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## The Early Church at Leeds.

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### IV.

The history of a church ought not to be solely a record of ministerial successions, and in the history of South Parade it would be hard to over-estimate the influence of intelligent and beneficent laymen. The first trustees, 1782, were Joseph Sharp, Joshua Armitage, John Laycock, and James Aspin; in 1821 they were James Laycock, James Aspin, Benjamin Goodman, Michael Thackray, and Joseph Eyre.<sup>78</sup>

Joseph Ross, the deacon who invited Langdon, is a shadowy figure, but a man of obvious importance in his day; he was a "linen-draper, haberdasher, and lace-dealer" in the Market Place, Leeds, probably on a fairly large scale.<sup>79</sup> Hardly one of the other original members who signed the Covenant is known to fame, except J. Sharp. He was a member from the first, a deacon for nearly twenty years, and an influential man, witness the collection made in 1797 to pay him accumulated interest. He died on November 26th, 1803, and Langdon's funeral sermon for him was printed next month.<sup>80</sup> Mrs. Sharp gave an annual subscription of two guineas in 1804 towards Little Horton Academy.

A greater figure than these was William Radford (5 January 1764-26 August 1826), who, although never actually a member of the church at all, belonging to St. John's, Leeds, was actively connected with the Old Chapel almost from the beginning. A letter<sup>81</sup> from W. Price, the student sent to replace Langdon in 1780, and afterwards pastor of a separate Baptist congregation

<sup>78</sup> MS. notes of W. R. Bilbrough.

<sup>79</sup> Advertisements in the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Leeds Intelligencer*, July 10th, 1781, &c. I have no knowledge of the Ross family, and conjecture proves nothing, but is it mere coincidence that three persons named Ross, originally members of the Bradford church (John, May 22nd, 1768; Bridget, August 20th, 1767; Hannah, October 17th, 1772) signed the Farsley covenant of March 27th, 1780? *The Centenary Volume of the Baptist Church, Farsley, 1877*, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> See bibliography.

<sup>81</sup> MS. in the possession of Mr. J. E. Town, treasurer of South Parade, Leeds.

in Leeds, addressed to him is dated "Leeds, 11 July, 1782"; Radford was then an apprentice at Birmingham. He was the son of Thomas Radford (1730-1801) a Leeds jeweller and watchmaker, and was sent in 1780 to Birmingham, returning to Leeds about 1789; here he set up a separate shop having no connection with his father or his brother until 1793, on the death of the latter.<sup>82</sup> His generosity to the church is betokened by two subscriptions; 1804, £50 and other gifts to Horton Academy, and 1824, £100 towards the new South Parade church. His family connections are of special interest for our history; his three sisters married Baptists of note: Sarah married Thomas Potts, who gave Carey £10 to print his *Enquiry into the obligations of Christians to use means for the conversion of the heathen*; Ann married Benjamin Goodman; Elizabeth married Joseph Eyre. His cousin was the wife of Michael Thackray; and his daughter Elizabeth by his first wife, married John Goodman, and Sarah by his second wife married J. B. Bilbrough, whose son faithfully preserved much information about the old church. So that within that family circle is written much of the fortune of South Parade, for all the names mentioned stand out in its history. Langdon had a standing invitation to dine at his house once a week; and Acworth, when co-pastor, called every Saturday to read the *Mercury*. His is a figure of great charm; the incidents of his life, his kindness of heart, fondness for company, for books, and for sports, his membership of the "Stupids Club," the respect in which high and low held him, as well as the delicate and beautiful specimens of his craftsmanship and well bound volumes in calf from his library that I have seen, leave the impression that here was a man of wide sympathies, who touched and loved life at many points. He died just before South Parade chapel was opened.

