beetham were not sent away, so that they might have preaching to suit their sentiments, he would open his house for preaching; later charging that they were unlawfully keeping the place from them, and that if Mr Beetham were not removed, they would use means to take the place of worship out of their hands. An agreement dated 20th January 1832 was drawn up between Mr Beetham and the church, specifying that Mr Beetham should resign the pulpit up to the Church on 11th March next and all claims on the place or property connected with it, upon condition that he be paid £50 in addition to all the emoluments up to Lady Day next, and have possession of the dwelling house free of rent until 1st August.

After Mr Hinds came as Pastor, there seems at first to have been a measure of reconciliation. New members were added, 3 members restored including Thomas Battle and John How, Thomas Battle chosen deacon (then a later insertion 'but he refused to act'). Whatever was simmering underneath came to a head in 1841 when one of the male members requested leave of the Pastor to introduce a Mr Sears to preach in the pulpit. Mr Hinds refused, and five of the male members expressed dissatisfaction. The five wanted a more general meeting and the matter put to the vote. The Pastor replied that they might do as they pleased, but their vote would not alter the case as he should not suffer anyone to be introduced into the pulpit in opposition to the Minister and Deacon. The parties said they would not submit to such arbitrariness, but would leave if acted upon, and many of the congregation would leave with them. The upshot was the ordinance was suspended until October, and then for three successive months Thomas Battle, John How and William Hills absented themselves from the ordinance, and by the standing law of the church were excluded from the membership. In the beginning of 1842, Mr Hinds gave notice of his leaving the pastorate the first Lord's Day in April.

May 6th 1829 The Baptist Association
 was held at Bhamham, the Ministers who
 preached in the morning were Mr Cutbush
 of Ridgmont & Mr Glinds of Sharnbrook
 In the Evening Mr Vorley of Calton
 It was a good day & I hope will long
 be remembered — I was aware that I
 was soiled here as if Pastor of Wier
 & that it wd undergo a Revolution I
 hope now if worst is past —
 And that now whether I be taken
 away soon or late that no Antinomian
 or Hypercalvinish Minister will
 give Satisfaction here — but however
 that may be, I am satisfied that I have
 not shudd. to declare if w^{ch} counsel
 of God so far as I know it.

Antinomian
 See page 18

It ~~is~~ moved and seconded & passed
 Unanimously at our Church Meeting
 Jan, 4th 1830 That any member ab-
 senting himself from the Lord's Table
 three times successively (except on
 account of affliction, or distance) shall
 no longer be considered as a member
 of this Church. Present

W^m Usher
 W^m Skilleter
 W^m Lovell

Deacons

John Beetham Pastor
 Joseph Keep

An extract from the Blunham Old Meeting House Church Book

1841 On Tuesday 3 May one of our male members requested leave of the Pastor to introduce a Mr Sears to preach in the pulpit. To which the Pastor replied he had never refused the pulpit to any respectable minister who preached Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, and was sorry to refuse the pulpit on this occasion, but he would state his reasons.

- 1) He did not consider Mr Sears a man of peace. His conduct towards Mr Irish of Warboys and other persons plainly declare that, as also his sweeping censures of every minister who happens to differ from him, especially his declaration that Stephens, Murrell, Irish and all that class were in the broad way to destruction.
- 2) His unwarrantable expressions such as he himself is as black as the Chimney Pots of Hell and worse than the Devil. The pastor could not admit a man who used such expressions. If he really was worse than the Devil he ought to be avoided and if he does not mean what he says he ought not to stand up in the name of God and say what he does not mean.

Five of our male members expressed their dissatisfaction at the refusal and one proposed to call a more general meeting and put it to the vote if Mr Sears should come or not. To which the Pastor replied that they might do as they pleased about that, but their vote would not alter the case as he should not suffer any one to be introduced into the pulpit in opposition to the Minister and deacon.

The parties replied they would not submit to such a decision and should leave if that was acted upon, and many of the congregation would leave with them. To which the Pastor replied they must act as they pleased, but as far as he thought he was right, he should go on, let who would leave.

It was then suggested by the Pastor that we were not all in a suitable frame of mind to approach the Table of the Lord — would it not be better to suspend the Ordinance until a better feeling existed? It was unanimously agreed to suspend the ordinance accordingly, and we never met again as a Church until 6 September.

6 September the Pastor made the following communication to the members: as the ordinance of the supper had been suspended for four months on account of the unhappy feeling that existed, he now wished to know if a better feeling existed among them. If so, he was ready to administer the Ordinance to them on the next Sabbath, provided they could meet together as Christians and give up any claim to bring in a preacher in opposition to the Pastor and Deacon — And he should consider those that come to the Table of the Lord came renouncing all such claims.

