

The History  
of  
Trinity Congregational Church, Swinton

by

Rev. Ian H. Wallace B.A.  
Minister, of Patricroft United Reformed Church,  
Eccles

## Introduction

My thanks are due to Mr. Alan Platt, Chemist, 295 Moorside Road, Swinton, who gave many years of loyal service to Trinity Congregational Church, Swinton, as Church Organist, for preserving the Minute Books of the Church and granting me his good will in the matter of undertaking the task of writing the history of the Church he served so well.

Rev. Dr. Glyndor Harris and Rev. David W. Turner, B.Sc., were kind enough to supply me with detailed information regarding their subsequent careers in the church.

Mr. John Creasey, Librarian, Dr. Williams' Library, has again been most helpful to me by providing copies of the Cards prepared by Rev. Charles Surman for Revs. Elliot, Cotton, Hanson, Mappin and Harris, and useful extracts from:

W. Densham & J. Ogle - The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset and from The History of the Old Independent Chapel, Tockholes 1886 by Benjamin Nightingale.

Mr. Frank J. Carroll, Head of the Newspaper Section, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. and Elinor S. Hearn, Librarian, The Archives of the Episcopal Church in America, supplied information and data about Rev. Robert Hammond Cotton.

Mark W. Harris, Information Office, Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston, Mass. and Marta M. Flanagan, Assistant to the Curator, Andover - Harvard Theological Library, Cambridge, Mass., furnished data regarding Rev. Miles Hanson.

I am also grateful to Rev. Ann S. Arthur, Unitarian Information Officer, Essex Hall, Strand, London and David Watson, Potters Bar, Herts for answers to queries regarding the Union of Modern Free Churchmen.

Mr. Ronald Edgerley, our Church Secretary at Patricroft, did me the favour of reading the manuscript before publication.

Ian H. Wallace

The early history of Congregationalism in Pendlebury is not easily obtained but evidently Pendlebury was recommended as a suitable place for the attention of the Lancashire Congregational Union as early as 1819. A number of Reverend Gentlemen - Messrs. Adamson, Dyson, Jackson, Slate, Combs and Gadsby - made a practice of preaching in different cottages which were thrown open for that purpose and it is said that Mr. Dyson on coming from Farnworth often met with a hostile reception on passing through Clifton by being pelted with stones.

The work of God prospered, however, and regular services were subsequently held in Union Street in a cottage set apart for the purpose; and as a token of the brotherly feeling which ought to exist between one portion of Christ's church and another, it appears that while the Independents conducted a Sabbath School and public worship in the room below the Church of England, at the same hour, held a Sabbath School in the room above. The two congregations holding their services in the same building at the same hour were in the habit of disturbing each other thus rendering a dissolution of partnership desirable. So in 1821 the Independents erected their first small chapel in Chapel Street.

The chapel was opened for worship on 14th June and the congregation in the evening was so large that it was necessary to conduct worship in an adjacent field. For a time the church continued to be served by pulpit supply, but then it was considered desirable that an agent should be stationed on the ground and this recommendation was implemented by the Union although no mention is made of the agent's name.

Towards the end of 1823 or the beginning of 1824 Rev. John Penkethman was called to the pastorate. He had no college training but he had laboured successfully at Wharton, where the congregation had increased both in numbers and in harmony during his ministry and the Sunday School there was in a promising state. He also exercised an itinerant ministry at Walkden, Edge Fold, Salt Lane and Westhoughton.

On settling at Pendlebury in 1824 he continued his itinerant ministry in Swinton, Clifton and other places but not to the detriment of the cause at Pendlebury. In the following year it was reported that Pendlebury could not accommodate a larger congregation or school without a larger place of worship and that a church had been formed, which at the time consisted of nine members.

In 1825 the second chapel "36 feet by 45 feet" was built - the original chapel was subsequently converted into two cottages. This second building was so beautifully situated that it was known as "T" Chapel-i-th-Gardens<sup>1</sup>. Revs. Roby and Bradley preached the opening sermons. The sum expended on the building was raised at the time apart from £90. Mr. Penkethman also had preaching stations at Swinton, Clifton, Wardley Lane and Irlams-o'-th-Height. Disturbing elements arose, however, in the church and congregation and this led to the resignation of the minister in 1828.<sup>2</sup>

He was succeeded by a Mr. Eliot but as trouble continued in the church, he remained only a short time (1828-30).<sup>3</sup>

Since 1819 the County Union had made an Annual Grant to Pendlebury, but the church which now numbered three or at most four members had sank so low that the Union decided that something simply had to be done. Accordingly Revs. Messrs. Roby, McAll, Combs, Deaken and Dyson with Messrs. Joule, S. Fletcher and Barnes were appointed a Committee to meet members of the church and to investigate their affairs.

The Committee met at the house of Mr. Joule who was a member of Mr. Roby's church. His residence, however, was in Pendlebury and he was an occasional worshipper at the Pendlebury Church. Rev. T.S. Porter, late of Glasgow and formerly a tutor to Mr. Joule's sons, was present when the Conference took place and reported later that the Committee recommended the Church to end its existence. This the members refused to do. "Once or twice" says Mr. Porter "they pleaded divine right, then Civil Law, then the eternal sacredness of Independency and at last they shut themselves up solidly in the fastness 'We cannot and we will not' and it was not until the Committee intimated that they could not give public money to such a church that dissolution followed." Eventually the advice was accepted and a committee was formed out of the congregation to carry on the work.

According to an old record of the "Transactions of the subscribers to Bethel Chapel" an invitation was extended on 27th October, 1830 to Rev. J. Anyon of Inglewhite to become minister. This he accepted and he commenced his labours on 28th November of the same year. On 11th September, 1832 a church was again formed consisting of eight members. For some time steady growth was maintained not, however, without discordant elements. Still Mr. Anyon proved himself to be the right man in the right place doing good work at Pendlebury and also being the "honoured instrument" of forming several churches in the surrounding districts.

When he came to Pendlebury there was a debt on the Chapel and at the commencement of his ministry it did not have a gallery. By 1834 a gallery had been erected and improvements made to the chapel at a cost of £312 5s. 11d. the whole of which was paid for by 16th March of that year together with £20 towards the chapel debt which then stood at £52 14s. 10d. By 1840 the prosperous condition of the church enabled the friends to declare themselves independent of any pecuniary aid from the Union. A debt of £190 which was due upon the chapel to two individuals was generously cancelled by them. After 15 years of ministry Mr. Anyon resigned in December 1845 leaving behind him 32 members.<sup>4</sup>

For three years the church at Pendlebury was without a pastor until in 1849 a unanimous invitation was extended to Rev. Mark Hardaker, which he was pleased to accept. He had trained for the ministry at Airedale College and as Pendlebury was his first pastorate he was ordained to the charge. At the beginning of his ministry the church again became the recipient of help from Union Funds, but the grant was justified as substantial progress was made. His ministry, however, at Pendlebury was made difficult by "the exponents of a peculiar theology" i.e. hyper-Calvinism, which he succeeded in putting down. Mr. Hardaker was a Calvinist himself, but he was not an extremist. The struggle, however, was not without cost. His health broke down and he moved to Horwich in January 1854. When he left Pendlebury there were on the church roll 47 names instead of 27 which he found when he came.<sup>5</sup>

Again there was a period of about three years during which the church was without a pastor, but on 11th January, 1857, Alexander Bell commenced his ministry at Pendlebury.<sup>6</sup> Before he came a house had been purchased for the minister, but a debt of £200 remained upon it. By 1858 this debt was paid the money being raised by subscription amounting to £180 10s. 0d. and by a bazaar, which yielded £71 11s. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. leaving a balance in hand of £52 1s. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. This was originally intended to form a nucleus of a fund for enlarging the schoolroom, but the money was ultimately devoted to a fund for building a vestry at the back of the chapel.

By the time Mr. Bell arrived in Pendlebury the green belt which had characterised the area in the early days when the church was known as the chapel in the garden had been largely replaced by the working class dwellings occupied by those who worked in the mines, the mills and the factories. In the early years of Mr. Bell's ministry the workers in Pendlebury and indeed throughout Lancashire were comfortably situated being in steady employment. Many had deposits in the savings banks and a considerable number owned their own houses, but although the Cotton Industry had many strengths its prosperity was threatened by increased foreign competition, by periodic depressions and by being dependent on one source of supply for raw material - the Southern States of America.

The outbreak of the Civil War in America was a disaster for the people of Lancashire. The Cotton Famine decimated the industry and led to bankruptcies and the closure between 1861 and 1865 of no less than 338 cotton mills throughout the County. Other mills went on short time and the distress caused by the Famine led to a big increase in the number of applications to the Guardians for relief.<sup>7</sup>

The Cotton Famine made itself sorely felt at Pendlebury. Professional people suffered along with the workers. Non-Conformist ministers helped others although themselves in distress through reductions in their salaries, as few if any of their members were able to pay for their seats in the chapels. Doctors continued to visit patients, who were ill but too poor to call them out. School fees were also waived during the crisis, but the Headmasters saw to it that education was continued free as they would not incur the responsibility of turning the children on to the streets.

Mr. Bell and the church at Pendlebury shared in the general hardship. Finances fell off but the minister shared in the poverty of his people, foregoing his stipulated salary and accepting what the people would raise in addition to the Grant from the County Union. In recognition of his exertions in connection with the Relief Committee he was presented with a silver medal. Amid the good wishes of his own congregation and the vast population he had served so well he preached his farewell sermons on 1st May 1864. He found 44 names on the Pendlebury church roll and left 51.<sup>8</sup>

Rev. George Rogers, who was educated for the Baptist ministry took charge of the church in August 1864. He engaged himself initially to the church for only 6 months, but he remained 11 months. After being absent for 3 months he returned by invitation of the church but finally resigned on 7th April 1867 leaving the membership of the church the same as he found it. During his ministry, however, the schoolroom was enlarged and classrooms were added at a cost of £400 about one half of which remained as a debt.<sup>9</sup>

Rev. H.F. Walker, who had trained for the ministry at the Nottingham Institute, succeeded Mr. Rogers and began his duties on 9th August, 1868.<sup>10</sup> The debt of about £180 was now found to be a burden and on 29th June, 1870 the church decided to hold a bazaar for the purpose of raising funds for its liquidation and also to improve the chapel. A Committee was appointed and circulars issued. Friends in the neighbourhood advised the erection of a new chapel. This was taken into consideration by the Committee and a resolution was passed at a Church Meeting held on 30th November viz. "That this Committee having heard the report of the Bazaar Committee of Management advising the erection of a new chapel and schoolroom gladly accepts the proposal and pledges itself to further the scheme".

