

A scenic landscape featuring a river flowing through a valley, surrounded by rolling hills and mountains. In the foreground, a flock of sheep is grazing on a grassy slope. In the middle ground, there are some buildings and a stone wall. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

SIX
REMARKABLE
MINISTERS

Edited by B. A. Ramsbottom

Six Remarkable Ministers

Edited by
B. A. Ramsbottom

*“Behold, God exalteth by His power: who
teacheth like Him?”
(Job 36. 22)*

2006

Gospel Standard Trust Publications,
12(b) Roundwood Lane,
Harpenden, Hertfordshire, AL5 3DD,
England

©B. A. Ramsbottom, 1994

ISBN 1 897837 04 6

Published by:
Gospel Standard Trust Publications,
12(b) Roundwood Lane,
Harpenden,
Hertfordshire,
AL5 3DD

First printed 1994
Reprinted 2006

Cover Picture: Nant Ffrancon Pass, North Wales
(Andy Williams)

*Printed and bound in Great Britain by
The Cromwell Press Ltd.
Trowbridge, Wiltshire. BA14 0XB*

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Thomas Godwin	6
Alexander Barrie Taylor.....	84
Francis Covell.....	138
Edward Samuel.....	180
George Mockford	244
Robert Moxon.....	306

INTRODUCTION

This book tells the story of six interesting men whom God raised up to preach the gospel. They were all completely different. Thomas Godwin was a poor, illiterate cobbler in Wiltshire, who taught himself to read and write, on his knees. A. B. Taylor was brought up in formal Presbyterianism in Scotland, where singing and shooting were his chief delights. Francis Covell was a Croydon tradesman who stammered so badly that often his customers could not understand him. Nisan (later, Edward) Samuel was a strict Jew in Poland. George Mockford was a Sussex shepherd boy who knew grinding poverty. Robert Moxon lived in Yorkshire and as a young man only narrowly escaped committing murder. Though so different, God raised up each of them to be preachers of the gospel. All these men were remarkable in several ways:

1. Not one of them was brought up under clear preaching of the truth, neither did any of them ever hear a true gospel sermon till after they had been savingly converted to God. Some had no religion at all, some had just a formal religion, and one was a strict Jew.

2. Not one of them was brought up a Baptist, yet all became clearly convinced that baptism by immersion is the baptism of the Word of God.

3. All of them became convinced Calvinists through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. One or two of them were told that they were “Calvinists” before they knew what the word meant. In fact, one of them, Robert Moxon, was convinced of the truth of sovereign election whilst in the pulpit of a Methodist chapel where he had gone as a “free will” preacher.

All became staunch, unflinching preachers of the doctrines of God's free and sovereign grace, denying offers of salvation to all. In varying degrees each of them became eminent preachers, and all were wonderfully used by God.

So it is right to describe them as “six remarkable ministers.”

* * *

Each of the “six remarkable ministers” became Strict Baptist ministers connected with the *Gospel Standard* magazine. Not all David's mighty men “attained to the first three,” (1 Samuel chapter 23) but they were all valiant men, and the Holy Ghost has left them on record. The six ministers whose lives appear in this book are not so well known as Gadsby, Warburton and Kershaw, but they are certainly among the

“valiant of Israel” and their lives deserve to be better known. They all knew the depths and heights of sin and salvation.

But apart from the spiritual quality of their lives, they are all extremely interesting. What light we have on life in the last century in the household of a strict Jew, or among the poor in Wiltshire and Sussex, or in the highlands of Scotland! And what interesting adventures and escapes some of them had!

* * *

The accounts are written with varying ability and style – for instance, what a difference in the style of writing of the first two accounts. In the case of Francis Covell's life, this was not written by himself but compiled after his death. All the other accounts have the serious shortcoming of having been written a considerable time before the author's death (one 50 years!) or if written in later life, the account ends some years previously and usually abruptly. In these cases we have given a few details of what took place afterward – but the earlier part is the cream.

In these days when life is more easy, and when many want religion to be more easy, may the faithful witness of the six ministers bear fruit to the honour and glory of God.

B. A. Ramsbottom
1994

Mrs. Hazel Parish, Mrs. Joy Wiltshire and Mr. John Kingham are specially thanked for all their work in preparing *Six Remarkable Ministers* for publication.



yours affectionately
Thos Godwin

THOMAS GODWIN: 1803-1877

The remarkable account of a poor, illiterate cobbler raised up by God to be a minister of the gospel.