At the same time it was agreed upon the people should choose their own supplies when the pastor went out for a month in the year, as was customary with him, provided they paid them themselves and did not bring anyone objectionable to the Pastor.

4 Octr. At the Church meeting, some of our friends appeared still to be dissatisfied about the objection to bring in a preacher by a majority in case the Pastor did not approve, and they said the concession made for the people to choose and pay the supplies was not extensive enough, and if they had not the liberty of bringing in a preacher by a majority, they should leave.

In consequence of which, Thos. Battle, John How, Wm. Hills absented themselves from the Ordinance on the 2nd Sabbaths in October, November, and December, and by the standing law of this Church have excluded themselves from any connection with this society.

1842 Feb. 10 Mr Hinds having been two Lord's days to supply the Church at West Row on probation, he gave notice that he intended to supply them 2 more Sabbaths in March with a view to become their Pastor, and so should leave Blunham. We had a friendly meeting. It was the first intimation of Mr Hinds' leaving. No one objected to his leaving, but thought it an opening in providence.

March 6th	Mr Carter supplied
13	Mr Smith Cotton End
20	Mr Hinds returned and gave notice that he should leave the first Lord's day in April.
27	Mr Hinds exchange with Mr Clarke of Hunslip
April 4	Mr Hinds preached his farewell

Mr Septimus Sears

A word might not be out of place concerning Mr Septimus Sears (for 35 years the first and highly esteemed Pastor of the church at Clifton, Bedfordshire) who, unwittingly was at the centre of this division.

Septimus Sears was born at Chatteris in Cambridgeshire, on January 5th 1819. He was the seventh son of Mr Joseph Sears, a highly respected tradesman of the village, who ended a long life under the roof of his beloved and affectionate son Septimus, and was interred in the vault in front of the chapel at Clifton.

Septimus Sears was a man of weakly constitution and delicate health, who many times in infancy and childhood was considered near death's door. He also had remarkable providential escapes from death.

As a lad, during a long sickness, he was blessed with 'melting sights of a suffering Saviour'. He says, 'I scarcely passed a day all that summer but some precious portion of His word was found by me, and I was enabled to eat it and to esteem it more precious than gold, yea than fine gold.' In the November he was taken worse, and to excruciating pain was added 'darkness the most dreadful' which surrounded his soul.

The following May he was able to walk a few yards with crutches, and went to Addenbroke's Hospital Cambridge, where 'the doctors had an instrument constructed to hold up my head, which to me was an invaluable help'. He earnestly sought the Lord to unbind him as he did the woman bowed down with a spirit of infirmity. 'Soon after, these words dropped into my soul, melted my heart and loosed my bonds — 'Thou art loosed from thine infirmity' — and immediately (O matchless kindness! O the almighty power of His voice!) I was made straight, and glorified God. After this visit from the Lord, I left the hospital, and my health became much better, so that I could walk forty or fifty yards with my crutches.'

But in February and March 1839 he had an attack of Rheumatic Fever and was afflicted with hardness of heart and wicked thoughts, but in his groanings, opened on the 20th Chapter of John's Gospel, and Mary at the sepulchre, and 'the Lord Jesus did so break and melt my heart, did so lift upon me the light of his countenance, that it appeared to cure both body and soul at once.' He was blessed for some time 'with much and frequent communion...and so far recovered as to regain the use of my left arm and leg, and to be able to ride out, and to walk a little way with the assistance of crutches. The same year, in June, the Lord opened my mouth in His name for the first time, at Dedington, (where I spoke sitting).'

'My strength increased gradually' he says, until January 26th 1841, when the use of his arm and leg were restored in a very sudden and remarkable manner. From that time his strength gradually increased until he had an accident at Warboys on May 11th. He was greatly blessed in this affliction, which took place immediately after the request (refused) that he should preach at the Old Meeting. He had already preached in the vicinity. Mr Fane of Southill went to hear Mr Warburton (senior) at St Neots, and met Mr Sears who, in November 1840 was invited to preach at Southill. This was before Mr Warburton (junior) was settled there. Mr Tay was almost past preaching because of age and infirmity. The preaching of Mr Sears was greatly blessed to several who heard him at Southill. He preached once or twice afterwards, and the last time the crowd of people who came to hear him was so great, and the aisles and pulpit steps were filled to such a degree, one 'could almost have walked on the heads of the people'.