Fresh circulars were issued appealing for friends around to aid the Bazaar, which was held in the Pendlebury Institute in October 1872 and realised the sum of £478 Os. 1½d. After deducting expenses and paying off the debt on the school, which had been reduced to £129 the sum of £317 was deposited in the bank. This amount was added to from time to time e.g. from the sale of articles left over from the bazaar and from subscriptions given by several members of the congregation so that at the Jubilee Meeting<sup>11</sup> held in November 1875 presided over by Henry Lee, Esq. J.P. of Sedgeley Park, the minister was able to report that upwards of £520 was safely in the Bank towards a new chapel, but unfortunately the building had not been proceeded with owing to the inability of the Committee to agree upon a suitable site and to the fact that the money raised was insufficient to proceed with confidence and the Lancashire and Cheshire Chapel Building Society appeared to be in no position to help the Church.

Mr. Walker also reported that within the past three months the church had purchased an organ at the cost of £75 and required about £10 to complete payment for it and a similar sum to meet the expense of the alteration of pews. The Sunday School had now 230 or 240 members - only 10 or 20 more than it had 35 years ago. In the Mission stations in the district the church had rather lost ground not having any at present whereas in 1839 it had missions at Irlams-o'-th-Height, at Wardley Lane, at Folly Lane, at Prestwich and at Colliers' Square with congregations varying from 25 to 60, but churches both established and non-established, which have sprung up on most of those localities may account for the work being abandoned.

Later in the meeting while Rev. R. Best was reviewing the marvellous changes that had taken place in the world, the international postal communications, the press etc., a workman entered breathless and indiscreetly raised an alarm that Hope Mill, the property of John Davis, Esq., leader of the choir, was on fire. This led to his hasty departure followed by his son (the organist) and a large number of those present.

Rev. G.H. Brown attempted to speak but was unable to proceed owing to the excitement of the fire alarm. After a short interval a collection was taken and the congregation became more composed when it was known that the fire had been subdued. Rev. Mark Hardaker, a former pastor then addressed the gathering and the proceedings closed with a vote of thanks to the Ladies, who had provided tea free of charge and presided at tables.

It was regrettable that the interruption caused by the fire in some measure affected the collection though many contributed at the door as they hurried out.

The Congregationalists at Pendlebury had to wait for seven years more before they were able to abandon the old chapel, which they had for long felt to be unsuited to the growing requirements of the district for "a more imposing structure in Swinton on a site central to the two villages" although they continued to use the old chapel at Pendlebury as a Day and Sunday School.

- 1 The site was behind the present day Pendlebury British Legion Club.
- 2 Mr. Penkethman moved to Ashton-in-Makerfield. There he was ordained and ministered successfully for eleven years. A short pastorate at Belthorn, near Darwen (barely two years) was followed by his last ministry (eight years) at Tockholes, where he instituted a Ragged School. For a full account of Mr. Penkethman, see History of the Old Independent Chapel, Tockholes, near Blackburn, Lancs., by Benjamin Nightingale.
- 3 No details are known of Mr. Eliot's subsequent career, but he trained in Blackburn Academy. He is listed in the Academy Report 1839 as "deceased".
- 4 Mr. Anyon moved to Park Chapel Ramsbottom where he laboured earnestly and successfully for nearly 22 years.
- 5 Mr. Hardaker laboured successfully at Horwich until 1866. A beautiful chapel was erected during his ministry and entirely cleared of debt. A more restful ministry at Bucklow Hill, a small country pastorate in Cheshire, which he served for over 15 years, prepared him for his retirement in Southport.
- 6 Mr. Bell trained for the ministry at Dublin Independent College. He did mission work as a student and his first charge was at Ballycraigy, a church which had fallen into a low state. His labours soon produced a gratifying change. He also served at Plunkett Street, Dublin and at Mountmelli, Queen's County before leaving Ireland to settle in Mottram Cheshire in 1849. These varied spheres helped to equip him for the work he had to do at Pendlebury a charge which was to tax his resources to the limit.
- 7 For a full account of the distress caused by the Lancashire Cotton Famine see: The Lancashire Cotton Famine by W.O. Henderson. Also: A Visit to Lancashire in December 1862 by Ellen Barlee.
- 8 Mr. Bell proceeded to Westerham, Kent, where he served until 1878. He retired to London and became a member of Camberwell Green Congregational Church, being responsible for the Sunday Afternoon Service at the Masonic Hall and engaging in tract distribution. He wrote several poems and three pamphlets - "Neutrality in Religion an Impossibility"; "Congregationalism, its Principles and Polity" and "Specific Prayer insures Specific Answers".

- 9 Mr. Rogers became pastor of the associated churches of Stallridge and Henstridge in 1867. A new chapel was built at a cost of £1,400 and a new organ and communion service was presented by two of the members and before Mr. Rogers closed his ministry i.e. by 1871 the whole of the debt was paid. He removed to Yeovil in 1872 and soon afterwards to Harley Clay County, Minnesota, where he established an agricultural settlement and became its leader and chaplain.
- 10 Mr. Walker had previously laboured about two years at Uppingham in Rutlandshire. He was ordained on 22nd November, 1869.
- 11 The Jubilee Celebrations were memorable with three services on the Sunday. Attendances were large and included many members of other churches.

On the Monday evening a well-attended tea meeting was held in the schoolroom, which was decorated with a superb collection of variegated foliage plants in pots (lent by Mrs. Thomas Knowles). At the Public Meeting which followed (in the chapel) Mr. Walker read an interesting sketch of the church's history, which was afterwards printed in the Swinton and Pendlebury Times and the Eccles and Patricroft Journal - Saturday 6th November 1875.

Trinity Congregational Church as the new building was called was opened for worship on 13th June 1882 when Dr. MacFayden preached the sermon, the Revs. H.F. Walker (pastor) and W.H. Fothergill of Heywood, assisting in the service. The cost of the building was about £3,000 and it had seating accommodation for 430 people. Mr. Walker served the new church for two years before moving to Loughborough, Leicestershire in 1884 where he laboured until 1893.<sup>1</sup>

His successor Rev. R.H. Cotton, M.A. was a man of many parts. He trained for the ministry at Rawdon Baptist College (1862-67) but began his ministerial life in Unitarian circles holding Pastorates at Padiham, Lancs. 1869-73 and Dob Lane, Failsworth, Manchester 1873-74. He conformed in 1874 and attended Owen's College, Manchester 1874-79. He took three degrees B.A. 1872, B.Sc. 1877 and M.A. 1879 (London). He was ordained deacon in 1877 and priest in 1878 and served as curate of All Saints, Chorlton-on-Medlock 1877-82. He was also an Assistant Master of a Boys School and Headmaster of the Evening Classes, Manchester Mechanics Institute 1880-81. He was curate of St. Simon and Jude, Manchester 1883-84 and from this curacy he came to Trinity, Swinton. He settled in the pastorate in July 1885. There are no records regarding the numerical strength or the progress of the church at the time, but he served the cause at Trinity for four years. He resigned in 1889 and emigrated to America where he spent the rest of his life in the Episcopalian Church.<sup>2</sup>

He was succeeded on the first Sunday in April 1891 by Rev. John Shuker, who had previously ministered successfully at Poulton-le-Fylde (1873-80) where he had the supervision of several smaller churches and at Tottington near Bury. During his years at Trinity a new school was built to take the place of the original building of 1825 at Pendlebury. A keen supporter of Free Church principles he was one of the founder members of the local Free Church Council. He served the church faithfully until 1901 when he moved to Edgeworth near Bolton.<sup>3</sup>

On Mr. Shuker's departure there was a vacancy for about 12 months until Rev. Miles Hanson, who had ministered successfully at Bethel Chapel, Wortley, near Leeds since 1892, (although not without critics in his congregation because of his liberal views) accepted the call to Trinity and settled in the pastorate in August 1902. He came as an experienced minister, who had rendered excellent service to the Free Churches in the Leeds area and in the Education Work of the Local Authority.

Miles Hanson came to a family church at Trinity. The friends who gathered week by week loved it because of its family ties. If the preacher's views were not altogether acceptable on some occasions still the bond held. A deep sympathy grew up between minister and people. Congregations were uniformly good and interest was genuine. The renewed interest led to increased giving and the church officials readily agreed to recommend to the church that the minister should be given an additional sum for the half year ending 31st December 1902.

His ministry, however, was not free of difficulty. The church organist resigned in 1903 and in the following year trouble arose in the choir. This led to the choirmaster, Mr. Walmsley of Droylsden, giving notice of dismissal to four members. His action, however, was not approved by the Deacons and it was agreed that the choirmaster should be asked to reinstate Lily and Jimmy Bennett and Clara Wild. When Mr. Walmsley was called in and informed of this decision he tendered his resignation to take effect from the end of January 1905.

At the next Deacons' Meeting there was a long discussion about the choir and it was resolved that Mr. Walmsley should be asked to withdraw his resignation and that the three choir members should be asked to resume their seats in the choir. All present pledged themselves to abide loyally by the decision and to keep their seats whatever the decision of the parties mentioned might be.

It was later reported that Mr. Walmsley was prepared to withdraw his resignation on condition that he had a free hand with the choir and with his methods of conducting the choir and in carrying on choir work. It was unanimously decided that such conditions could not be accepted and that Mr. Walmsley be informed of that fact. Mr. Walter Yates was asked to undertake the duties pro tem.

Card playing and smoking in the schoolroom seems to have been a problem in 1905 and it was resolved that in future no card playing be allowed on any premises under the control of the Deacons and that smoking be only allowed in the men's classroom. (Minutes of the Diaconate 30th October 1905). Later steps were taken to limit Dancing on the premises. It was resolved by the Deacons (28th May 1906) that if dancing formed a part of the programme of any social gathering organised on behalf of church or school it must form only a very minor part and that dancing be prohibited on all other occasions. An attempt was made by the Church Association Football Club to get this rule relaxed in connection with a Club Social, but it met with a negative reply which stated that "the regulation regarding dancing is a resolution of the church and the Deacons have no power to vary that resolution" (23rd January 1907).