Brought to a knowledge of salvation without ever hearing a gospel sermon, Thomas Godwin learned to read and write on his knees, crying to God to help him. After two short pastorates, he was minister at Godmanchester, Huntingdonshire, for the last sixteen years of his life. He preached occasionally for John Warburton at Trowbridge and J. C. Philpot at Stamford, and after William Gadsby's death was invited to succeed him at Manchester (which he declined). Mr. Godwin was perhaps J. C. Philpot's closest friend.

CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND EARLY DAYS

The Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob help me to do the thing which I have had on my mind for many years, and help me to be honest before God and men and with my own conscience. I have for many years past been much exercised about giving an outline of my poor unprofitable life, and of the gracious dealings of my covenant God and Father in the Lord Jesus Christ.

My first birthplace was at Purton, in Wilts. I was born at Purton, in the county of Wilts, a village about five and a half miles from Swindon, in the year of our Lord 1803. My father's name was Ralph Godwin, and my mother's Susan. My parents were poor, and my father's calling or trade was that of a shoemaker. There were eight of us in the family – five boys and three girls – and I am the youngest son of my mother.

As I grew in years, and everything was so dear, I was obliged to go out to work just after I was turned six years of age. My first employment was to ride about with an old farmer, to open the gates for him, as he was a cripple; and my wages were two pence per day – one shilling (5p) per week. As I grew older, my wages were advanced; and when I was about ten years of age I became a milk boy, and cut my own

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

loaf. But I was then a steady and a hard-working boy, and had to rise in the morning about four o'clock.

And so I was moved on, by God's good providence, from one step to another until I became about fifteen years of age; and then I began to think myself something. The pride of my heart and the lust of my flesh began to show themselves in a most rapid way and manner. I was then living with a widow woman, at the vicarage house in a village called Rodbourn Cheney, near Swindon, in the county of Wilts. She feared God, and would often correct me. I lived with her three years, and then went home to my father and learned shoemaking, as I had done a little at it before.

Then I ran further into sin than ever. I was then just nineteen years of age, and I commenced in business as a shoemaker at a village called Shaw, about three miles and a half from Swindon, in the county of Wilts. There I ran further into sin and wickedness than ever, until I was just over twenty-three years of age.

At this time I was married; and as we were much addicted to card-playing, and visiting from place to place, and people getting into my debt [*sic*]; although my wife and I worked very hard for the bread that perisheth, and tried hard to pay our way, yet we were never satisfied unless we were card-playing or visiting. And we were both as proud as the devil and the pride of our hearts could make us.

CONVICTION OF SIN

But now troubles and afflictions of one kind and another began to fall upon us, and I began to be very unhappy and very miserable, so that I did not know what to do with myself. One day, I had been into a neighbour's house, where I often used to resort, as I was so fond of foolish talking and making sport of one and another, and an awful blasphemer when in a passion, and that was often. But, as I was passing from this person's house to my own, just as I got into the centre of the road, these words dropped into my heart and soul with such power: "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

THOMAS GODWIN

And now the Lord put a damper upon all my wicked practices, and spoiled all my sport in this world. At that time I was very fond of singing, but the arrow was shot into my conscience, and stuck fast there. I tried with all my might and power to get it out and shake it off; but all was in vain. The Lord began to show me that I was a sinner in His sight, and I began to make vows and promises that I would mend my life and go to church; and I then thought that I should soon grow better.

At that time I could not read at all, no, not the alphabet, and what to do I could not tell; for, I thought, if I could read, the Lord may be pleased with me, as I wanted to do something to try and please the Lord. I knew that we had got one old book in the house, and I thought it was a Bible, because I knew some of the letters, but not all. So I got this old book and went up into my cutting-room, and knelt down and opened the old Bible, and began to try to pray over it, to ask the Lord to teach me to read.

On a Lord's day morning I used to be up before the sun all through the spring and summer, as my soul's trouble commenced in the spring of the year 1826. I had been very diligent in business, but yet not so earnest in it nor at it as the Lord had made me about my never-dying soul. Here I used to spend all my Sabbaths, from daylight in the morning until dark at night, with the exception of going to the parish church twice on a Lord's day.

When I could read the little words without spelling, this encouraged me to press on and redeem all the time I could; but as convictions grew within my conscience, and one sin and another was opened up in my soul, I felt that all my seeking and trying to read and pray did not make me any better, but I rather grew worse and worse. But still, as the Holy Ghost showed me what was wrong, He gave me power to leave it off. And here I went on until the Lord made me leave off all the business that I had practised on the Lord's day from the commencement of my marriage. All my old companions looked with a scornful eye upon me; before they could do nothing without me, neither could they go anywhere with pleasure without me; but now they hated me, and began to persecute me, and say all manner of evil against me.