The night before Mr Sears preached this last sermon at Southill, he dreamed that he was in a boat rowing off from the chapel with some of the people, which dream was fulfilled; for while some of the heads of the church were not willing he should preach in the chapel again, many clave to him

and begged him to come amongst them; and Mr Kempson promised to turn two of his cottages in Clifton Fields into a chapel if he would agree to preach there, which he ultimately promised to do.

In an address to his church at Clifton written at the commencement of his last affliction (its sober, chastened style contrasting with the vehement language of his youth) he says that soon after becoming their stated Pastor, he was much tried about his religion. He saw that his early religion, though it had been accompanied with deep distresses and high joys, and 'had set me down firmly in the great doctrines of grace, was sadly disproportionate and very deficient or shallow in some important features. I had made very much of depths and heights, workings of corruptions, strong detestations of self-righteousness, and strong adherence to the five points;⁶ but had not in the same proportion valued godly fear, humility, and such holy and lowly graces of the Spirit.'

Mr Sears originated the *Sower* and *Little Gleaner* magazines, and was the means of erecting four almshouses in Clifton for aged members of his church and congregation. He died December 26th 1877, aged 58. Mr Thomas Hull of Hastings officiated at the funeral service.

Extracts from the Church Book, Providence Chapel, Park Lane, Blunham

It should be noted that these extracts are copied exactly as written.

There are many quaint spellings and there is no punctuation.

Formed into a church the Second Sabouth in March 1842

Thomas Battle John How William Hill Thomas Webb Catherine Battle Jane How Ann Field

At our church Meeting

Jos Sutton Wm Tatman Wm Maris Jon Talor

Gave in there experance Was accepted Wm Maris Jon Talor was baptized at Potton by Mr Tite Jos Sutton
Wm tatman was baptized at Southill By Mr Cooper

Sarah Haynes Elizabeth Ellson Left the old Meeting they joined us Mr tompson Labours Was Much Blessed to the establishing the souls of the People and we had Much comfort and injoyment as we saw the Lord work going on for the Dear Lord was with us of a truth at our Church Meeting Tho field Jos How Elizabeth How Elizabeth Talor Elizabeth Squires Elizabeth Tatman gave in there experance was Accepted was Baptised at Potton by Mr Tite thus the dear Lord was pleased to make it Manifest he had sent Mr Tompson to blunham by crowning his labour with Much success for we could say from hart felt comfort and injoyment that the Lord was with us indeed Mr tompson was very weak in boddy throw Affliction but much Blessed with soul comfort he was an honnour to his Profession at our Church Meeting Meriah Bywaters Sarah Maris Jas Harden Gave in there experance and was baptized at Potton

Ann Shilliter

Mrs Sutton

Mrs Underwood formerly

members of the old meeting left and Joind us

May 1843 A few friends separated for truth's sake we wanted to have the docterings of the gospel and they stood opposed to it so that we could not agree when ever we met to consult about a minister we wanted to have a man that preached the docterings of free and sovereign grace which mr Usher the de con always opposed mr Hine was pastor at this time and some times he would ask a man of truth to come to preach we believe mr Hine was a good man but seldom preached any point of doctrin then to put a stop to the unpleasantness that used to be when we met they made a law in the church that no member was to have any voice in choosing a minister which we thought was quit rong and we could not agree with we said that we would not be under such a law as that for if that was to be the law we would leave the church for we thought it was to shut out men of truth and bring in fulrites⁷ to which mr Hine said so long as he saw it to be rite he would abid by it if all the church and congregation left him about this time we believe god in his all wise providence directed mr Hine to ask mr tompson to come to preach he was very unwilling to come but we believe the hand of god was in it for he did come and god was pleased to bless

⁶ Presumably the five points of Calvinism.

⁷ Fullerites, i.e. Followers of the Reverend Andrew Fuller.

