

## John Stutterd of Colne.

Based on an anonymous fragment belonging to Mr. Percy Stock, of Shadwell, near Leeds, incorporating entries from Stutterd's diary.

**S**TUTTERD'S parents were natives of Perth, who left about the time of the Scotch rebellion and came to England. As the father was a weaver of tweeds, they settled at Southfield or as it is now called, Briercliffe or Haggate, where John was born 2 March, 1748. (Even if this means 1748/9, it does not quite tally with the memorial inscription presently quoted.) His grandmother, a pious and lovely character, died before he emerged from childhood, but not before she had made a deep and salutary impression on his mind. The words of love and the songs of praise which were so expressive of the cheerful piety of his beloved parents, were remembered through life and spoken of with gratitude. "O that her son may meet her there to join in the blissful employment of praise to the Lamb for ever!" His father Jabez and his grandmother lie interred in one grave inside the old chapel at Haggate; his mother and her son lie interred in one grave in the burial ground of the old Baptist chapel in Colne Lane, awaiting the appearing of Him whose voice will wake the slumbering dead.

John was the eldest son; besides a sister Hannah he had brothers Thomas and Jabez. Thomas was transferred from Haggate in 1781 to the church at Salendine Nook, which called him out to preach the gospel; being a traveller in the woollen trade he often took long journeys into Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Northampton, &c. He frequently preached for Hopper at Nottingham, Ryland at Northampton, Stennett at Coate, also at Leicester, Banbury, Witney, Weston and Bugbrooke. As he died on a journey, he was buried at Oxford by James Hinton. Jabez was a Methodist, employed by the same firm at Huddersfield; he joined a new Baptist church at Elland, built by Ashworth, and ministered to by Hindle, a pupil of Fawcett—whose advertisement has been rescued. About 1791 he went on with Hindle to a new church at Blackley built by Cartledge, leaving Elland to collapse. He entered the employ of a firm at Driffield, and may have helped the church there; also he may have helped the church at Dagger Lane in Hull, first offshoot from Hindle's church there. He ended as he began, a Methodist at Colne.

A descendant, a third Jabez, became pastor at Crowle, where he was the innocent victim of forged records.

The church at Haggate is due to the labours of Thomas Jollie of Altham, an ejected minister, who is known in 1666 to have had Baptists among his hearers; he died in 1703. His work was helped by Charles Sager, formerly master of the Blackburn Grammar school, who had to resign because of the Five Mile Act; he however died in 1697/8. But while dissent was strong in the district, it received a gain from an immigration of chapmen from Scotland, of which the Stutterds are an example, and from the work of William Grimshaw, incumbent at Haworth from 1742. By him Richard Smith was converted; he joined the Baptist church at Barnoldswick and was sent out as a preacher, doing good work at Haggate for about ten years. "He zealously maintained the doctrines commonly called Calvinistical, in which he neither feared the frowns nor courted the smiles of men. A diversity of opinions on doctrinal points prevailing, Mr. Smith withdrew and began to preach at Wainsgate, where in 1750 he erected a chapel and formed a church."

"The Revd. Dan Nowell was the next presiding Elder or pastor at Haggate, and by him Mr. Stutterd was baptised in a river near Southfield on Thursday, September 13th, 1766, when about seventeen years of age. The church immediately gave him a commission to preach the gospel; he preached his first sermon at Haggate Chapel from Acts 17, v. 3, This Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ. His decision for God was developed at an early period, going into the surrounding villages to carry the bread of life to hungry and perishing souls, and that at great and imminent danger to his health. It was in January, 1767, he set off from Southfield to preach at Colne one evening, it was before the bridge was erected at the bottom of the Lenches over the river Calder; the river was swollen, the stepping stones were either swam away or they could not be seen; in this perplexity what was he to do? Go back to Southfield or go through the stream. Duty said No, venture thro; he did so, tho it took him up nearly to his waist he got safe through, obtained a change of raiment, preached to 7 persons in John Highton's house Windybank from 'Ye must be born again.' The service over but his audience could not leave the house, somebody had tied them in the house with a strong rope. Staid at Colne all night.

"Mr. Stutterd's account of sermons begins on Christmas day, December 25th, 1768, on which day he preached John i. 14 (and the word was made flesh) and is continued up to Year 1818, during which time he preached 7,937 Sermons. He was in his younger days an active village preacher; he kept a plan and

visited in rotation such as Southfield, Barrowford, Barley, Whearley Lane, Roughlee, Trawden, Wycollar, Foubridge, Earby: by this means was the Baptist Congregation at Colne first gathered. This year (1769) the room on New House Back Side was taken at a yearly rent of £4 : 0 : 0d. of Abraham Crook, supposed to be the grandfather of Bernard Crook, formerly a grocer in this town. It seems that a few persons believers in our Lord Jesus Cht. had previously been baptised on a profession of faith, and on June 22nd in the year 1769 a church of baptised believers was formed at Colne. As it may gratify many of the friends at Colne to read the request to the Church at Haggate for Mr. Stutterd's dismissal we give it entire:—

Colne May 9th 1769.