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

But still, my soul was on the full stretch after something; but I was as ignorant of salvation as a beast.

After a time I got a New Testament, which was better print than this old Bible, and down I fell upon my knees to thank the Lord for it, and tried to ask the Lord to teach me to read it, and often with weeping eyes. After a long time I could read a little, and then I began, as I thought, to be thankful to the Lord for teaching me this little. As I had left off all my former practices, and was very diligent in the use of the means, and tried to do all the good I could to my neighbours, and never lost a moment in idleness, therefore pride and self-righteousness sprang up in my heart to that degree that I began to think that I really had become a better man. The church minister that I sat under began to praise me, and set me up very high among the congregation, until I thought that I must be a Christian in deed and in truth; and I used to go from house to house to talk about, as I thought, *religion*. But, alas! alas! I neither knew my own heart, nor anything of the fall of man, nor anything of the bitterness and evil of sin.

As I had then two small children, I took my little girl to a weekly boarding school. And as I had a brother who lived close to this school, I looked in to see him and found another brother with him. As I was in my own eyes too holy to talk about anything but religion, I began to tell them what state and condition we were all in by nature and practice. My eldest brother said to me, "Tom, thee dost think that thou art righteous." I answered him by these words: "There is none righteous, no, not one." And the Holy Ghost brought the same words back into my own heart and conscience like a sharp two-edged sword, and cut me down at a stroke. I trembled from head to foot, within and without, and the tears ran down my cheeks.

Out of the house I came. All my supposed religion was swept away in a moment; and down my soul fell, like a bird shot, into a state of despondency. But before I had got three stones' cast, these words came with such killing power: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew

THOMAS GODWIN

them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.”

Now the enemy told me that I had committed the unpardonable sin, that there was no ground whatever for me to hope for mercy, and that I was a reprobate, and must be cast for ever into hell. All my profession was turned into sin and transgression; the curse of the law was brought into my heart and conscience; and the devil let loose upon me, so that my soul sank into the lowest hell. Sin and transgression became so bitter and hateful in my soul, I seemed to suffer the torments of hell within; and I could neither eat nor drink, sleep nor work. My flesh and strength failed me, and I very soon became like a walking ghost. Here I saw a just God, and His strict justice; and the wrath of a broken law was let out into my conscience like a burning fire. Truly my soul did experimentally know the right meaning of these words: “Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

CHAPTER 2

The Lord kept me shut up here in this prison of sin, guilt and condemnation, tortured and tormented in my very heart, soul and conscience; and I envied the dog, horse, cow and fowl, and wished that I had never been born. With such a heavy load of sin and guilt, law and wrath, working within, I felt afraid to close my eyes in sleep, for fear I should wake up in hell. I was tempted day and night to destroy myself, sometimes with poison, sometimes with a knife, and sometimes with a razor, sometimes in the water, and sometimes with a rope, until my life became a burden to me, and the torment seemed as bad as hell itself, and the solemn weight of eternity. With the fear and dread of eternal torments, fearing that the earth would open her mouth and swallow me up, or else that the judgment of God would come down upon me and strike me dead on the spot, I went backward and forward to the parish church, and heard the law read over every Sabbath day. I used to look at the minister and the dead congregation; they all seemed dead together; and not one word about my case could I hear.

Here I was, with my mouth stopped, my soul lost; and no one seemed to know my case nor care for my soul. My flesh had gone off my bones, and my strength was dried up like a potsherd. Here my soul could feelingly and experimentally join with David, and say, "There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." And I could feelingly say with Jeremiah, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath." And here my soul was kept at Mount Sinai; and as the trumpet sounded long and louder in my poor burdened and condemned conscience, and expecting to be cut off and sent to hell, my flesh trembled for fear of Him. I was indeed afraid of His judgments.

In this awful state I cried to God for mercy day and night; but I wanted repentance before God. I felt that I could not repent of myself, and my soul cried to God day and night for it. And yet godly fear and godly sorrow were at that time working within my soul; because sin was

THOMAS GODWIN

so hateful and bitter, and the tears of sorrow were running down my cheeks day and night. Satan was tempting me on every hand and on every side, until my soul was in such an agony that I felt as though hell could be no worse, and the devil set in upon me like a flood.