Another great name in the old church is that of Michael Thackray. He was baptised about 1792, for the funeral sermon, in manuscript, preached for him by Dr. Acworth, is still preserved and testifies to a connection with the chapel for more than thirty-seven years. He was a deacon at the old chapel, and a trustee for both the old and the new churches; it was at his house that the important meeting to launch the South Parade scheme was held in 1824; and he gave most generously to the total of £1,000 his share in the cost of that church. He subscribed five guineas annually to Little Horton, besides giving an initial donation of £21. He died on October 11, 1829. He, too, was in the woollen trade, like many of the chief men in the church. His wife, Rachel Spence, was the cousin of W. Radford; his family were

<sup>82</sup> *Leeds directories*, 1798, 1817, 1826, but not 1834; advertisements in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, July 21st, 1794, &c.

generous donors to the new church; in 1824 G. & J. gave each £250, Mary and Rachel each £20, Sarah £10, and John £20. Mary (b. 1788) died unmarried; Rachel (b. 1794) married Rev. R. W. Hamilton; Sarah (b. 1803) married Dr. Acworth.

But the chief layman is Benjamin Goodman<sup>83</sup> (27 August, 1763-10 June, 1848) who, with his wife Ann, née Radford, was baptised on April 17th, 1792. By trade he was a wool-stapler, at Hunslet Lane; and he was "an ardent Reformer . . . and had been a chief prop of the Lancasterian school from its commencement," said the obituary notice of him in the *Leeds Mercury*.<sup>84</sup> He was a church member for fifty-six years, and a deacon from 1792 till 1833, when in November of that year he resigned the office, it being recorded in a minute of January 3rd, 1834 that "attempts to induce him to retain diaconal office [were] seemingly unavailing and useless." In 1817, he presided at the meeting of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Auxiliary B.M.S. at Leeds. He had much to do with the finances of the church, and was treasurer for a time; the church balance sheets are continuous from his time to the present (1820 onwards), and from the account books kept by him much of the history of the church is derived. In 1804 he is among the annual subscribers, with a five guinea subscription, to Little Horton, and he afterwards made many generous donations to it; in 1824, he gave £500 towards the new church, and in 1836 £356 13s. 0d. He was a trustee of South Parade, and his activities at that time have been noted. In the year before he died he was deprived of speech "while worshipping in this sanctuary" records a minute of January, 1847; he died on Saturday, June 10th, 1848; Dr. Acworth preached a funeral sermon for him on the 25th. Of him, after considering what has been preserved about him, we can only say that his was the vigorous personality that perhaps Browning would have delighted to honour and portray; he was inclined to be masterful, dominating the conversation ("we have had a pleasant evening's talk, gentlemen," he would say, at parting, to the company which had sat mute all the evening at his feet) yet kind when known.

His eldest son, John, was in the same business. He married Elizabeth, daughter of W. Radford. Though never baptised, he did much good work for the new South Parade building scheme; yet he seems to have inherited many of his father's faults without his kindness, and his life was in the end not happy. His more famous son, Sir George (1792-1859) was Mayor of

<sup>83</sup> Portrait by C. H. Schwanfelder (Leeds Corporation) and another (Thoresby Society), Old Leeds Exhibition Catalogue, 1908.

<sup>84</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, June 17th, 1848, p. 5, col. 2.

Leeds in 1836, being the first holder of the office after the Municipal Corporations Act, in part of 1847, 1850/1, and part of 1851/2; he was re-elected for 1837, but paid the statutory fine of £100 to resign; he was also M.P. for Leeds from 1852-57. Like his father he was a wool-stapler. He had a long connection with the church, of which he was trustee, and to his name stand the contributions of £250, 1824, £100, 1836, and jointly with John, £110 3s. 6d. in 1828. He was unmarried. In Leeds he was universally popular, and in character the reverse of his brother; his good nature earned him the nickname of "Smiling George." Benjamin Goodman had two bachelor brothers, John and George, who should not be confused with his sons of the same names.

There are many other names in the records, some of them not unimportant, but most of them ordinary, humble members, unknown even to local history; we can but vaguely wonder who were those forgotten worshippers in that little church of Thomas Langdon's; and it is not until after 1826 that the records are so abundant that we feel that we know a good deal about the minor men and women, who, like the greater ones, have left us so precious and so fragrant a memory.