To the Church at Haggate: Grace mercy and peace be multiplied unto you.

Dear Brethren,

This is to let you know our circumstances at present. We are a company of baptised believers who have agreed together (God's grace assisting us) to give up ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant we hope never to be broken:—And we have set apart a day for fasting and prayer to seek the Lord's direction in this important affair and we think it is the Lord's will and pleasure to call a pastor to labour among us in word and doctrine—As brother John Stutterd has we firmly believe preached the gospel unto us with much clearness and sincerity of mind and heart and his life and conversation have been adorned with the same. And inasmuch as we can truly say from the ground of our hearts that he is really sent of God to preach the Gospel though he does it with much fear and trembling we humbly desire you to grant brother John Stutterd his dismissal from your presbetry to labour among us as our teacher or pastor for we think the Lord hath made him willing to take the oversight of us. So we conclude desiring your request unto Almighty God for us—Farewell—

Signed

JOHN GREENWOOD, WILLIAM ROBINSON.

“ Mr. Stutterd's dismissal being received, he and his friends were formed into a church June 22, 1769, consisting of the following persons all baptised believers, namely John Stutterd, Elizabeth Stutterd, John Greenwood, William Robinson, Kezia Green, Jane Laycock, Obidiah Sager, Thomas Hyde, Ruben Conyers; six males and three females. Mr. Stutterd was ordained the same day. Revd. Dan Nowell of Haggate offered the ordination prayer and delivered the Charge from 1 Timothy

3. 15 latter clause: The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. The Revd. Henry Clayton of Salendine Nook addressed the Members from I Corinthians 4. 17. Colbeck Sugden, Cowling Hill, and Dan Taylor of Widdup closed the service with prayer. Dan Taylor was afterwards the founder of the New Connexion of General Baptists in 1770.

"I baptized this day (1770, January 12th) at Broken Banks our young friend Miss Martha Cocker aged 21 and Benjamin Whitehead Abraham Broadbents brother-in-law; very much snow on the ground. The thaw had caused the Calder to rise. It was most bitter cold. For Saturday Afternoon there were many eye witnesses.

"Mr. Stutterd once a year made some remarks in the Church book respecting the number of members their increase or decrease during the past year. May 11th 1772. This day the baptised church of Christ at Colne Lancaster under the pastoral care of John Stutterd is composed of 19 members. We have lost by death three by exclusion one, We have received four from the ruins of the church at Gosburn, two have been baptised. Number of Members, 21.

"December 16th 1773. I this Saturday Afternoon baptised in the Broken Banks river, Robert Hyde and Jane Gregson. Mr. Hyde was born at Marsden nr. Colne in the year 1756; at 17 years of age he was under serious impressions having worshipped with the Methodists." [Here follows a long passage about Hyde to be seen in the Baptist Magazine of May, 1842, and in the History of Cloughfold; not written by Stutterd.]

"Church Meeting, Feb. 1st, 1785. Betty Laycock who had been offended was reconciled. Last Church Meeting she produced a plan for a new chapel. It was little attended to. Our hired house is taken for another year at four pounds rental—And I hear nothing more said about building. Tommy Blakey one of our members has been about three months in the lunatic Hospital Manchester. John Fawcett of Wainsgate the last time he preached in Manchester called to see him. Dan Laycock thinks to bring him home next" [here the fragment ends].

The anonymous writer thus places the origin of the Scotch Baptist church at Haggate about 1750, rather earlier than was thought. And whereas the church at Colne was regarded as an offshoot of Cowling Hill, there is here a careful account of its origin and connection with Haggate. A chapel was built on Colne Lane, and application was made to the "Baptist Case Committee" for help towards the expense. It was promised that it might collect after Manchester; but when that time arrived in 1792, the whole cost had been cleared by a collecting tour in the midlands, among the churches John's brother Thomas had

served. John married twice; by his first wife he had a boy who died young: at the age of 65, "on the recommendation of his friends," he married a girl of 20. Within three years a memorial was needed:—

JOHN STUTTERD, who under God was the founder of the Baptist Church in this place and Pastor over it for 40 years. Like Moses he was slow of speech but was well informed and judicious and of an eminently meek and quiet spirit. He lived respected and esteemed by his friends and acquaintances and died in peace June 7th, 1818. Aged 68. The memory of the just is Blessed.

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May 28, 1794.