A HOPE IN GOD'S MERCY

Being at home by myself on a Monday morning, Satan and I had agreed together to go up into my cutting-room and hang myself. Upstairs I went to put an end to my miserable life, trembling from head to foot, and under these feelings: that my poor dear wife and children would come home and find my dead body, and my soul would be in hell. But Satan got defeated. Before I could get up into my room, these words dropped into my heart and soul: "Who can tell but what God may have mercy on such a hell-deserving sinner as I have felt myself to be before a heart-searching God?" I cast my eyes up to the beam where the execution was to take place. All of a sudden the Lord brought before my mind all the vile characters that He had saved, as they are set forth in the Bible; such as the harlot Rahab, Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, Saul of Tarsus, and others. Down I fell upon my knees once more, and the publican's prayer was put into my heart and soul. My heart was broken all to pieces. The tears ran down my cheeks in streams, and a hope was raised up in my soul in the free mercy of God.

How long I was kept here I could not say; but this I can say, that while on my knees, pouring out my soul before God, I felt He was *able* to save me; but my soul said, "Art Thou *willing* to save such a black sinner as I am?" I felt willing to be saved in any way; but all this time my soul had no knowledge of the Saviour. Although I felt nothing but the strict justice of God against me, yet I could see that He was a God of mercy to His people. But when the Lord raised up this hope in my soul in His free mercy, I had such a sight and felt sense of His long-suffering mercy and forbearance towards me that I came down out of my cutting-room, trying to thank the Lord for making a way for my escape once more.

After this my soul sank lower and deeper than before. I was now tempted to kill my wife and two dear children, and then destroy

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

myself. I must leave my reader to judge what my feelings must be. Here my soul was tormented day and night. I had no one to speak to, and there was no truth to hear on the Lord's day. I went to the parish church twice a day, and sometimes used to go out between the services into fields, creep into the ditch, and try to cry for mercy. I always walked with my guilty head down, looking on the earth, with my mouth shut. When any one came to my house on business, I could only receive their orders; I could not talk to them. If any one asked me what was the matter, I used to say, "I am lost and going to hell." The byword was, respecting me, "Godwin has gone out of his mind"; and I thought so too, and that I should be taken off to an asylum and die there, and that my wife and two children would die in a poor-house.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE LAW

Now the time drew near that the Lord had fixed for my deliverance. My soul was suffering a hell upon earth, between the guilt of sin, the weight of transgression, the strict justice of God, the wrath of the law, the power of temptations, the terrors of God, the fears of death, the pains of hell, a never-ending eternity, and everlasting separation from God and my poor wife and children. These things sank me into black despair.

But the memorable morning was come. I walked round my garden and my nice little cottage at Shaw, which the Lord had given me, for the last time, I thought; for I expected to be in hell in a few minutes. But, honours for ever crown the dear Lamb of God! I staggered into my shop. I passed my front door, and looked upon my wife and children for the last time, as I thought. But just as I stepped into my shop, the Lord Jesus came down into my heart and soul, and took off my burden of sin and guilt, and blotted out my transgression. He removed the curse and terrors of the law out of my conscience, and brought pardon and peace into my soul; and these words came with such power: "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest." My soul mounted up on the wings of love and faith, and upon the wings of the Holy Ghost, and entered into the dear bosom of the precious Jesus.

THOMAS GODWIN

My soul was so happy, and as full of the love of God in Christ Jesus as it could hold. I sang, I danced, I shouted; and I loved, I blessed the dear name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. My soul saw by faith the Three Divine Persons, yet but One Eternal God. The Word of truth came with weight, power and sweetness into my heart night and day; the Holy Ghost opened it up unto my soul, and then I could read the letter of the Word. I opened the Bible, fell upon my knees, and asked the Lord to teach me and guide me into all truth. The glorious revelation and manifestations, and the applications, with the operation of the Holy Ghost, filled my heart and soul with joy and peace in believing; and under the Spirit of adoption my soul cried, "Abba, Father!"

For over twelve months my soul walked in the life, liberty, and love of the gospel of the Three-One God, eating and drinking the truths of the everlasting Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. Although my mourning days were many under the burden of sin and the hard bondage and curse of the law, yet my glorious days of life, love and liberty weighed down all my sorrow, mourning, grief and torment. And the continual operations and applications of the Holy Ghost, the dear Comforter, made my soul dance like the poor prodigal son when he entered into his father's house and had his filthy garments taken off and the best robe put on. And although it is nearly forty years since this took place in my soul, yet it is as fresh and clear as though it was but as yesterday. Under this enjoyment I fell to work with my hands to try to get out of debt, and pay every man twenty shillings in the pound. I worked eighteen and twenty hours out of the twenty-four for years together.