There was a second Particular Baptist Church in Leeds in the eighteenth century, but it had a short life and records of it are scarce. A number of the original members, it is said, so liked William Price, the student sent from Bristol to replace Langdon in 1780, that they built for him a separate chapel called Ebenezer, not far distant from the Stone Chapel. Price was succeeded as minister by Hugh Williams. By 1797 the building was in the possession of the Methodist New Connexion. Of Langdon's relations with other denominations we know little also, but we know that Dr. Steadman preached on one occasion for Rev. E. Parsons, when ill, and that in 1817 it was Parsons who seconded a resolution of Langdon's at the B.M.S. meeting in Leeds.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Abbreviations :

*W.T.W.*, Dr. Whitley, A Baptist bibliography.

*Lds.*, Leeds Public Reference Library.

*Memoir*, A brief memoir of the Rev. Thomas Langdon . . . by his daughter, 1837.

I. The printed works of Langdon.

1791. Christian benevolence. (Circular of the Yorkshire & Lancashire Association at Salendine Nook). [*W.T.W.*]

[In a letter of 1790, May 1st, to Langdon, Robert Hall praises a sermon he has received : " You ought with such talents

for composition as you have displayed in this instance, to edify the world oftener by your publications." *Memoir*, 143.

Fawcett praised the circular letter, August 13th, 1791. *Memoir*, 155.]

1795. The obligation of Christians to support a conversation becoming the gospel. A sermon . . . in Hull. pp. 31. [*W.T.W.* and *Memoir*, 30.]

1803. The death of a good man lamented and improved. A sermon, occasioned by the death of Mr. Joseph Sharp, of Woodhouse-Car, near Leeds; who died November 26th, 1803, in the fifty-ninth year of his age. *The memory of the just is blessed*. Prov. x. 7. pp. 20 (ii). sm8vo. Leeds, printed by George Wilson, Hunslet Lane.

[*Lds.* Dedication dated Leeds, December 10th, 1803. Last leaf comprises a hymn.]

1804. The divine Being a God that hideth himself. A sermon preached on Lord's-day evening, January 7th, 1804, at Salem Chapel, in Leeds, at the weekly meeting for prayer on account of the present state of the nation. *Clouds and darkness are round about him*. Psalm xcvi. 2. pp. 22. sm8vo. Leeds, printed by George Wilson, [etc.]

[*Lds.* "Advertisement" dated Leeds, January 24th, 1804. The *Sharp* sermon advertised at p. 22 as "just published."]

1804. The importance of the Christian ministry. A sermon preached before the ministers and brethren of the Associated Baptist churches in the counties of York and Lancaster at Hebden Bridge, May 24th, 1804, previous to the establishment of the Northern Education Society. Published at the request of the ministers. pp. [ii] 32. 8vo. Leeds, printed by George Wilson.

[*W.T.W.* *Lds.*, has a presentation copy with the autograph inscription "Mr. C. H. Tatham from the author." A subscription list at p. 29.]

1810. The certain and proper use of the doctrine of election. (Circular of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association at Bradford). Leeds, pp. 16.

[*W.T.W.* Cf. *Memoir*, p. 101.]

[1814]. God maketh wars to cease. A sermon preached at Leeds, July 7th, 1814 . . . a general thanksgiving. . . . A tribute of respect to the memory of C. J. Fox. 8vo. Leeds, printed by G. Wilson [etc.]. No date. pp. 24.

[*W.T.W.* *Lds.* Dedication dated Leeds, July 9th, 1814.]

1817. A tribute to the memory of a young person lately deceased [his son] in which some of his letters are introduced,

. . . [By John Fawcett, junior]. To which is subjoined a sermon, preached by the Rev. T. Langdon on occasion of his death. pp. iii, 88; 22.