his labours to the comfort of many souls when they saw that the minds of the people was very much for mr Tompson they would not let him come there any more this we believe was the means in the hand of god in making a separation at the second sabbath in may 1842 our congregation increased Mr Rutland and Richard Leavecock from Cople met with us and I can say that I believe that the Lord was with us & our congregation increased so that the house was too small mr Tite from Potton came to preach on the Tuesday night some of the people was obliged to stand in the yard mr Hunt from London came with him and they wished us to have the house licensed accordingly we did and the licence expressed a building on the premises and there was a large barn in the yard so we met in that and the overruling hand of god brought mr Tompson amongst us on the second sabbath in June 1842 when he first entered the old barn the enemy suggested to his mind that no respectable people would meet in such a place as that but god was pleased in a few minutes to convince him that it was a suggestion of Satan for the barn was filled and the dear Lord was pleased to set his soul at liberty and to lead his mind into the truths of the ever blessed Gospel and bless his labours to our souls so that we had sweet enjoyment under his ministry so that we could from heart felt experience bless and praise the dear Lord for sending him amongst us we spent some most sweet and blessed sabbaths but the enemy envied our comforts and stured up the Landlord of the place to tell some of our friends that he should oppose it this was a means we believe in the hand of the Lord of sturing up the minds of the people to seek for another place so we had a meeting to consult about it and our dear friend mr Judd said that he would build a place but to our surprise the landlord of the place did not come near to disturb us so that we could say from feeling if god be for us who can be against us we had many enemies but the lord was pleased to bare testimony to his truth and crown mr Tompsons labours in the conversion of sinners and building up of his saints and many can bare testimony to the truth preached in the old barn Mr Judd according to promise began to build a place he had much cold water throed upon it by the enemies to quench it but god was pleased to bear up his mind under all the opposition so that the place was built in troubles times we believe that the hand of the Lord was in it for we had nothing in view but the Glory of god and the good of souls we continued meeting in the old Barn Wilst the 13 of December 1842 and had a good congregation and some sweet times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord on the 18 of December the chapple was opened Mr Smart from Welling morning Mr Tite in the afternoon and evening was well attended Mr Thompson continued with us until the Lord was pleased to remove him to the Church Triumphant during wich time Lord was pleased to Bless his Labours amongst us Being then destitute of an under shepard wee sought direction From the Lord who was pleased to send us men of God to supply us Mr Drakeford and Mr Smith of Lecister and Mr Cooper and others Joseph Sutton being a member with us Used to speak occasionally and some of the friends was not satisfied with his speaking by his wish we had a church meeting to decide about his speakeing and the majority of the members wished him not to continue speakeing but to fill up his place as a member at this time God was pleased to direct sutton to invite mr frayer to come for one sabbath and the friends enjoyed his preaching and wished him to come again but we believe the enemy stured up sutton to oppose it because the friends objected to his speakeing he left and said that he would not come any more we believe God was pleased to direct us to invite mr frayer to come for six weeks and we believe the dear Lord was pleased to bless his labours to our souls and in spite of all our enemies our congregation increased and God was pleased to make it manifest that he had a work for him amongst us his labours being Blessed amongst us we wished him to become our pastor he accepted the invitation and the Lord has Blessed his labours both to saint and sinners our congregation increased so that our place become too small and we thought it adviseable to in large our friend mr Judd engaged to build the outside and the friends to do the inside which was done.

1852 Held a Church meeting on the 1st of Sepr. At which the following Friends related the Lords dealings with them in calling them by His Grace the Church were well satisfied with their statements accordingly on the Following Lords day they were Baptised and received into Church Fellowship and partook of the Lords supper and wee Found it a time of soul profit

Ann Mardling
 Mary Maris
 George Little
 John Hill

Held a Church meeting April 30 1854 at which time John Hardin Mary Hardin Sarah Griggs gave in their expeiriance and was accepted as members

At A church Meeting July 30 Mary Heaynes Eliza Little Gave in there Experience was Exceped

1855 Church Meeting Oct 30 Elizabeth Barnes Elizabeth Clark Ann Bainbridge gave in their Eperience was accepted

1858 Sept held a Church meeting at which time Elizabeth Meeres gave in her experience and was accepted by the Church and was Baptised Oct 3rd and received into Church fellowship

1859 March 27 Held a Church meeting at which time Mrs Baterson Mrs Cullop John Batterson John How gave in their experience and was accepted and Baptised on April 3rd

1860 Church Meeting August 1st at which time John Norman Mrs Batterson gave in their experience and was accepted and Baptised on Lords day August the 5th.

1861 Church meeting Jany at Which time Joseph Martin gave in his experience and was accepted Baptised on Lords day Jany. 27th

Church Meeting Lords day May the 5th at which time Ruth Myers gave in her experience and was accepted and baptised on Lords day May the 26th.