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

CHAPTER 3

PROVIDENTIAL TRIALS AND DELIVERANCES

Here I must go back a little. I might enlarge, and write much on the difficulties by the way in providence, and how I tried hard to make money. My wife was anxious we should go into Wales, for she had heard such good tidings of that part. Nothing would satisfy her but I must go over and see about settling there. I left home soon after Christmas, and walked to Bristol the first day, and over into Wales the next. But when I came there I did not try to get a house, for I hated the place, and I could not understand the people's language. The day I went over it was a very calm sea, but when I returned it was very rough. The sea wrought, and was tempestuous. When we got into the Bristol Channel, I thought my life was at stake, and I ran upon deck to cast myself into the sea, to swim to shore; but the captain soon cried, "No danger!" But, before we could land at Bristol, a poor woman fell overboard, but the poor ungodly wretch, Godwin, got safe to land. I walked home to my wife the next day, and told her I would never go into Wales to live, for I did not like it well enough. My wife was much disappointed. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

I had taken an apprentice boy, and received twenty pounds with him. He was a very good boy, and would have got on very well, but when he had been with me about half his time, the Lord struck the poor boy with a stroke, and took the use of his right side away. Now here was a great trial, for I had engaged to keep him in food and raiment until the seven years had expired, and also to find a doctor, if needed. So I had to send for the doctor, and soon I had a bill of £5. But the doctor could do him no good. Then I got him to Bath, but all was useless. He had served half his time and had been very handy, and I had set great store by him, as he was quiet and willing to work, and I could also trust him. But the Lord knew what was best for me, and also what I needed. Although at that time I had no religion, yet I was enabled to perform my covenant with him. But I had many temporal troubles and

THOMAS GODWIN

trials with a poor afflicted wife, who had the fever, and I had heavy doctors' bills to pay. But I had strength to work, and the Lord brought me out of all my temporal troubles, as regards my debts, and enabled me to forgive all my debtors.

SPIRITUAL DARKNESS AND TEMPTATIONS

But, again, after the blessed Lord had taught me to read His precious Word of truth, and my soul so enjoyed it, I thought that my soul was near entering heaven. I longed to die, to be with the blessed Jesus. But the Lord had another furnace for me to be plunged into. Although my conscience was kept tender, and the fear of the Lord flowed in my heart like a fountain of life, and my temper was mild and meek, yet the Lord began to hide His face, shut up His Word, and let a cloud down upon the mercy-seat. Thick darkness gathered over my soul, and my heart sank fathoms within me. The sins of my heart began to rise, and the devil was let loose upon me. The Bible became a sealed book, and all prayer seemed to have left me, so that I could not get my heart up to the Lord, for it lay within me like stone or lead. The old serpent, the devil, tempted me to curse God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.

These temptations followed me day and night, and whenever my eyes or hands fastened on the Bible, the curses and blasphemous thoughts rose up within my heart like so many mountains. These things crippled, wounded and killed me; but as fast as the blasphemous thoughts passed within my heart, my soul kept saying, "Bless the Lord, bless the Lord," day and night, when my eyes were open. And to think that these awful thoughts should go out against my best Friend, and also that the curses should go out in thoughts against the people of God! My soul again reeled to and fro, and staggered like a drunken man, and I was brought to my wit's end. But my heart was so hard, I could not cry here as my soul did under the law; and this followed me wheresoever I went for about twelve months, until I felt sure I must have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost; for I had inwardly blasphemed His name, and Satan told me that I had committed the unpardonable sin. As I had nowhere to go to hear but to the parish church, and never had any

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

spiritual companion to open my mind to, nor yet any minister of truth to hear, I thought I must be the man out of whom the unclean spirit went, and now he had come back again, and brought seven other spirits more wicked than himself.

Under these feelings and fightings I was compelled to live. I used to walk about, wringing my hands and stamping my feet like a madman. I could not think for one moment that I could be a child of God. I dared not read my Bible, because these awful curses went out so strong against the Bible and its Author. And when I dropped off to sleep for a time, Satan told me that the curses came out of my mouth in my sleep. This distressed me beyond measure, so that my flesh and strength gave way again, and I felt so weak in body and soul.

O! my dear friends, you that have a gospel minister to sit under, thank God for it; and you that have a few spiritual friends to meet with from Sabbath to Sabbath, set a value upon them. If you cannot get a preacher, remember the poor wretch that is now writing had no truth to hear, no friend to speak to, and could not cry to the Lord in this state.