The last years of Mr. Hanson's ministry at Trinity were undertaken amid domestic difficulty. His eldest boy had an accident at public school, a kick given in play injured the lad's hip bone and a tuberculous hip was encountered. Permanent injury had been sustained and the lad had to be still in bed for 2½ years with constant attention given all the time. The household fought bravely and quietly and the friends at the church were noble in sympathy. Deeds of kindness were innumerable. The physician said that a bright dry climate would be a help. For months the family wondered and debated and then the second son was one day sent home by the school physician who said he had grave doubts about the condition of his lungs. They knew of a likely place in Texas and so they decided to make the break and try afresh in a new land under more favourable climatic conditions.

Mr. Hanson intimated his decision to relinquish his pastorate to the Deacons at a special meeting at the close of the Morning Service on 15th November 1909.

A farewell meeting was held in mid-January 1910 at which Mr. Joseph Yates, the Senior Deacon, presented Mr. Hanson with a handsome chain purse containing £78 10s. Od. in gold for Mrs Hanson's use and an illuminated album signed by the Church Officials in which mention was made of the progress which had marked Mr. Hanson's ministry.

Mr. Hanson had done a very good job at Trinity and he left behind for his successor a newly decorated and renovated church equipped with a new organ which cost with electric blowing £630.

The Eccles and Patricroft Journal for Friday 12th February 1909 gives a good description of the church. "Over the dado wains coting runs a deep band of blue green colour and above that running right round the church is a very cleverly designed border based on the vine. Surmounting that there is a beautifully effective arcaded rose and thorn pattern coloured in sage green, salmon and red. The side walls are panelled in light sage green with touches of gold in the corner ornaments, the centre ornaments are large conventional Gothic flowers picked out in blue, green and salmon colour.... Around the arch of the organ and choir gallery is an exquisitely designed ribbon label "Rejoice in the Lord and glory in the Holy One" in black Gothic letters with decorative touches in red to the initials.... These are supplemented at the same end of the church with the texts "Cease to do evil" "Learn to do well" in gold letters outlined with black on a cream ground, arranged as a horizontal border or frieze panels."

The scheme reflected great credit on Mr. Gordon M. Forsyth A.R.W.A. who did the designs and colour drawings and on Messrs. Jones and Jackson of Manchester, who carried out the work. The alterations to the choir gallery and pulpit to accommodate the new organ were entrusted to Messrs. Gerrard & Sons Ltd.

Mr. Hanson also left behind in Swinton a memorial of a different type in the form of the Swinton and Pendlebury Civic Guild of Help, which although by no means the largest organisation of its kind had the distinction of being the first in Lancashire. Rev. J. Renshaw Bailey, minister of Eccles Congregational Church, had preached a sermon in his church on Sunday 2nd April 1905 in which he referred to the defects in the English way of dealing with poverty and commended the Elberfeld System of Relief. Elberfeld was the German town where the scheme had first been introduced 50 years previously. The sermon was reported extensively in the Eccles and Patricroft Journal, 7th April 1905 and aroused a great deal of public interest and concern.

Miles Hanson readily took the initiative in Swinton and through his efforts a Provisional Committee was formed, a Town's Meeting convened and the Swinton and Pendlebury Civic Guild of Help was brought into being. An Inaugural Service was held in Trinity Church in January 1905 which was attended by most of the members of the Local Authority and the leading residents of the town. The Guild was officially formed at the Public Meeting, which was convened by the Chairman of the Council in May 1905.

Miles Hanson gave a splendid lead not only to the area but to the County when he founded the Civic Guild in Swinton and Pendlebury. In the early years the Guild did a great work and enjoyed the confidence and support of the public. Later it was relegated to a supplementary role and its work gradually became curtailed until it ceased altogether.<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Hanson had good memories of his pastorate at Trinity and he kept in touch with the Swinton people sending them vivid accounts of life under protection in Texas in which he calculated that it cost three times as much to live in Texas as it did in England. "Wages are double, but living costs treble English wages and costs,"<sup>5</sup> and of the Mexican Insurrection which took place just before President Diaz, who had held office for many years, resigned. He was opposed by Madero, a Socialist Millionaire. At the election Diaz was declared the winner, but it was openly said that he had "worked" the election and Madero lost hope of redress at the polls and took up arms<sup>6</sup>.

Mr. Hanson had a good clear mind and he later wrote a most interesting book "Out of the Old Paths" in which he describes his early life in Gomersal, near Leeds, his ministry and family troubles at Swinton, and his life in Texas where he spent a time in ranching before taking charge of the Pilgrim Church in El Paso. By dint of hard work and enterprise he put the church on its feet and it later became a Federated Church, Congregational and Unitarian. He also relates the peculiar circumstances which led to him becoming the minister of the noble old Meeting House, on John Eliot Square, Roxbury, Boston, one of the six oldest churches in New England - named after John Eliot, the Apostle to the Indians 1632-1690. The book is full of interest and is characterised by its candour and sincerity regarding his advanced views about the Bible and his personal beliefs and opinions. He wrote two other books "The Power Behind" 1915 and "The Hills of God" 1923.<sup>7</sup> His son Miles Hanson, Junior, who was for over twenty years minister of the First Parish in Weston, Mass. paid a visit to England and to Trinity, Swinton in July 1928.

- 1 Mr. Walker subsequently held pastorates at High Street, Burton-on-Trent (1893-1902) and Oakham (1902-1905). He retired to Leicester and did supply work when necessary. He died suddenly at the age of eighty three.
- 2 The details of Mr. Cotton's varied career are as follows: St. Peter Union 1890-93; Glenwood Union 1890-93; Gilbertsville, Albany 1895; St. James Church, St. Paul, Union 1895; Christ Church, Oak Cliff, Dallas 1895-96; R. Trinity Church, Fort Worth, Texas 1898-1907. He was an examining Chaplain in the Diocese of Dallas 1897-1900 and he was the author of "Essays and Sermons on Prohibition and other Subjects". He retired in 1907 and lived to the advanced age of eighty seven.
- 3 Mr. Shuker served at Edgeworth from 1901-06 and again, during his ministry, a school was built. His last pastorate was at Besses-o'-th-Barn (1906-1910) and on retirement he took up residence in Eccles and preached in the local Free Churches.
- 4 For a full account of the work of the Civic Guild of Help in the Eccles and Swinton area see my books on: The Eccles Civic Guild of Help and The Swinton & Pendlebury Civic Guild of Help.
- 5 For a full comparison of prices etc. see The Eccles & Patricroft Journal - Friday 23rd December 1910.
- 6 For a detailed account of this most interesting glimpse of the Mexican troubles - see Eccles & Patricroft Journal - Friday 9th June 1911.
- 7 Mr. Hanson retired in 1935 and spent his remaining years in California.

During the vacancy a letter was received from Mr. Greenhalgh, the Pendlebury Superintendent regarding the situation in the school. The Deacons discussed the letter at length (they had all received a copy as individuals) and as a result it was resolved that an announcement should be made from the pulpit on Sunday 16th October 1910 to the effect that additional workers were required at Pendlebury and if these were not forthcoming the only alternative was that the Pendlebury School would have to close. The additional workers were evidently not forthcoming because in February 1911 the question was raised as to whether the time was opportune for the Church to hand over to the District Council the management of the Day School since the Pendlebury premises were not required for Sunday School purposes. It was unanimously resolved that the Management should be handed over to the Council; the matter to be brought to the next Church Meeting for confirmation or otherwise.

The Deacons also considered the stipend to be offered to the next minister and it was agreed that this should be a minimum of £160 plus three quarters of all income over £320 per annum, the £320 being made up of £160 for stipend and £160 for church and school expenses. It was also agreed that circulars asking for promises for systematic giving by envelopes should be issued to the church and congregation.

A call to the pastorate was sent to Mr. Leslie Artingstall B.A., a native of Manchester, who had trained at Lancashire College and graduated at Victoria University, Manchester on 11th December 1910. Mr. Artingstall readily accepted and indicated that he proposed to commence his ministry on 1st January 1911. His text for his first morning service was Ephesians 4 v. 15 "Speaking the truth in love". In his sermon he outlined his concept of ministerial work and ideals. "The aim of preaching" he said "was to make better christians of those who professed the faith and to make Christians of those who did not." There were differences of opinion as to what ought or ought not to be uttered from the pulpit. The question arose as to whether there was an underlying principle to guide. He thought there was - the words of his text. The tendency was to speak something less than the truth, yet the preacher's task was not to blur the truth but to speak it. Truth as it appeared to a single mind was not absolute, everyone had to acknowledge some bias due partly to heredity, to environment or to education, hence he made a plea for tolerance since no one could claim to speak the whole truth.

He went on to state his own attitude towards the Bible. The moderate view of criticism; which he held did not settle every question and problem but it robbed them of nothing that was essential to the Christian religion. In the Old Testament views had altered on many things and even in the New Testament things had to be explained differently from what had been our wont, but no criticism could destroy that Jesus was God Man.

Mr. Artingstall's ordination took place on Saturday, 21st January, 1911. The service was at 4 p.m. and this was well attended.<sup>1</sup> At the evening meeting in the schoolroom a glee was sung by the choir and a part song by the Swinton Male Voice Choir. Mr. Artingstall's ministry had a most auspicious beginning.

At the outset of Mr. Artingstall's ministry an attempt was made to regularise the church membership roll and 17 names were removed for non-attendance. It was also agreed that "for the more efficient carrying out of the financial burden of the church, a Committee of Management should be appointed".

A sermon preached by Mr. Artingstall in Trinity Church was considered worthy of a full report in the Journal at the end of his first year of his ministry at Swinton. It revealed some of the criticisms that were being made of Christianity by the man in the street at the time e.g. the teaching of the church was antiquated and made no appeal to modern thought: the church had no gospel for the social conditions of the time and calling in question the good of religion.

In replying to the criticisms the preacher stated that for many years such doctrines as the Virgin Birth; the Fall of Man and the Resurrection of Christ had been examined on their merits and the truth only had been sought; it was not valid to claim that the church had no social gospel, the Social Gospel was the Christian Gospel based on love to one's neighbour; and finally every great movement in the direction of freedom, political and religious, or the amelioration of social conditions had originated from men, who had claimed and honoured Christ e.g. the Reformation; missions at home and abroad; the abolition of slavery and the reform of an obnoxious gaol system.<sup>2</sup>

In 1912 in connection with the 250th Anniversary of the Ejection of Non-Conforming Ministers of Religion a Miss Hallett of Newton-le-Willows was engaged to lecture at a Sunday Evening Service in December at a fee of 10s. 6d. and a letter was sent to Sir George Pollard M.P. requesting him as their Member of Parliament to support the Welsh Disestablishment Bill which was before Parliament at the time.