1861 October Church meeting at which time Mercy Ekins gave in her experience and was accepted Baptised October 20th

In August 62 Mr Fraser gave us notice that his mind was to leave so we had a church meeting and there was not one but what wished him to continue with us and he had the wish of the congregation but his mind was to go to Stevenage so he left in November 62 in the midst of love and respect booth with church and congregation at our church meeting it was proposed that we should ask God to give us wisdom and that when we could not get a minister we cary on the service by reeding and prayer but we have to prayse the dear Lord for his manifested mercy in sending his servants among us at our church meeting it was proposed to ask Mr Rust to supply us which he did for some sabbouths Mr Rush recommended mr Rickett to us and he came At our church meeting it was agreed to give Mr Rickett an invitation for three Months which he accepted the first Lords Day in June 64

August 64 At our church meeting our friends wished to give Mr Rickett an invitation for 3 months more which he accepted our congregation in creeced for a time

Nov [64] At our church meeting it was agreed to ask Mr Rickett for 3 months more which he accepted at this time our congregation began to fall away and he could not see his labours blessed as he could wish he continued with us up to May and said he would supply us any time that he was at liberty

Mrs Knight
Mrs Roberson
Elizabeth Marshall
Baptised Jany. 28th 72

Mrs Single
Mrs Gaylor
William Stonebridge
Simeon Stonebridge
Baptised February 23 1873

1874 Church Meeting February 22 at which time Mrs Judd gave in her experience and was accepted Blessed Meeting was Baptised by Mr H Fox on the 15 of March

A Church Meeting was Held and Mrs Roberts of Chalton Came and give in her Experance and Said that She had been Baptised by a General Baptist Minister and Belived She was a Christian at the same time, but had Been Brought to See the Errows that they preach and was Brought to Believe in the Truths Belved in and preached in this place. Was received into Church fellowship the same time Sat down with us the first Sabbath in January 1888

Ann Franklin of Moreanger.⁸ Came before the Church and was received. And Baptised by Mr Short the Minister on the first Sabbath in September 1891

Hannah Elson Came before the Church and was received March 1894 Left the Bottom Chapel and we thought it needed not a second Baptism. E Short Minister

⁸ Probably Moggerhanger.

Providence Chapel — Roll of Membership

Sept. 4 1852. The number of members Constituting the Church at this time

1	Thomas Battle	Deacon
2	William Hill	Deacon
3	William Tatman	Deacon
4	Thomas Webb	Deacon
5	John How	
6	Joseph How	
7	Thomas Field	
8	William Maris	
9	James Harden	
10	John Taylor	
11	William Dust	
12	George Little	Chosen Deacon
13	John Hill	
14	Catherine Battle	
15	Jane How	
16	Elizabeth How	
17	Ann Field	
18	Mary Maris	
19	Elizabeth Talyer	
20	Elizabeth Squire	
21	Elizabeth Tatman	
22	Maria Bywaters	
23	Mrs Underwood	
24	Elizabeth Elson	
25	Sarah Hinds	
26	Ann Mardling	
27	Rebecca Thomason	
28	Jane How	
29	Ann Hill	
30	John Marshall	
31	Caroline Jeeves	
32	Susan King	
33	Richard Underwood	

The list continues:

34	John Hardin	April 30 1854	
35	Mary Hardin		
36	Sarah Griggs		
37	Mary Haynes	July 30 1854	
38	Eliza Little		
39	Elizabeth Clark	October 30 1855	
40	Elizabeth Barnes		
41	Ann Bainbridge		
42	Elizabeth Meeres	September 1856	
43	Mrs. Batterson	March 27 1859	
44	Mrs Cullop		
45	John Batterson		
46	John How		
47	John Norman	August 1st 1860	
48	Mrs Batterson		
49	Joseph Martin	January 1861	
50	Rith Myers	May 5th	Baptised May 26th
51	Elizabeth Frances		
52	Mercy Ekins	October 1861	Baptised October 20th
53	Mrs Knight	Baptised January 28 1872	
54	Mrs Roberson		

55	Elizabeth Marshall	
56	Mrs Single	Baptised February 23 1873
57	Mrs Gaylor	
58	William Stonebridge	
59	Simeon Stonebridge	
60	Mrs Judd	Church Meeting February 22: Baptised 15 March 1874