One day, I could not sit in my shop, but walked into my house in bitter agony of soul. The New Testament lay on the table, and I took hold of it and threw it open. These words took hold of my soul: "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." My poor devil-tempted, sin-tormented soul was delivered in a moment. My soul danced within me. O how my heart and soul thanked, blessed and praised my dear Lord and Saviour for coming down into my heart once more, to give me peace and rest! The Holy Ghost showed my soul that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness on purpose to be tempted of the devil. And He also showed me that going through all these temptations that my soul had been passing through was following Jesus through the wilderness; and I could clearly see that the Holy Ghost was leading my soul all through these cutting and killing temptations, and that divine grace enabled my soul to fight against them from the commencement of this hot war in my heart.

How sweet and precious was the Word of God to my soul in those days, and what pleasure I felt in reading it! The Holy Ghost led my soul into it, opened up the beauty and sweetness of it within my

THOMAS GODWIN

heart, and taught me to read the letter of it. I used to sit up nights, after my wife and children had gone to bed, and rise up hours before them in the morning, and eat and drink the Word of life; walk off miles on a week evening to try to pick up a crumb, but could find nothing but husks; return home on a dark night, and have a little persecution to go to bed with. But I could then bear it with patience, without returning a word.

LEARNING THE TRUTH

As the dear Lord led my soul on in divine things, revealed His precious Word of truth home into my soul, taught me to read the letter of His Word, for which I have blessed Him over and over again, and as it was opened up in my heart, I could not help speaking of it. An old man that had heard of me, who lived in the adjoining parish, came to see me. After he had talked with me some time, he said, “Why, you are a Calvinist.” I could not think what he meant by saying that I was a *Calvinist*, so ignorant was I of the meaning of the word. Indeed, I had never heard the word before. I kept on turning this word “Calvinist” over and over in my mind, and I could not get rid of it.

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

CHAPTER 4

About this time, I heard that a poor woman who lived in the upper part of the village was brought to feel her state as a sinner before God. This set fire to my zeal. It came into my mind that the parish clerk, who at that time was a friend of mine, had a book that would suit her case; but it being late at night when I heard of it, I did not know how to manage to get the book for her to have it that night, as she lived about half a mile from my house one way, and he about a mile the other. But my soul being so full of love to Jesus and zeal for the welfare of poor sinners' souls that there was scarcely a house in the place but what I had been into to tell them of their state, and that they would go to hell if they died in their sins, I started for this book, and felt she must have it before I slept.

I set off running, for fear the man would be gone to bed; but I had not gone far before these words dropped into my heart: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." I stopped my pace all of a sudden, and could not think what it meant, for I did not know that these words were in the Bible. But I began to run on, when the words returned again: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." I reached the house before the man had gone to bed, told him my business, and said there was nothing like driving the nail while it was hot; and I wanted to give it a good clench.

Off I went with the book; but no sooner was I got out of the house when the words came again: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." This followed me all the way to where the woman lived, and back to my house, and also when I awoke in the morning; so that, instead of my driving the nail into the poor woman's mind and clenching it, the Eternal Spirit drove a nail in a sure place into my conscience, and clenched it; for it has never been drawn out unto this day, and I believe it never will be, because "the Word of the Lord endureth for ever."

THOMAS GODWIN

Now the Lord began to inform my judgment, and open up the doctrines of grace in my heart and conscience. My soul was very earnest at the throne of grace, and over my Bible. I was led to beg the Lord to lead my soul by His blessed Spirit into the truth as it is in Jesus, and that He would never suffer me to go astray. And, bless His dear name, He opened up His blessed Word of truth in my soul day after day; so that when the church clergyman, whom I still sat under, came to see me, which he mostly did once a week when he came round to visit what he called his "flock," I began to talk to him about election and predestination, and also what I saw in them, and what my soul felt from them. He looked at me, smiled, and said that he loved the doctrines of election and predestination; and that none would ever go to heaven unless they were elected. My soul kept on crying to the Lord for Him to teach me and lead me into His truth, and was still led to search the Bible with more earnestness than ever; and His Word and Spirit searched my heart and conscience in such a powerful way.

Now I could read some of the easy chapters in the Gospel of John through; and every time the parson came to see me I had some fresh testimonies to speak about. He still said that he loved those things, and what precious doctrines they were. He had said to the people in the parish, those he called Christians, and some out of the parish that used to hear him, "Be sure and go to see Godwin when you want to talk about religion; for he is such a bright Christian." And as my soul was so full, I could not help speaking about it.