In 1913 the Deacons recommended the Church to adopt a scheme of systematic giving at a rate of one penny per family per week for outside objects. In March 1914 Mr. Yates was asked to prepare a synopsis of the History of the Church and Schools for insertion in the Manual.

Mr. Artingstall intimated that he was leaving the pastorate on accepting a call to Fleetwood. His farewell party was fixed for 20th December 1915 to commence with tea at 6.30 p.m. (tickets 9d. each). Mr. W.T. Postlethwaite was delegated to make the presentation of the purse of gold to Mr. Artingstall.<sup>3</sup>

After a vacancy of approximately twelve months Rev. T. Wigley, M.A. settled in the pastorate and presided over his first meeting of the Deacons on 2nd February 1917. Mr. Wigley, who was a native of Manchester was educated at Manchester Grammar School and Cheshunt College, Cambridge. Trinity was his first charge. With his arrival the church agreed to introduce the "Young Worshippers' League" on Sunday Mornings in church in an effort to induce the children to attend in greater numbers.

Mr. Wigley ministered faithfully in the church during the difficult years of the First World War and in view of the situation caused by the War the Deacons resolved that a special grant of £40 should be made to him, the whole matter to be put before the church and congregation.

In 1918 Mr. Postlethwaite tendered his resignation from the Diaconate, from his position as Church Secretary and from all the other offices that he held in the church. A deputation from the church was appointed to interview County Union Officials in this connection and Mr. Yates, as Chairman later reported on the interview he had with Rev. A.E. Viner, (the only official seen by Mr. Postlethwaite) to the meeting. The Minutes do not give any reason for Mr. Postlethwaite's resignation.

Smoking and card playing again came up for consideration following a letter from the Guild Secretary and it was agreed that smoking could be allowed in the large schoolroom on occasions when the centre of the room was left open. The matter of card playing was left for further consideration but there is no record of any decision being taken.

In December 1919 a letter was read from the Church Solicitors indicating that the sale of the Pendlebury property was proceeding and that completion might be expected early in January. The sale of the Bethel property eventually went through and realised the

sum of £382 0s. 9d. the Solicitors' charges being £10 10s. 0d.. This was considered satisfactory. Later it was decided to recommend to the church that "out of the money received from the sale of the Pendlebury property £300 should be invested in some suitable fund". The Church Management Committee were instructed to proceed at once with the necessary school decorations.

In July 1923 it was decided that the War Memorial should be unveiled after the next evening service (the decision was taken on 6th July) after a short and simple service and that Eric Wild should be asked to unveil the Memorial.

In 1924, after hearing a report by the Master of the Barton Union to the effect that if Maggie Brooks could be moved for a short time to some more suitable institution, she might recover her health, it was agreed to suggest to the church that 10s. 0d. per week should be contributed from the poor fund for three months and that a similar sum should be advanced to be repaid as convenient by the Brooks family.

In February 1925 a request was received from Worsley Road Congregational Church for the use of the School premises at Trinity for a three day Bazaar during March 1926. The friends at Worsley Road did not have the necessary accommodation and the proposed Bazaar was being held to obtain funds for the provision of adequate Sunday School premises. Permission was gladly given at a charge of out of pocket expenses.

At the Annual Meeting of the Church and congregation on 20th February 1926 Mr. Frank Jones reported that the school was financially solvent and that the number of teachers and scholars on the roll was 124. He also raised the matter of the Whit Week Procession and asked the church to decide whether or not the custom should be continued in view of the fact that it was no longer a Religious occasion.

In 1927 a Ballot was taken on the question of the Whit Thursday Procession as follows: Which do you prefer, a procession or picnic? Out of 43 participants 3 were for the procession, 38 against and 2 did not know. If a procession will you join? 10 answered "Yes". If a picnic will you go? 35 replied "Yes" 5 said "No". Mr. Jones reported that the cost was about the same in each case. Miss Hughes stated that the church was liable to lose scholars if it did not join in the procession. After discussion it was agreed that the parents should be circulated and that the final decision should be left to the Sunday School Officials.

At the Church Meeting on 29th June 1927 Mr. Greenhalgh explained that in connection with the Pendlebury School there had been a Penny Bank. When the Bank closed down there was interest left over. This had grown over the past few years and the gentlemen in charge had decided to withdraw the amount and purchase a Communion Cloth. Mr. Jesse Makin presented the cloth amid grateful applause. Mr. Wigley expressed the thanks of the church for the kindly and serviceable thought.

On Sunday 6th November 1927 Rev. T. Wigley, M.A. closed his notable ministry of almost eleven years at Trinity on his acceptance of an invitation to become minister of the Blackheath Congregational Church, London. At the evening service there was an unusually large congregation and at the communion service, which followed there was perhaps the largest gathering of members known in any similar service in the history of the church.

The "Good-byes" were reserved for Monday evening when Mr. & Mrs. Wigley were entertained at a social gathering. The schoolroom, which was brightened by many flowers and in other ways made pleasantly sociable, was filled by a large company representative of every branch of the Church and Sunday School organisation. Mr. Wigley was presented with a cheque, accompanied by a framed watercolour drawing of a moorland scene in Swyndale and his wife received a handsome tortoise-shell hairbrush and a Lancastrian vase.

The minister in his reply stated that he had never sought "popularity" and that at one time he was thought to be "a dangerous man" by those who had no eyes to see the signs of the times. His eleven years at Trinity had proved that "safety first" was never a command of the Master. In Goethes words "The man who feels that he has truth on his side must step firmly. Truth is not to be dallied with". Always at Trinity Church they saw before them the fact that their religion must be as wide as life or it was not Christian..... "You have permitted me on every subject and occasion" he went on "to speak the truth as I saw it. I cannot say how much I have appreciated the liberty that has been mine".

Mr. Wigley took his departure with the good wishes of all the Trinity people. He had served the church and community well. In particular he had co-operated with the local medical officer of health in attacking an infectious disease that was ravaging the community and his keen interest in public health at the time made him an expert lecturer on the subject throughout his ministry.

He had also been a frequent speaker at the Trinity Fortnightly, a literary society, which was flourishing in the church during his ministry. He spoke on serious subjects such as "The Problems of Sex Education", "Eugenics and the Welfare of the Race", "Divorce - An Appeal to Society" and "Dreams - a Study in Psychology". He could also, however, deal with more popular themes such as "Cambridge and its Colleges", "The Lighter Side of Varsity Life" and "Shakespearian Humour". His sermons and lectures were always prepared with scrupulous care and delivered in impeccable English.

He was also remembered as the minister who would never wear a clerical collar, because he said "it means nothing to me, and I hate doing anything that has no meaning for me". He hated pretence in any form. If an idea had no meaning for him then he discarded it without a qualm, no matter how distinguished its ancestry.<sup>4</sup>

- 1 Rev. F.W. Adeney, M.A. D.D. Principal of Lancashire College; Prof. MacIntosh, M.A. D.D. and Rev. J.F. Shepherd, M.A. all in academic robes took part. Prof. MacIntoch expounded Congregational Principles and Prin. Adeney delivered an eloquent charge.
- 2 For a full report of Mr. Artingstall's sermon see The Eccles and Patricroft Journal - Friday 3rd November 1911.
- 3 Mr. Artingstall held the pastorate at Fleetwood until 1919 when he became L.M.S. District Secretary for the Northern Counties. He was appointed Assistant Home Secretary in 1928 and held this office until 1936 when he became Organising Secretary. He resigned the following year to become Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. For four years (1941-45) he added to his duties as Secretary the pastorate of Grafton Square Church, Clapham. Later he served as minister of the Pevensey Road Church, Eastbourne (1945-48) and as Field Officer of the Sussex Congregational Union (1948-50). He is remembered as a faithful minister and brilliant organiser who gave himself unsparingly in the service of the church.
- 4 Mr. Wigley became well known at Blackheath where he strongly advocated by word and pen the need for a liberal outlook in religion. He founded the Union of Modern Free Churchmen and served for many years as its Chairman; finally becoming its President. He helped to prepare its Statement of Faith and often used it himself. He and his like minded friends, who became known as "The Blackheathens" intended the statement to be a modern substitute for the old belief.

The document was highly controversial at the time. In the opinion of Nathaniel Micklem, Principal of Mansfield College Oxford "it did not restate the religion of the Bible: it was the residuary faith of those, who consciously or unconsciously were no longer holding to the Biblical religion".

The "Blackheathens" were mostly friends of Micklem and they did not abuse or willingly misrepresent each other. Regrettably, however, Micklem became the centre of attack for all who supposed themselves to be liberally minded and his position in Mansfield College was not made easier by the intervention of his Vice-Principal C.J. Cadoux, who defended the right of Mr. Wigley and his associates to engage in what he termed "Free-speculation".

For a full account of the Blackheath Controversy see "The Box and the Puppets" by Nathaniel Micklem and The article C.J. Cadoux and Mansfield College, Oxford by Elaine Kay M.A. in the Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society - Volume 3 No. 8 May 1986.

Mr. Wigley embodied his views in two books "The Necessity of Christian Modernism" and "A New Highway to Christian Reality" and in numerous pamphlets.

During the war years he worked bravely and cheerfully through the bombing and then patiently rebuilt his shattered church. He was privileged to minister in the unusual but beautiful building for the last four years of his life, but regrettably the church at Blackheath has now closed.

The Union of Modern Free Churchmen amalgamated with the Modern Churchman's Union early in the 1970's owing to lack of interest and the advanced age of most of its members.

Some difficulty was experienced by the church in obtaining a successor to Mr. Wigley. At the Church Meeting which was held on 26th September 1928 Mrs. Ogden asked "What kind of a man are we looking for?" All the last three ministers had been great preachers, organisers, social reformers etc. and all left dear memories, but was the church any better numerically, financially or spiritually? Mr. Yates in reply said "First we desire a man who will inspire us, a Pastor who will look after the members and the sick and an organiser. A man who at the end of a day's service will cause us to say "I wish that man were our minister"." Mrs. Ogden then said "Is it possible to get such a man at the salary we are prepared to pay?" Mr. Yates stated "It is possible to get an ex-student or an older minister, who had accepted some remote ministry and was now anxious to get near to the centre of things. That would now be the Deacons' line of investigation!"

After two students and two ministers had visited the church without any positive development with regard to the filling of the vacancy a call was given to Rev. G. Nuttall, B.A. of Halifax. Mr. Nuttall came to the church as an experienced minister having served the church at Halifax for seven years.

A Social Evening to welcome the new minister was held on Saturday evening 7th December 1929 and the Induction Service took place on Thursday evening 12th December 1929. The Moderator Rev. T.T. James M.A. presided. Both gatherings were well attended as was the church at the opening services.