Loss of Members by Death

(25)		Sarah Haynes		(? Hinds)
		Ann Skilleter		
		Mrs Sutton		
		Sarah Maris	8.2.1851	
(20)		Elizabeth Squires	27.9.?	(? Squire)
(11)		William Dust		
(5)	1854	John How		
(14)		Thomas Webb		
(15)		Jane How		
(27)	1855	Rebecca Thomason	Oct 2	
(13)	1858	John Hill	Feb	
(8)	1862	William Meeres	died May 12 in Fit of Apoplexy	(? Maris)
(37)		Mary Haynes		
(14)		Catherine Battle		
(36)	1866	Agnes Griggs		(? Sarah Griggs)
(3)		William Tatman		
(55)	1873	Elizabeth Marshall	Aug	
(1)		Thomas Battle	Nov 25	
(2)	1874	William Hills		(? Hill)
(53)		Mrs Knight		
(40)	1876	Elizabeth Barnes	Sep 29	
(9)	1880	James Harding		(? Harden)
(39)	1881	Elizabeth Clark		
(21)	1832	Mrs Tatman	Decr 13	
(56)	1884	Mrs Single	Died Broncites	
(60)		Mrs Judd	Died June 26 Cancer in her Body	

Historical background of the Strict and Particular Baptists

Those who advocated baptism upon a profession of faith, both on the Continent and in this country, were at first reproachfully termed 'Anabaptists', or 'Baptizers Again', because they could not allow infant baptism to be baptism according to scripture. Persecution caused many to escape from this country to the Continent, but on their return became founders of the Baptist Churches in England.

The Arminian section of these returning exiles gave rise to the General Baptists, while those who held the doctrine of Particular Redemption constituted the Particular Baptists. Later on, the name Strict Baptists was introduced to denominate those who adhered to the church order of Strict Communion, as opposed to the Open Communion which was being advocated by Robert Hall and others about 1816. It had long been practised by the Bunyan Meeting at Bedford and like-minded independent churches, but these churches, though practising open communion, held to the Particular view of redemption.

Strict Baptist Periodicals

The *Gospel Herald*, largely supported by the Suffolk Strict Baptist churches, advocated the erroneous views then being broached by Mr John Stevens, as to a supposed pre-existence of the human soul of Christ before the incarnation. It commenced publication in 1833.

The *Gospel Standard* was started by John Gadsby, son of William Gadsby (Manchester) in 1835, partly to counter the views promoted by the *Gospel Herald* and Mr John Stevens. In its pages J C Philpott ably defended the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only-begotten of the Father, against those resolving it into a name, a title, or an office.

The *Earthen Vessel* was commenced in 1843 by its editor and proprietor, Mr C W Banks. The editor himself held the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship, but it seemed to him to be a matter of indifference whether it was believed or not:

“Whether a work be sent us by ‘*Standard* men’, or ‘*Herald* men’, or ‘*Vessel* men’, or any other class of men (terms we would not employ were they not so much in use), if those works are designed for the elucidation of pure Gospel truth, and for the separation of the precious from the vile, they shall always be as faithfully noticed by us as our small abilities will allow.”

The Sonship Controversy

It caused a division among Strict Baptists in the 1840’s to 1860’s and beyond. Hence the name ‘Gospel Standard’ applied to a group of churches of which Blunham (Park Lane) became one. Some of the other camp were referred to as ‘Vessel’ churches. Blunham Old Meeting seems to have associated themselves with the *Gospel Herald* as a Strict and Particular Baptist Church rather than ‘open communion’ Baptist. One of the later Pastors, Mr William Abbott⁹ who appears to have come from Rattlesden in Suffolk, was a regular contributor to the *Gospel Herald* both in the 1848-50 period when he was in Suffolk, and later in 1861, when he was at Blunham. These are the only issues immediately to hand:

The *Gospel Herald* seems to have regarded Andrew Fuller as a semi-Arminian. According to the breakaway party at Blunham, Mr Hinds in 1842 ‘wanted to bring in Fullerites’. Mr Septimus Sears’ sympathies would have been with the *Gospel Standard*, although Mr Philpott reviewed some of Mr Sears’ publications in his early years very critically — he was inclined to exuberance and extravagance — but he mellowed considerably as he grew older. He was never in vital error.

The references in the May 1841 minute (Old Meeting) to Stevens is explained, in part, above.

George Murrell was Pastor at St Neots. As to consigning such to the ‘broad road’ this is difficult to reconcile with Mr Sears and Mr Warburton (senior) being at St Neots about this time. George Murrell was not clear in his views on the eternal Sonship. In a letter dated June 22nd 1865 (*Gospel Herald*) he says, ‘I am old, feeble and broken; my hand shakes and I cannot write much. On the subject of our glorious complex Lord, his people have had, and still have, different thought; it is one of “the deep things of God” I Tim 3:16. ...if my brother has a little more light than I have, let him be humble and thankful, and not be angry with me because I cannot see with his eyes, and will not pin my faith to his sleeve. ...I know He (Christ) is a Divine person in the infinite essence, unoriginated and unbegotten, having an equal personal standing in the Godhead, which he has not

⁹ In 1845 and 1848 he seems to have been pastor at Wetherden.

derived from another...the begetting scheme...necessarily gives priority to the Father...and is destructive of personal equality.'