One day, when I called on a person in the next village who made a profession, and I hoped the wife knew something about soul-trouble, the conversation turned upon religion. I could not help telling them a little of what the Lord had revealed to my soul; and having known them for some years, I felt a freedom to open my mind. But when the clergyman called on her, she told him that I had called there to see her (indeed, I had done their work for years), and had talked about election, saying that there was a people that God had chosen in Christ before the world began, and that those people must go to heaven. This frightened the poor woman so much that she could not sleep. She

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

began to look at her children, and wondered what would become of them if that was a truth.

When he came to see me again, he did not forget to tell me about it, and also told me to mind what I said to people about such doctrines. But, as the Lord led my soul on, and revealed these precious doctrines of truth to my soul, I began to look into the New Testament he had got for me, with Bucket's Commentary [does he mean *Burkitt*?]; and I was led to see that Mr. Bucket was a rotten-hearted man, who did not know the life and power of truth in his soul. The more the Lord opened my understanding in the mysteries of godliness, the more my eyes were opened to see into error. "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures."

Once on a time I went to hear an Independent minister, who preached in a house on a week evening in a village near Wootton Bassett. People told me that he preached the doctrine that some were to go to heaven and some to hell; and let them do what they would, they must go to hell. I said that if ever I heard him or any other man say such things, I would never believe him, but would attack him as soon as he had done speaking. But he never mentioned such a thing, neither did he come any nearer the truth than the church parson. But, before the Lord brought my soul out, the enmity of my heart boiled up against the doctrine called election; and I said I would never believe such a doctrine, for I would not believe that God was such a God as that, to save one and leave another, without giving all a chance. But God made my soul believe it, for "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." This truth settled the matter in my soul's experience, and this one passage came upon the back of it: "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth."

Again, as the dear Lord led my soul on experimentally into the truth, and applied His precious Word to my heart with divine power and life, the Bible was increasingly dear to me, and Mr. Bucket was laid aside. Then the doctrines of divine grace were opened up more clearly within my heart and soul, and my stammering tongue was more and more loosed to speak of them. The people looked shy upon me. About

THOMAS GODWIN

this time a man called at my house with a roll of papers in his hand. When asked what he had, he said, "I will leave you one if you will promise to stick it up in your house after you have read it." I replied I would not promise that. He left it, and walked away. When I looked at it, down I threw it; for I saw what it was on the first page. It said that the doctrines of election and predestination were not the doctrines of the Bible, and that they came from hell. My feelings rose up so strong against the doctrines of free will, and so strong on the side of free grace, that I felt indignation against the man and his party for ever publishing such blasphemies against God and His precious truth.

I then heard that a man had come to Swindon who preached those precious doctrines, and that the enemies of truth had these bills printed against him. As they had heard of me, they sent me one, or rather brought me one. Then I said I would go and hear this man. My wife and I fixed to go one Thursday evening. When we had found out the chapel, I stood and looked up and down the street to see if anyone whom I knew would see us go in, as I had been a strict Churchman so many years.

We got into the chapel, and the people's eyes were upon us, as we were strangers. The old gentleman read and prayed, and began to preach. He spoke of the blackness of the heart, and the preciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and also of the everlasting love of God towards His elect people, and many other things. It was just what my soul wanted to hear; yet he did not say how the poor sinner was exercised and tried in his soul, nor yet how he was plagued with sin and the devil. Yet he said a good deal about the devil, and that the Lord Jesus had made an end of sin and transgression, and brought in an everlasting righteousness to justify the election of grace. I had never heard any man preach the doctrines of God's free grace and mercy before, though the Lord had been leading my soul experimentally into it for some months before this, therefore I was much taken by the man's preaching, and it spoiled me for hearing the church minister, although I continued to hear him for some time after this, and went to hear at the chapel on week evenings. The Word of God was so sweet to my heart and conscience

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

that my soul was diligent in searching it, with earnest prayer in my heart for the Lord to lead me into all truth.

About this time I heard that a minister by the name of Tiptaft [William Tiptaft of Abingdon (1803-1864)], was going to preach in the same chapel at Swindon. I was told that Mr. Tiptaft had not long left the Church of England. I felt such a desire in my soul to go and hear him, particularly as he had been in the Church of England; so I went to hear him. When he began to read, every word came with power and weight. I had never heard any one read so before. Then he began to pray, and I could not keep my eyes off him. Then he read this text: "And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called Sought out, A city not forsaken" (Isa. 62. 12). He went into it in such a feeling way and manner, and knocked everything down as he went that stood in his way, and rooted out, and pulled down, and destroyed; and then began to plant. As he went on, he beat down infant sprinkling, and set up believers' baptism; and this had a firm hold on my conscience, for I had seen it in the Word of God. And when Mr. Tiptaft entered into it, and opened it up as a Bible ordinance for believers only, then my soul was led more and more to the Word, to see whether the things that he spoke of were true. "They searched the Scriptures daily," to see "whether those things were so."