In connection with Mr. Nuttall's settlement in the pastorate it was decided that a house - 50 Stanwell Road, should be purchased at a total cost of £600 (approx.) and arrangements were subsequently made to hold a Bazaar with the object of raising £750.

In October 1931 the Centenary of the Congregational Union was observed. Special celebrations were held in Manchester and in response to a circular letter regarding the expenses involved in connection with the Hire of Halls, Publicity, Printing and Hospitality, the latter being estimated at £1,000 which averaged £15 for each church, it was decided that Trinity should endeavour to raise this sum and that Mr. Stafford should be asked to act as collector. The church also offered hospitality for 19 delegates.

In July 1932 a special Week-end of Anniversary Celebration was held by the church. A General Re-union was planned for Saturday 9th July with tea and speeches from former adherents. The

Anniversary Services on Sunday 10th July were conducted by Rev. L. Artingstall. A Public Meeting was held on Monday 11th July addressed by Rev. G.K. Davies and other speakers. A Souvenir Programme covering the three days was prepared.

Some two years later concern began to be expressed at both Deacons' and Church Meetings about the difficulties that were being experienced in Church matters at the time, the decline in Church Membership and in weekly offering subscribers and the unsatisfactory attendances at Communion Services. The minister acknowledged that with regard to preaching he had certainly been keeping too much on one string and he was grateful for suggestions that had been made regarding sermon subjects. He offered by letter (February 1935) to accept a reduction in his salary to £250 a year. He also indicated that his work at Trinity was done and that he was looking around for another church. The Church Meeting (27th May 1936) did not agree to the reduction in his salary in spite of the fact that the church had spent £206 more than the Income during 1935 and that at the time the finances for 1936 were falling at the same ratio.

An attempt was made to improve matters towards the end of the year by arranging for a visitation of the Trinity people. This was undertaken at the suggestion of Mr. S. Whittaker, who had addressed the church as an outcome of the Inner City Mission Meeting at the Milton Hall, and who spoke of the success which had attended the organised visitation by the Minister, Deacons, and School Officers of his own church. It was agreed that Mr. Shuker and Mr. Nuttall should make the start. Reports of the visitation work were very satisfactory and it was agreed that the visits should be continued.

Early in 1937, however, Mr. Nuttall resigned from the pastorate on accepting a call to Union Church, Putney. A Farewell Gathering was held on Monday 24th May 1937 (a sum of £21 7s. 3d. was collected) and at the function Mr. Nuttall was thanked for his work at Trinity and good wishes were conveyed to him for the success of his labours in his new sphere.<sup>1</sup>

It should be stated that during Mr. Nuttall's ministry the Lancashire Congregational Union (Inc.) was made trustee for all the Trinity church's property and the Town Council agreed to take over the chief rents of the Bethel grounds and graveyard.

On Mr. Nuttall's departure a call was given to Rev. Alfred Gregory Mappin B.A., who had trained at Lancashire College, and who had returned to this country after serving the London Missionary Society at Imerina, Madagascar (1934-37) and who came to the church with the recommendation of Principal Grieve and Rev. L. Artingstall B.A..

The salary offered was £275 per annum and the Induction Service was held on 18th November 1937 at 7.30 p.m. in church followed by a short welcome social with light refreshments in the school-room.

*Mr D. Hall*

At the Annual Congregational Meeting a presentation was made to Mr. David Hill in recognition of his 25 years of service as Organist and Choirmaster. A Testimonial Fund in favour of Mr. Yates in acknowledgement of his services to the church yielded £45 and it was decided that a personal present should be made and the Women's Guild was asked to provide tea for 100 people on the day of the presentation.

In 1939 the Manse at 50 Stanwell Road was sold to Mr. T.A. Crompton for £300 and a new residence for the minister, 39 Temple Drive, Swinton was purchased for £500. There was a ground rent on the new property of £3 16s. Od.

The condition of the Pendlebury graveyard gave concern to the Church after a report had appeared in the Local Journal. Mr. Stafford was deputed to interview Officials of the Town Council regarding their undertaking when the land was conveyed over to them. The officials concerned agreed to put the graveyard in order as soon as possible.

The outbreak of war brought changes. The school had to be blacked out, the downstairs room was done immediately, the question of the large schoolroom was referred to the Finance Committee. Air Raid Precautions were taken and the necessary appliances were provided, two stirrup pumps and six water buckets, the latter were painted red. Drums, to be filled with sand were provided by Mr. Lee and scoops were supplied by Mr. Martin. A notice was placed in the church vestibule indicating the location of the nearest Air Raid Shelter.

The second service was held in the afternoons instead of evenings and in consequence of the Black Out regulations it was decided that the early morning Communion Service on Christmas Day and the Watch Night service should be cancelled. It was also agreed that in the event of an Air Raid Warning being given during a service that the service be immediately concluded. Mr. Mappin indicated that he was in touch with Street Fire Watchers around Pendlebury Road with a view to their undertaking to look after the Church and School premises, and it was agreed that they should be allowed the use of the school cellar. The Trinity Fortnightly was suspended, but members were to be kept in touch with each other through a circular letter and the formation of reading circles each group to be supplied with reading

matter. A soldiers' Comforts' Committee was appointed and thirty parcels were subsequently sent out and numerous letters of appreciation were received.

The church Dramatic Society celebrated its Coming-of-Age on 24th February 1940 and it was agreed that Mr. Wigley, who was expected to attend the gathering should be asked to take the services on the following day. The Society was to share any liability in this connection. In spite of war-time difficulties the Society managed to continue its work and went on to produce four One Act Plays, the performance being repeated on behalf of the British Red Cross, and a number of other productions including visits to Holyrood Church and the Eccles Co-operative Society. Donations were subsequently made to the "Salute the Soldier Fund" and the "Red Cross".

In July 1940 congratulations were extended to Mr. Mappin on obtaining his B.D. Degree of Manchester University and he was granted an increase in his salary of £10 as a War Bonus. The following year the minister reported that he had the opportunity of accepting a position on the staff of the Manchester Grammar School. Approval was given to Mr. Mappin to accept the appointment and by mutual agreement his salary was reduced by £106 per annum.

Because of the extensive bomb damage throughout the country, - 99 churches and manses were damaged in London alone, - the Congregational Denomination launched a Reconstruction Fund in October 1941 with the aim of raising £500,000 which would be needed for reconstruction in addition to the compensation that would be received under the War Damage Act. To promote collections, Reconstruction Committees were convened by each County Union, and when the matter was put to the church at Trinity the general feeling at first was, that the Church was not in a position to make any commitment as to the amount that should be aimed at on behalf of the church. On further consideration, however, it was agreed that the church should endeavour to raise £300 as the contribution from Trinity to the Fund, and that Rev. T.T. James, the Moderator, should be asked to take an evening service to explain the scheme to the members and the congregation. Mr. Stafford was appointed to receive contributions. Later it was reported that the church's Target of £300 had been exceeded by about one third and that the Trinity contribution to the Fund including the Government rebate by Covenant was just over £400.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the difficulties of the war years slight increases in numbers in the Sunday School were reported and two new Teachers were recruited to cope with the additional numbers. A Boys Club, which was held on Tuesday evenings, was also successful, and a Junior Section of the Dramatic Society was formed. The Girl Guides,

however, had not been a success and Miss Bury had obtained the services of an experienced Guide from All Saints Rovers to take charge. The Trinity Fortnightly Lectures were recommenced at the beginning of the winter session in 1944 and enjoyed a good season, the Lectures being well attended.

Attention was drawn to the damage that had been done to church windows and later it was stated that the sum of £500 would be required for repairs and redecorations in church and school. It was agreed that a Bazaar Committee should be formed to collect funds and to arrange for a Bazaar in 12 to 18 months time.

In October 1945 Mr. Ogden resigned as Church Secretary and Mr. Martin was appointed to act pro. tem. Mr. Hall retired as organist and choirmaster after serving the church for 32 years. Appreciation was expressed of his long and faithful service. Mr. Platt was appointed as his successor at an honorarium of £15 per year.

In April 1946 Mr. Mappin stated that his engagement at the Grammar School had terminated at Easter and expressed his opinion that having served for  $8\frac{1}{2}$  years at Trinity it might be a good thing for the church to have a change of minister very shortly. The unanimous opinion of the meeting was that he should continue with the church if possible and it was resolved that his salary should be £336 per annum or £28 per month with a free manse. At an informal meeting, however, on 29th April Mr. Mappin stated that he had accepted a call to Ilkley and that he would make a statement to the church to this effect on the following Sunday morning<sup>3</sup>.

- 1 Mr. Nuttall's stay at Union Church, Putney was brief. It was for him a hard and difficult pastorate. While there, however, he married Nesta Nuttall of the Young Peoples' Department of the Congregational Union. He spent the rest of his life as minister of churches in smaller towns - Kingswood (1940-45); Thorsbury with Falfield (1945-50); Chippenham (1950-56) and Thoxted, where he was ministering with increasing joy at the time of his sudden death on 21st February 1962.
2. For a full account of the Reconstruction Fund see Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 by R. Tudor-Jones p 397 f.
- 3 Mr. Mappin was minister at Ilkley, Yorks. for three years 1946-49. He then became a Master of Ackworth School, Yorks. in 1949. His name appears in the Congregational Year Book up to 1966-67 but not thereafter.

Chapter 5     The Ministry of Rev. J. Glyndwr Harris

Mr. Mappin was succeeded by Rev. John Glyndwr Harris M.A., B.D., who was inducted to the charge on Wednesday 13th November 1946. He soon made his presence felt in the church by starting a four page Magazine monthly at a charge of 2s. Od. per annum. The first number (200 were printed) was favourably commented upon and copies were sent to young men serving in the forces and to former members living away from Swinton. He also began a series of addresses on Sunday evenings entitled "Religion and Life".

The church choir was in good voice at the time with 25 active members and an average attendance of 18 at the weekly practices. The Sunday School had 20 scholars in the Primary, 40 scholars in the Juniors and 20 Seniors. Twenty five children attended church regularly on Sunday mornings. The appointment of a new caretaker greatly enhanced the cleanliness of the premises.

In 1948 the proposed Union with the Presbyterian Church came before the churches and the minister gave some addresses on Sunday evenings to make the Trinity members aware of the issues involved in the Union. At the Church Meeting, however, (24th November 1948) it was decided not to take a vote on the Union but to convey to the Lancashire Union the general feeling of the meeting which was to the effect that the members were in favour of the matter receiving further consideration.