But Mr Philpott correctly says, 'We must not carry ideas borrowed from earth and time into heaven and eternity, and weigh and measure the nature and being of God by the nature and being of man. But, even on natural grounds, so far from a father necessarily existing before a son, it is not true, for though a father exists as a man before he has a son, yet he is not a father before he has a son. The very expression "the eternal Son" declares His co-eternity with the Father. So with His co-equality, if our blessed Lord is the eternal Son, He is necessarily the co-eternal Son; if He is the equal of the Father, He is His co-equal.'

David Irish became Pastor of Warboys in March 1832. He came from Mr Stevens' church in London. Both Stevens and Murrell took part in the recognition services.

The Shining Face

An article by William Abbott, Blunham Old Meeting, From Gospel Herald October 1861

'Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.'

The Bible is a good Prayer Book. Forms of prayer do not usually touch the heart. But in these prayers there is so much heart that they are likely to reach and move other hearts. These are inspired prayers, and the spirit of inspiration accompanies and blesses them. The prayer of this verse is repeated three times in this Psalm. These are not vain repetitions, but express the deep feeling and fervent desires of the suppliant. There is much that is touching in the several petitions of this Psalm — invoking God's attention, favour, presence, power, blessing.

Our first prayer must be for the grace of God to turn us. 'Turn us again.' This is a petition we often need to use. We are very prone to get wrong, and require setting right, or turning again. It implies the cherishing of wrong feeling, or the pursuing a wrong course, or both, for these usually go together. Prayer expresses the consciousness of the wrong state, and seeks grace to correct it. God graciously says, 'Return unto me, and I will return unto you'.

It is the prayer of a saint that had previously turned to God, but had relapsed; or it is the supplication of the church in declension. It will suit both. It is easy to get wrong, but not so easy to get right again. One difficulty is to convince us that such is the case with us. This often requires a long and sharp process. If the conscience has lost its first tenderness, rebuke does not easily touch it, and so no conviction, no repentance, no seeking for restoring grace. But the Spirit uses other and severe means to get at the conscience, and to cause the heart to return to God.

To every restored soul, how welcome is the shining face. 'And cause Thy face to shine upon us.' Mercy turns us, and then favour smiles on us. The turned soul is not happy without this sunshine. There is no joy in his soul unless God causes His face to shine upon him. If there is sin within us, unconvinced of, unrepented of, unforsaken, God's smiles cannot be expected. To live beneath His frown is a wretched life, yet some seem to choose this for a season, but the conscience must be hardened to persist. The soul in its right, in its healthy state, longs for the shinings of the father's face. This is the life-joy of all its graces, passions, affections, activities, and prospects. If the face of God shine upon us, we shall not mind the devil's frown, nor the world's; for God shines upon us, His heart is towards us, and His hand will be with us. It is through Jesus the mediator we must look for these shinings — '...the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'.

As returned to God, as smiled upon by Him, so the joys of salvation are restored to us. As saved from declension, we experience the power and blessedness of revival. We need a salvation repeated in the power of its application, and in the renewal of its joys. Coldness of heart, and inconsistency

of conduct, embitter our joys, deaden the spiritual life, and hinder our usefulness. More sensible we need to be of our danger from these, more watchful against them, and more hearty reliance on the Redeemer's grace to preserve us, and to stir us up to press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. So shall we be saved from evil; and saved to enjoy good, to do good, and to anticipate good.

Antinomianism

The term 'Antinomian' was used reproachfully of those such as William Huntington and William Gadsby who preached a 'free grace' gospel and contended for the gospel (and not the law) as the believer's rule of life — the gospel containing the sum and substance and glory of all the laws which God ever promulgated from His throne. (The Jews did what the gospel forbids).¹⁰

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'For many of those called Antinomian, their concern was to give full place to the effective work of Christ in salvation from sin, and to assert the reality of the Spirit's guidance in godly living. For them the law was not rejected, but internalised; it was not their conscience, but the Spirit of God who was supreme. They did not deny that they could still sin, but sought an increasingly close relationship to Christ which would give them victory over sin.'

'Such writers did not hold in any sense to a concept of the freedom to sin with impunity. Their thinking is on a different plane from perfectionism, or an apparent dismissal of sin's power, or an advocacy of liberty from sin by carrying it out. Yet all these attitudes are comprehended under the appellation of Antinomianism.'