[*W.T.W.*, who adds "two editions of the sermon separately." The full title of Langdon's sermon runs: "A sermon, preached at Hebden-bridge, Nov. 3, 1816, on occasion of the death of John Hargreaves Fawcett, son of Mr. John Fawcett, and grandson of the Rev. John Fawcett, D.D., of Ewood-Hall, who died October 10, 1816, in the twenty-first year of his age." No place, no date. pp. 24. No proper title-page to Langdon's sermon, but a full half-title; I have used a copy in the possession of Mr. J. E. Town, with the autograph inscription, "Miss Radford with the author's love" on a plain brown-paper cover. *Lds.* has a second edition, pp. [iv.] 88; 24 (and [ii.] advertisement), sm8vo. Halifax, Holden, [etc.] 1817. The first section dated Ewood Hall, June 3rd, 1817. This copy has an autograph inscription, "To Joseph Bilbrough for diligence in his studies. Ewood Hall, December 1825." Label on spine reads "Price 2/-"]

1823. Resignation to the divine will. A sermon occasion'd by the death of his daughter Mary B. Langdon, who died January 6th, 1823, pp. 20 8vo, Leeds, E. Baines [etc.].

[*W.T.W.* *Lds.* Copiously quoted in the *Memoir.*]

## II. Other Leeds books.

William Crabtree: The prosperity of a gospel church considered: in a sermon delivered at the Ebenezer-chapel at Leeds, January 14th, 1789, and published at the request of the hearers. 8vo. Bradford, printed for the author, Nicholson, no date. pp. 42. "Price 6d."

Account of the 2nd annual meeting of the Yorkshire and Lancashire, Assistant Baptist Missionary Society, held at Leeds, on the 28th day of August, 1817. sm8vo. Rochdale, Littlewood, no date. pp. 23.

James Acworth: An address delivered at the laying of the first stone of the intended new Baptist Chapel South-Parade, Leeds . . . February 23rd, 1825. pp. 13. 8vo. Leeds, E. Baines [n.d.].

A brief memoir of the Rev. Thomas Langdon, Baptist minister, of Leeds; . . . By his daughter. pp. 155; a plate of Langdon. 8vo. London, Simpkin, Marshall, 1837.

The jubilee of South Parade Baptist Chapel, Leeds, . . . Edited by John W. Ashworth. pp. 66. sm8vo. Leeds, Spark, 1877.

[Other printed works as quoted in the text.]

## III. Manuscripts.

1. Note books of William Radford Bilbrough, containing family notes; amongst which are recollections of his mother, née Radford, who attended the Old Chapel when young, information on the Goodman family, etc.

2. Funeral sermon on Michael Thackray by Dr. J. Acworth, October, 1829.

3. Funeral sermon on Thomas Langdon, by Dr. Acworth, October, 1824.

4. Funeral sermon on Mrs. Goodman, by Dr. Acworth, 1830.

5. Various church documents at South Parade Church, copied or preserved by Mr. J. E. Town, to whom the MSS. above belong.

*Addenda.* 1. P. 81, n. 41. The letter from Langdon to Steadman (7th Jan. 1805) urging him to accept the presidency of Horton College is in the Isaac Mann collection of letters, of which Rev. F. G. Hastings is compiling a calendar.

2. The Rawdon Church Book (ms.) page 75, reveals the fact that it was Langdon who preached the funeral sermon for Rev. John Oulton in May, 1804, from Gen. XV. 15.

*The Library,*  
*University, Leeds.*

F. W. BECKWITH.

CONTINENTAL DIVINES were invited to share in the English Reformation under Edward VI.; one came from Poland, three from Germany, one from Flanders, one from Spain, one from Provence, three from Italy. International education, wrecked by the Reformation, served England well. These scholars helped in the Polish Bible, produced a Testament in three languages, and a Spanish Testament still reprinted. Some of their traditions are preserved at the Dutch church in Austin Friars and at the French church in Soho Square. But their influence on England was direct and lasting. Not only did they hold divinity chairs at Oxford and Cambridge, and make preparations for a revision of the Great Bible, but they helped draw up a code of the ecclesiastical laws of England, and left a deep mark on the revised Prayer Book of 1552. The facts are well set out by Mr. Henry J. Cowell in the "Proceedings of the Huguenot Society of London," XIV., 3.