The 50th Anniversary of the building of the Sunday School was marked by a re-union of old and present scholars on Saturday 7th May 1949 and a Special Jubilee Service was held on Sunday morning May 8th. The officials of the Sunday School sent out an appeal at the time to old scholars asking for help with the funds needed to provide new equipment for the Sunday School. The Celebration realised the sum of £70 9s. 6d.

When new property was built in Cheetham Road and new flats erected in Temple Drive the minister was authorised to prepare and have printed a post-card featuring church and school activities for distribution on the new housing scheme. When the visitation was subsequently undertaken, however, by the Minister and Mr. Stafford they had to report that most of the new tenants claimed to be associated with some other church in the district.

The church was re-decorated at the end of 1949 at a cost of £375 and it was re-opened for worship in January 1950, the Communion Service was held on the day. The decoration of the

Lecture Room in the Schoolroom was also completed without any expense to the church. The Dramatic Society, which was particularly active at the time, paid for the stage to be re-wired. Productions during the year included "Lady from Edinburgh" and "Tobias and the Angel". The Society was also awarded second place in the Ashton-on-Mersey Drama Festival with a One Act Play "Change for the Worse".

The picture in the Sunday School was not quite so bright. The work was handicapped by a serious shortage of teachers following the resignation of four members of staff. The numbers were maintained, however, Mr. Jones volunteering to take a class during the shortage. Mr. Douglas Evans also joined the staff and Miss Dorothy Crompton gave help on a temporary basis.

The playing of football on Milner Street while the Sunday School was in session also gave cause for concern and after complaints by the minister it was agreed that a letter of protest should be sent to the Town Council requesting them to take steps to "prohibit the playing of football, which interfered with the work in the school".

Two German Youth Leaders - Mr. & Mrs. Gerwin, were given hospitality by Trinity members whilst they were in the District. Their visit created a good impression and they were grateful for the hospitality provided for them. "Their visit" said Mr. Harris "had promoted a much better understanding between the people of Germany and our own country. Nothing but good could come from such visits."

In March 1950 Mr. Harris introduced the ideas of the church at Trinity having a church covenant. He stressed that it was not intended to be a Statement of Faith or a Creed, and he presented the following for consideration by the church. "We make a solemn promise before God and in the presence of the Christian Congregation to live together in unity of faith and brotherly love, to partake of all the holy ordinances of God, to bind ourselves to one Lord and to seek His Kingdom as the Gospel of Christ requires of every Christian Church and the members thereof.". It was agreed that the Covenant should be adopted and that each Church Member should be issued with a copy printed on a suitable card.

In June of the same year the church made plans to receive a visit from a benefactor from America, a Mr. Joe Smith of California, who had sent food parcels etc. to the church.

Mr. Smith was evidently expecting a special welcome at Trinity with arrangements being made for large crowds to be present. It was agreed that the church could not be expected to arrange anything on the scale suggested by Mr. Smith but that a reception should be held in the schoolroom after the evening service on 10th September and that an invitation should also be extended to him to attend the usual Rally Social on 30th September. It was also agreed that the Teachers should arrange a party for the Sunday School to enable Mr. Smith to meet the children as he had requested.

Unfortunately, however, Mr. Smith developed a severe illness during his holiday which prevented him from visiting the church and Mr. Jones took him a copy of the Church Hymnary and presented it personally on behalf of the church before his return to America.

The Congregational Forward Movement was brought to the attention of the church before the end of the year. The Congregational Union was greatly concerned over the loss of 100,000 members during the past 20 years and in launching the Movement its objective was to encourage the churches to rebuild their strength.

Mr. Entwistle, whilst agreeing with the Movement thought that the only hope of success was the adoption of a more modern outlook on the part of the churches. He thought that the church had been losing ground for some time and that the Modern Free Church Movement was needed in all our churches.

Mr. Pearson spoke of the financial appeal and expressed the opinion that the Movement would suffer by introducing the financial aspect at this juncture. Mr. Jones thought that the only hope of success was to concentrate on children and young people. The Minister stated that the church should begin by examining its life and activities. Are our services what they ought to be or our week night meetings what we should desire them to be? He suggested that the church should consider holding a week night meeting (fortnightly) which would be educational, devotional and inspirational.

The Forward Movement was not mentioned again - although it was agreed that the principle of the Movement should be adopted by the church - until 1952 when it had reached the phase known as "We go out" and it was agreed that a list of parents and possible people to be visited with a view to increasing Church Membership should be drawn up, but there is no record as to whether the visitation ever took place<sup>1</sup>.

In 1951 (presumably as part of the Forward Movement at the local level) a letter was received from Rev. Leslie Hall giving details of a £10,000 Appeal for Building Churches. The period

envisaged for the Appeal was the next Ten Years and it was intended that the Fund should be used to assist local churches in new areas to build premises to meet the needs of the increasing population. There was a need for new churches on the housing estates in places like Baguley and Wythenshawe. Assistance would be given from funds like the Reconstruction Fund; but the local churches would be called upon to meet the main cost and the Appeal was intended to help the churches on the new estates.

The church agreed to accept the principle of the Appeal and Mr. Entwistle put forward a target of £20 per annum as Trinity's contribution. The minister suggested that the money should be raised by personal subscriptions and small efforts during the year. The Women's Guild characteristically led the way by issuing Sunshine Bags (made by the minister's wife) which raised over £5 contributed on the basis of a penny for each day of sunshine. A social was arranged for Easter Time (22nd March 1952) at which the bags were received on behalf of the church by Mrs. Harris.

The new hymn book - Congregational Praise - was purchased by the church in 1952. As the 25% discount allowance only applied to first orders it was decided to order 40 Choir books and 150 books of words only. Mr. & Mrs. Stafford presented a special book for Pulpit use and the Men's Fellowship donated £10 and a £2 2s. Od. donation was also received. An Appeal was made to the congregation so that the Books could be purchased without calling upon Church Funds and a total of £93 was subscribed. The hymn books cost £72 (approx.) and the surplus was used to purchase a suitable cloth for the Communion Table and for cupboards in which to keep the books. It was also decided to parcel up 50 of the new books and to keep them in the Muniment Room.

In April 1952 the resignation of Mr. Harris, the minister of the church, was received with real and genuine regret. He had accepted a call to Highfield Church, Rockferry and he indicated that he wished to terminate his ministry at Swinton on 27th July 1952. He had been a good minister in every sense of the term and the congregation at Trinity realised that they could not hope to keep him indefinitely. They were glad that he was going to an active and enthusiastic church. He was inducted to his new charge on Tuesday 2nd September 1952<sup>2</sup>.

- 1 For a good account of the Forward Movement see:  
Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 - R. Tudor Jones p401.  
His concluding assessment is balanced and fair:  
"The Forward Movement certainly stimulated the life of the churches that participated in it and helped to strengthen the resolution of many individuals, but the disparity between the hopes raised and the results gained tended rather to raise doubts about the value of spiritual campaigns initiated at Central Offices and promoted by Committees."

- 2 Dr. Harris was a scholarly minister, who pursued his academic interests for a life-time. Whilst at Trinity he undertook research in the field of Biblical archaeology and manuscripts with reference to the Quinran Scrolls. This was the subject of his doctoral thesis at Manchester University. Later in life Dr. Harris obtained another doctorate in Philosophy and Literature from the University of Zurich. This was the culmination of years of hard work and endeavour.

After seven years of successful ministry at Highfield, Rockferry (1952-59) he moved into the field of Higher Education, as Head of Religious Studies at the Caerleon College of Higher Education. Later he became a Counsellor and Tutor in Arts with the Open University and Examiner in religion for the University of Wales. After serving as chief examiner in religious studies for a number of Examining Boards he became chief examiner for the Welsh Joint Education Committee and member of the Religious Studies Panel of the Secondary Examination Council.

Over the years Dr. Harris has been a consistent contributor to religious and educational journals. He regards his work on the Quinran Commentary on the Book of Habakkuk and a series of text books on the Gospels and Acts, together with a series of books on Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism as being the most important of his publications. He has also written a book on the Heritage and Formation of the United Reformed Church in Wales.

Following the news of Mr. Harris's impending departure representatives of the church had an interview with Rev. H.S. Stanley, M.A., the Moderator, who emphasised the difficulty in obtaining ministers and advised them to write to Rev. L.L.G. Rees of Longridge, who might be willing to consider the matter.

Mr. Rees came and preached with a view and created a favourable impression. The church extended a sincere and cordial invitation to Mr. Rees to become minister of the church at a salary of £380 per annum the amount he was receiving at Longridge, and if necessary the church authorised an increase up to £406 per annum.

Mr. Rees replied accepting the call and he commenced his ministry at Trinity on 2nd November 1952. He soon became aware of the problems that existed at Trinity. The financial position was serious. Gale damage had cost the church £60 and there were repairs still in hand to chimneys in the school. With that account to be met and approximately £165 to be found for a new Church boiler the amount raised at the Sale of Work would be wiped out. The new minister said that the position was unfortunate, but it was a challenge to the church and he suggested that a Gift Day might be considered.

A more hopeful feature of the work, however, was the formation of a Youth Fellowship in the church by Mr. Eric Smith. A number of Young People had been meeting in houses after Service on Sunday evenings and Mr. Smith stated that it was now opportune to meet as a Youth Fellowship in the Schoolroom on Sunday evenings at 8 o'clock. He was authorised to use the Lecture Room and the Kitchen for the Sunday evening meetings. There were 25 members on the roll and any young person over 15 years of age sponsored by the present members would be welcome.

At the beginning of 1953 the church was faced with the problem of finding £150 to settle two accounts - for the New Boiler and work done at the Manse - and to avoid realising on Investments Mr. Huntington brought forward a Loan Scheme whereby each member and associate would be asked to make a loan to the Church, minimum of £1 and maximum of £5 for a period of three years, - the Loans to be repaid within three years - and the security would be the £200 which the church had in Defence Bonds and £300 in War Loans. The church adopted the Loan on these terms and there was a good response to the Appeal, £408 being realised and the loan eventually reached £525 a wonderful total.

At this time the church lost the services of Mr. Stafford as Church Treasurer owing to indifferent health. He was succeeded by Mr. C.H. Gerrard. The church also lost its Senior Deacon Mr. Walter Yates by death and later received £500 under the terms of his will. It also received a small legacy of £50 from the late Mrs. Annie Berry.