'What is needed for study is, perhaps, a new set of definitions. The stress on the inward law can be called antinomianism. Belief in absolute freedom from sin in this life must be called perfectionism. Indifference to sin, or to the relevance of the law to a believer at all, might be termed anomiaism (a word coined on the pattern of amoral); and the old term of libertinism may be applied best to the concept of sinning with impunity.'

*From 'The Ranters (1640-1660) with special reference to their Theological and Religious significance' (pp 76 / 77)
by A W Kennedy Hart BA (Theol).*

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'It does not appear that any set of Christians ever called themselves Antinomians, which is a term of opprobrium or reproach. It is indeed, more than probable, that some, who have been charged with Antinomian principles, should not be ranked among the Antinomians.'

'A Theological, Biblical, and Ecclesiastical Dictionary' by John Robinson, DD, 1835

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'Did I ever tell you, in the course of my ministry, that you should have more Gods than one? That you should make images, take the Lord's name in vain, prophane his day of rest, ridicule parents, kill, steal, commit adultery, bear false witness, and covet your neighbour's goods?I trow not.

'The Moral Law not injured by the Everlasting Gospel' William Huntington

¹⁰ See Matthew 19: 8,9.

William Gadsby and Antinomianism

In 1802 William Gadsby's friends set about building a chapel at Hickley, which was finished in 1803. It was the circumstance of his begging for this chapel that first took him to Manchester. Many years after, when he was at Manchester, Mr Gadsby wrote:

"I preached to a number of poor people in an old barn, and truly we had many precious visits from the Lord, which made the old barn a consecrated place to our souls, notwithstanding the thatch was off in so many places of the roof that we could see the sky through the numerous holes, so that when it rained, the people had to remove from one part to another, during preaching, to prevent getting wet through; and what was worse we were too poor to get it repaired. An additional torment was, that our enemies (who consisted chiefly of professors of religion) often broke our locks off, and did us much mischief. Thus annoyed with the rain and ungodly men, we came to the conclusion to build a chapel. But the question then arose, where is the money to come from? For I was the wealthiest among them, and knew, if all I had about me had been sold, I could not have raised £80. Notwithstanding this, we bought the land for a chapel, and consequently became a laughing-stock to the whole neighbourhood, they knowing our poverty. I then went about the country preaching and begging, and the Lord was with me, for I had soon got to the amount of £60, which enabled us to commence building. This made our enemies rejoice, and say, 'There now; we shall soon be clear of Bill Gadsby out of the country. His preaching race is nearly run, for he'll be in prison for the debt of this building before long.' But to the honour of the Lord, he supplied us with money as fast as it was required, for before one sum was exhausted, I went out again, preaching and begging, and fresh supplies were furnished, until the chapel was finished. There lived in the neighbourhood a farmer of considerable wealth, who was a great enemy to us, (though a great professor of religion) and

I was often told I durst not go to beg of him. I said, 'If the Lord spare me, I'll go.' The first opportunity I went, met him in the farm yard, and laid our case before him, when the following dialogue took place:

Farmer: 'There's a good deal of bother about religion now a days, and a set of antinomians have risen up who are a pest to religion, preaching that they may live in sin, for if they're elected they'll be saved.' Mr. G.: 'I know of no such people, and assure you I am not one of that sort; but what do you mean by antinomianism?'

F.: 'Why, they'll have nothing to do with the law.' Mr. G., seeing a number of corn stacks belonging to the farmer, observed, 'Why, these are your stacks?' F.: 'Yes.' Mr. G.: 'If you were under them they'd give you a tolerable squeeze.' F., laughing: 'Yes; but what of that?' Mr. G.: 'Then because you are not under those stacks, are we to conclude that you have nothing to do with them?' F.: 'No.' Mr G.: 'So we say we have to do with the law and the law with us; it makes a seizure upon us, demands full payment; we find painfully we cannot pay; consequently we are held fast by it until Christ comes and pays the debt, delivers us from that wherein we were held; becomes the end of the law for righteousness to us, and liberates us from it; which made Paul feelingly triumph and say, "we are not under the law, but under grace." Thus there is a difference between having nothing to do with the law, and being under it.' F., amazed: 'Why, I never thought of that; here's a guinea for you.' I thanked him and was going away; the farmer called after me and said, 'That's wonderful! I never heard it so explained,' and pulled out another guinea and gave it to me!"

*A Memoir
Gadsby's Works, Volume I 1847, pp 23 / 24.*

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For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Romans 6; 14, 15