"The Messiah" was presented in the church at Trinity on the afternoon and evening of 5th December 1953 by the choir of the Chorley Road Methodist Church with the good will of the Trinity people as part of their endeavours to raise the £6,000 needed to re-build their church which had been extensively damaged.

Early in 1954 a Scout Troop was formed at Trinity by Mr. Eric Smith, who was given permission to use the School cellar as a "Den". It was hoped that Mr. Smith would hold regular Church Parades but although he held the Scouts and Cubs together Mr. Smith did not co-operate in the matter of Church Parades. He resigned in March 1955 owing to his forthcoming marriage.

The Guides and Brownies also had their trouble in 1954 and following the resignation of Miss Hughes as Guide Captain, the Company decided to disband - its property was claimed by the Guide organisation.

The Youth Fellowship also gave cause for concern. There was little interest in it and the meetings in the schoolroom had not enjoyed the success which had characterised those held in the home of the members. After a Committee from the church had met the members the Fellowship was reformed and good attendances were reported. Later, however, it was stated that the Fellowship was again losing ground and that there was a danger that small groups might form. The Young People used the facilities provided by the church, but did not fulfil their obligations with regard to church attendance.

A difficulty of another kind arose when Mr. E. Huntington complained bitterly about the church doors being locked when he and others had arrived for the service. It was a matter of principle with him that no church should close its doors during divine worship. The Secretary informed Mr. Huntington that the matter could be righted at Church Meeting and that it did not warrant his resignation from Church Membership after so many years. Mr. Huntington refused to retract but later gave the assurance that he would not allow the issue to prejudice unduly his attendance at services or his support of the church.

It was eventually agreed that the outside Church doors should be left unlocked during services, but that the inside vestibule doors be locked and two keys provided for each door. A number of those present in the church meeting did not think it necessary to take precautions other than to inform those attending services to take their property with them into church.

The mid-fifties appears to have been a difficult time in every way for the church. Attendances were disappointing and it was not only the young people who were remiss in this respect. On one occasion there were only six present in the congregation (apart from ten in the choir) and it was agreed that to stimulate interest a series of special services should be held with sermons on topics of particular interest and that a few handbills should be printed for distribution by the young people drawing attention to the services. Mr. Rees pointed out that sometimes church members objected to the Minister expressing his views on matters of vital concern. Only recently on the Suez question he had been challenged over his sermon on the subject and had been told that the person concerned would not continue to come to church to hear such views.

In terms of finance the situation was described as serious if not desperate. An extra yearly Income of some £450 was required if the church was to continue for any length of time and a letter was sent out to all subscribers by envelope and ordinary collections asking them to increase their contribution to the church considerably. At the time only 29 of a membership of over 100 were donating by envelope. The letter produced some response and Mr. Pearson estimated that it would amount to about £50 per annum. Whilst this was welcome he was sorry that many more people had not responded to the Appeal. It was decided that the Sunday School Officers should be given a number of letters so that they could send them home by any of the children where they considered there would be a prospect of some response.

It is pleasing to record that in spite of the difficulties the church had encountered in the 1950's the Sunday School was still in good health. The attendances were good and the conduct of the children satisfactory. The Leaders were carrying out their duties admirably; although the work was hampered by the lack of a pianist. The Young People's Fellowship still had a membership of 28 and some of them had presented the play "The Old Geyser" in the schoolroom.

At the Annual Church Meeting on Wednesday 26th March 1958 Rev. L.L.G. Rees intimated that he had accepted a call to the Church at South Shields. He did so with mixed feelings. He and

his wife had been very happy at Trinity and he would leave the church with great regret but something made him feel that he ought to accept the call. He would be leaving Trinity at the end of July.

Tribute was paid to him as a most conscientious minister and a friend to all the people at Trinity. They had reason to be grateful for his kind ministrations in times of sickness and bereavement. A presentation by cheque was made to Mr. & Mrs. Rees at the evening service on their last Sunday at Trinity - 27th July 1958.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 6

Footnote

- 1 Leonard Rees trained at Brecon College and also studied at Marburg University in Germany. He held two pastorates before coming to Trinity - Mynydd Istwyn, Monmouthshire (1931-43) and Longridge and Grimsaugh (1943-52). Following his last pastorate - South Shields, Ocean Road (1958-68) he spend a happy retirement in Herne Bay.

His concern, compassion and practical service were noted in all his pastorates, and he gave much time to converse with people, always combining seriousness with good humour.

Shortly before the vacancy in the Pastorate caused by the departure of Mr. Rees was filled the church lost its Treasurer through the death of Mr. Gerrard. He had been an esteemed and loved official in the church. His successor was Mr. Val Parton and he took office immediately.

The Moderator, Rev. J.A. Figures, after referring to the acute shortages of ministers, gave the church the name of a student of Northern Congregational College, Mr. D.W. Turner, B.Sc., London, who also held a Teaching Qualification.

After Mr. Turner had preached with a view the church extended to him a "sincere and cordial invitation to become the Minister". Mr. Turner accepted the call, and he was ordained and inducted on Friday 26th June 1959. He commenced his ministry on Sunday 28th June 1959.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Turner had some initial difficulties on settling in the pastorate e.g. over the acceptance of preaching engagements and his holiday arrangements, and over the repairs that were required at the Manse. Mr. Turner divided these into "Necessities" and "Desirables" - the Necessities included faults deteriorating due to the weather - and it was agreed that these should be attended to as far as possible.

To sound a happier note Mr. Turner was approached by Councillor S.L. Suggit with a view to holding the Mayoral Service in Trinity Church on Sunday 28th May 1961 and the church readily gave him permission to accept the chaplaincy, which involved only the Installation Ceremony and the Mayoral Service at Trinity. Prayers were also said at each Council Meeting, but Mr. Turner did not know how far he would be involved in that respect.

Questionnaires were sent out regarding the possibility of changing from Afternoon Sunday School to Family Church and the Parents of the children were visited. It was found that the majority were in favour of Family Church, the ratio in terms of children being 40 to 5. Practically all the Teachers were in favour of Family Church so it was agreed that the change over should take place on Easter Sunday 2nd April 1961 at 10.30a.m.

The Young People's Fellowship, which had suffered through lack of leadership, found a leader in Mr. Hill, who agreed to take over in 1961 with the help of Mr. Irvine. Mr. Hill was evidently a success in the office and Mr. Turner expressed his

pleasure at seeing so many young people attending the Evening Services. The Fellowship was also meeting on several evenings during the week. Unfortunately, however, difficulties arose with the Leaders of the Girl Guide Company, who complained of interference with their activities by members of the Young People's Fellowship. The Diaconate agreed that the Youth Fellowship should not be allowed to interfere with the work of other organisations and the Guides were granted exclusive use of the large room from 7 to 9p.m. on Friday evenings.

When the report on Commission and the question of Covenanting together to form the Congregational Church of England and Wales was discussed in Church Meeting, the Secretary, who had earlier complained about the Report being difficult to assimilate, said he could see no reason for the change of name in view of the fact that we were already a Union of all Congregational Churches. The Minister felt that the Congregational Union of England and Wales was not the answer to all the problems of the present time. Mr. Pearson thought that the church should agree in principle, but request the Commission to go further into the matter. This was carried unanimously.

At meetings in the Spring of 1962 concern was expressed over the future of the church and its ability to maintain a full time minister. The Church Secretary felt that there was a complete lack of interest and apathy and he did not think that it was possible for members and adherents to raise sufficient money for normal expenses. He went on to raise the question as to whether the church was justified in using its assets to further what appeared to be a "losing cause" or whether it would be better to turn over such assets to the Lancashire Congregational Union to be used to establish a church in a new area or on one of the new over spill estates.

Others did not share his despondency and while it was recognised that the Church required £300 to £400 additional income to enable it to meet expenses it was felt that the District would lose something if Trinity were to close although the days were numbered so far as the maintenance of a full time minister was concerned.

Representatives were appointed to meet with Mr. Figures, the Moderator, to acquaint him with the situation. The church was in a serious financial position and there had been an alarming decrease in attendances at the services. There had been as few as six at a Morning Service after the children and teachers had left for their classes. The number on the roll was 75, but a more realistic figure was 40.

Mr. Figures recommended the church to undertake the "Every Person Canvass" and stated that the Lancashire Congregational Union was always loathe to see any church close. He also intimated that Mr. Turner had decided to look for another church and that he was doing all that he could to make a move possible.

In August 1962 the Deacons had to deal with complaints which had been made with regard to the behaviour of some members of the Youth Group. On Friday 10th August there had been rowdyism, fighting in the street and damage to fences and gardens. The church was getting a bad name because of such behaviour.

The Minister stated that there had been occasional complaints about the noise from the Radiogram, and he had heard of some differences between members of the Youth Group, but neither he nor Mr. Hill could obtain any information as to the cause or persons concerned. He strongly deprecated the rowdyism and alleged fighting in the street.

Mr. Hill subsequently indicated that there had been some "skirmishing" in the Group, but no evidence of fighting in the street or damage to property. He concluded by stating that he had no record as to who were members of the Group, so that it was difficult for him to take action in the matter.

It was emphasised that it was a minority that caused the trouble, the majority were well behaved and it was agreed that steps should be taken to prohibit trouble makers from the meetings. Mr. Hill was asked to call the Group together and to inform them that the Deacons would not tolerate hooliganism or rowdyism in future and that any repetition of such behaviour would lead to the closing of the Fellowship.

In the following month (September 1962) a letter was received from Rev. D. Turner indicating that he had accepted a call to Brampton Congregational Church, Chesterfield. Mr. Turner was allowed to go after serving  $2\frac{1}{2}$  months of his stipulated 3 months notice, so that his Induction at Chesterfield could take place on 1st December 1962. A presentation was made to Mr. Turner following the evening service on Sunday 25th November 1962 and Mr. Holland was deputed to speak on behalf of Trinity at the Induction Service.

Mr. Turner had a difficult first pastorate at Trinity, but he went on to have a good and varied career in the church.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 The Ordination and Induction Service and the welcome meeting which followed were both most impressive. Mr. Holland, the Church Secretary, was thanked for his efficient work in organisation and the ladies for providing the tea and refreshments. Additional chairs and crockery for the occasion were hired from St. Paul's Methodist Church.
  
- 2 Mr. Turner, son of a prominent Congregational layman, graduated B.Sc., in 1953 and took a Post Graduate Certificate in Education before training for the ministry at Lancashire Independent College/Northern Congregational College (1956-59).

Before coming to Trinity he was an Assistant in Dispensing University College Hospital, London (directed in lieu of National Service 1954-56). While at Trinity he served as Free Church Chaplain at the Manchester Royal Children's Hospital (1960-62).

At Chesterfield (1962-68) he played a prominent part in uniting Brampton and Soresby Street Congregational Churches 1965-67, now Rosehill U.R. Church. At Broadheath Altrincham (now Woodlands U.R. Church) where he served from 1968-71, he wrote a history (unpublished) of the church.

On moving to Providence Place Congregational Church, Cleckheaton, he played a large part in the Tercentenary Celebrations 1672-1972 (including writing a brief history) and served on the Council of Social Service, the Citizen's Advice Bureau and the Community Health Council. From 1976 he held the Joint Pastorate of Spensborough Group; incorporating Providence Place, Grove, Gomersal and Norristhorpe.

He was inducted to his present charge Harpenden U.R. Church in 1980, where in addition to his pastoral duties, he has served on several denominational Committees and as Chairman of the Council of Churches (1982-84).

Shortly after Mr. Turner's departure from the pastorate, the Moderator, Rev. J.A. Figures, M.A., visited the Deacons and the Church. On both occasions a full discussion of the position at Trinity took place. Mr. Figures was informed that there were 64 names on the Roll. Of them 12 attended irregularly. Attendances at the services were 15-20 in the morning and 25 (approx.) at night. Mr. Figures considered this to be very poor.

When he met the church members Mr. Figures gave a report from a Surveyor regarding the likely cost of repairs and maintenance for the Church, School and Manse over the next ten years. A sum in the region of £4,000 was required and the church would have to find £400 per annum. The Manse was in a serious state of disrepair and £500 would have to be spent on it if it was to be used or let. He recommended that the church should carry out the Every Person Canvass within the next twelve months. The alternative was to drift on and eventually peter out or take an immediate decision to close the church. (Mr. Figures did not advise the latter).

Mr. G.F. Seddon (an expert on the Canvass) and Rev. Kenneth Cairns subsequently visited the church and explained in detail the whole procedure relating to the Every Person Canvass. No action appears to have been taken at the time, but some months later it was agreed that the Church should try a modified version and a Committee was formed to arrange all the details.

When an Engineer carrying out an investigation on behalf of the Congregational Insurance Company reported that the Heating System in the church was completely frozen, that one Radiator was broken and that eight others had signs of leaking and that the boiler in the school was also cracked, the Church Officials realised that the Church could not be used for services for some considerable time, and they decided to hold the services in the Lecture Room, and to arrange for a "working party" to do some decorating and to make the room clean and presentable.

An approach was made to an Estate Agent regarding the sale of the Manse. He indicated that this could prove difficult in view of the cellars and attics. The property was initially advertised at £1,600 on the understanding that any offer over £1,200 should be carefully considered. The house was eventually sold for £1,000 (the only offer received) and a cheque for £943 13s. 4d. was forwarded later to the Lancashire Congregational Union for investment.

In January 1963 a Journal Reporter, Stephen North investigated rumours that were circulating at the time regarding the possible closure of the church and his article in the Press provoked a lively correspondence. The rumours, which were denied emphatically by the Church Officials and Leaders, were supported by a statement made by the leader of the 200 strong Youth Club to the effect that the church was in financial difficulties and in danger of closing down. The adverse publicity given to the Church was a matter of great concern to the Deacons but after correspondence with the Editor of the Journal over the issue it was agreed that no useful purpose would be served by any further action being taken. The Youth Leader and his wife subsequently transferred their membership to an Anglican Church, because of what they described as "undertones in the church".<sup>1</sup>

To sound a happier note, an approach was made to Mr. L. Breedon with a view to his coming to Trinity as Lay Pastor of the church. The arrangement put to him was that he should preach on a regular basis on two Sundays in the month (possibly three when there were five Sundays) and undertake special visiting of the sick and the elderly and Preside at Meetings etc.

Mr. Breedon readily accepted the invitation on the understanding that he would be paid preaching fees for each service he conducted, plus £20 per annum and fares incurred on church duties. He was soon active in the pastorate, and did good work amongst the Trinity members. He conducted Church Membership Classes for 4 young people and he interviewed 4 ladies regarding membership. All this was a welcome encouragement to a jaded church.

In December 1963 an offer was made by Mr. Stringer to re-floor the large Hall in the Schoolroom. He was prepared to do the job provided the church would pay the cost of all materials. The area which required attention was 1,625 square yards. The cost of timber would be ninepence a running foot or 1s. 6d. per square foot, a sum in the region of £125 to £150 would be involved for all materials. Mr. Stringer expressed the desire to get on with the job as soon as possible. After the floor was completed he was prepared to decorate the entrance and the passages in the school.

The Diaconate agreed that if the large Hall was to be used for Socials it was essential that something should be done about the floor, but at the same time it was felt that if the job was being done merely to provide facilities for Young People of the type recently attracted by the Youth Club, the vast majority of

whom had not the slightest interest in the Church, the expenditure was not justified. Mr. Holland was asked to inform Mr. Stringer that the deacons could not authorise the expense involved at the present time.

In March 1964 the short but happy Lay Pastorate of Mr. L. Breedon came to an end. He had been advised by his doctor to give up all Part Time activities owing to the condition of his heart. There had been a better spirit in the church during his time of service. His sermons had been of the highest order and his friendliness had endeared him to all. A letter of thanks and good wishes was sent to Mr. Breedon conveying the affection and concern of the Trinity people for his future health and welfare.

On Mr. Breedon's departure concern was expressed over the poor attendances at the services. After the children had left, the morning service was no more than 12-14, the evening attendance averaged 15-17. In view of these depressing figures it was agreed that for a Trial Period - May to September one service only should be held each Sunday (except for the Sunday School Anniversary and the Harvest Festival). When the stated period expired it proved impossible to revert to two services each Sunday owing to the difficulty in obtaining Pulpit Supplies and the fact that attendances in the winter months were always smaller.

At a Church Meeting in September 1964 the future of the church was discussed in detail. In view of the difficulty in obtaining officers and the decline in numbers attending the Sunday School (partly due to property clearance in the area), and the heavy financial commitments that would have to be faced by a seriously diminishing number of members and the burden of old property needing much money for repairs, a number of those present felt that the church should close.

When the name of Rev. W.J. Else, M.A., who had joined the staff of Eccles Grammar School, as a teacher of Divinity was put forward as a possibility with regard to giving help to the church as Part-Time Pastor, it was agreed after a lengthy discussion to meet Mr. Else and to "put all the cards on the table" with regard to the difficulties facing the church so that he could make up his mind.

Mr. Else subsequently visited the church (October <sup>x</sup>1966) and after being informed of the many difficulties and the possible closure of the church he mentioned his own problems and hesitations with regard to his undertaking the work e.g. travelling from Bolton and being so far away from members and adherents and indicated

that he had come to the meeting to say that he could not accept the invitation. It was pointed out that Lay Preachers also came to the church from a considerable distance, and it was suggested that Mr. Else should come for a trial period.

Mr. Else accepted the invitation and it was a matter for regret that his coming co-incided with the resignation of Mr. Holland as Church Secretary. Mr. Pearson also resigned as Free Will Offering Steward, although he indicated that he was prepared to carry on until a successor could be found. Thanks were expressed to both men for their unfailing service to the church. The Diaconate, however, was strengthened by the admission of women for the first time - agreed 15th December 1964 - the ratio being 3 women and 7 men.

Mr. Else was asked by the Diaconate to give a brief explanation of the "Draft Constitution" which came before the churches at the time. He indicated that it was a matter of re-constituting the Congregational Union of England and Wales. There was no reason to think that under the new Constitution individual churches would be affected very differently than at present. Some decisions affecting local churches may be made by the National Body, but Mr. Else felt that these generally would be in the interests of the local church. When the minister called for a resolution on the matter it was carried unanimously that "we intimate to the Congregational Union of England and Wales our approval of the new Draft Constitution".

The question of heating in the school was discussed at length in the Deacons' Meetings in January and March 1965. Estimates obtained from the Ellesmere Engineering Co. Ltd., and the Gas Board and Electricity Board were considered. The defective boiler could be repaired for less than £100, but this would mean continuing with the solid fuel process and the need for proper care-taking, lighting, re-fuelling and damping down etc., at appropriate times involving the payment of wages for such work. It was clear from the Gas Board's estimate that conversion to a gas-fired system, which church members could operate themselves and the installation of a new boiler was desirable but extremely, not to say prohibitively costly considering the limited resources of the church, and the reaction of the majority was that it was quite out of the question.

Later in the year the Hon. Pastor of the church Rev. W.J. Else M.A. accepted an invitation to serve Blackburn Road Congregational Church, Bolton as their minister and a special meeting was called to consider the future of Trinity in the light of this development. After a lengthy discussion during which it was stated that the

average collection was £5 18s. 7d. it was agreed by all concerned that the church could no longer continue.

Representatives of the church were appointed to meet the Moderator, Rev. J.A. Figures, M.A. to discuss the matter and to ask him to arrange a meeting between the representatives of Trinity and Worsley Road with a view to a merger or union of the two churches.

A Final Extraordinary General Meeting was held on Sunday 30th January 1966 at which a summary was given of the Meeting between the Diaconate Sub-Committee and Rev. J.A. Figures, M.A. on 9th January and a report was presented by the Hon. Treasurer.

Resolutions were then submitted to close the church and disperse the congregation and to ask the Lancashire Congregational Union to assume responsibility for the Church and Sunday School property. The Diaconate was authorised to dispose of all assets and fix the date of the last church service. *March 1966*

Mr. Else returned to the church to conduct the closing service. The organ was given to a Roman Catholic Church in Clayton and small items such as hymn books etc., were distributed to church members as mementoes.

Conclusion: So a century and a half of worship at Trinity Congregational Church came to an end. In its day the church had a vital influence upon the life of the community it existed to serve and during the ministries of Miles Hanson, Thomas Wigley, Leslie Artingstall, and Glyndwr Harris it was a flourishing centre of Liberal Christianity in the North, but slum clearance in the area and declining congregations made the aging membership feel that there was no future for the church. Most of the church members joined Worsley Road Congregational Church, Swinton, where they continued to give loyal and faithful service.

- 1 For the full text of the investigation by Journal Reporter Stephen North and the correspondence which followed see:

Swinton & Pendlebury Journal Wednesday 23rd January 1963

Swinton & Pendlebury Journal Wednesday 30th January 1963

Swinton & Pendlebury Journal Wednesday 6th February 1963

Swinton & Pendlebury Journal Wednesday 13th February 1963.