The next time the clergyman called I entered into the subject of infant sprinkling and believers' baptism, and also spoke of the sermon that I had heard that dear man of God preach. I told all the people that I would walk twenty miles any time to hear another such sermon as Mr. Tiptaft preached. Then commenced a union with that dear man, and we walked in love and peace until his death, which took place at Abingdon, August 17th, 1864.

But now my troubles began with the clergyman. He was filled with rage and jealousy against me, and began to chide me that I was going astray, that the doctrines I held were erroneous, and that they were doctrines of devils. Then I turned and fought him with his own words; how he had confessed and owned to me before that he loved the doctrines of election and predestination; and that he had testified to me that there would never be a soul saved if it was not chosen to salvation.

THOMAS GODWIN

But the more he persecuted me, the more the Word of truth multiplied within me, according to that word: "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew."

As he was for ever taunting and plaguing me, both at my own house and elsewhere, after trying to drive the truth out of my heart, and finding that he could not move me, for it was burned into my heart and conscience by the living power of a living God, he looked angrily at me, and said, "Godwin, you are led by the devil." I answered him, under a meek and quiet spirit, "If I am led by the devil, Christ is precious to me; and if that is being led by the devil, may God give my soul more of it." He now began to warn all his friends not to come near me, for I had become a dangerous man. Now I saw that this poor man had never had the enmity of his heart slain; therefore he hated God's truth, which was so precious to me.

One Sabbath day he said, "Godwin, you say that I am in error." I replied, "You *are* in error." "Then," he said, "we had better have a meeting. You get a man, and I will get one." He fixed the day for the following Thursday, at my house. He came, with the clerk and more of his friends; I had only one friend for whose soul I thought the Lord had done something; and he came with the minister. When he came, he wanted to know whether my man was come or not. I said, "No; I have not asked one, neither do I intend to do so. I have the Word of truth, and the eyes of the Lord upon me; and my soul has called upon God to be a witness." Then he began to pray in his way. Then I said, "Before you begin, I will tell you my creed. In the first place, God the Father loved my soul in Christ before the world began, and He gave me to Christ. In the fulness of time the Lord Jesus fulfilled the law, and made it honourable for me, and died, and redeemed my soul from all my sins and transgressions. In God's own time, the Holy Ghost quickened my dead soul into life, and brought me, as a perishing sinner, to Jesus, and revealed Christ within my soul as my Saviour." I also said that Christ only died for His people, and that the invitations of the gospel were only held out to the quickened sinners. Then I said, "Now, you contradict it by the Word of truth if you can." He shook and trembled, with my old Bible on his knees; and himself, his clerk and his friends were all

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

confounded. At length he said, "You want to get wiser than your teacher." And the man he had chosen, who had been a close professing friend of mine, spoke up, and said, "Some people do want to get wiser than their teachers." But my soul testified that God the Spirit alone had taught my soul, and that he had never put one finger to it; and how was it likely, when he, with his friends, hated the very things that God had taught me, and that my soul loved better than life itself. So "none of those things moved me."

After the Lord had so blessed my soul, I was greatly exercised about my dear wife; and many prayers and petitions I put up on her account. I used to watch her in the church, to see whether she was paying attention or not. I knew that I could do nothing for her. It must be the power of God to bring her to know anything aright. Still I was kept begging the Lord to quicken her dead soul into life, and always checked everything I saw her do or say wrong. After a time, the Lord was pleased to lay her on a bed of affliction, and brought her down very low. My mouth was opened to talk very closely about the state of her soul, and also to tell her what I had passed through under the curse of God's righteous law, and under the guilt and burden of sin in my conscience; also the blessed deliverance the Lord had given me, and the sweet enjoyment that my soul had rejoiced in for a long time. She heard me with all the quietness imaginable. She knew that she had never passed through those things. The Lord heard my prayer, and restored her to health again.

Still, my soul was led to beg for her on my knees before the Lord, out in the shop, and in my cutting-room; for I then knew the worth and value of a soul, and also the preciousness of a Saviour. My eyes and ears were opened to all her words and ways. I could see she was more quiet and not so much after the world. Once in particular the Lord brought me down on my knees, and let down such a spirit of prayer into my soul on her behalf to bring her out, that my soul will never forget that night, nor the power I felt in my soul. From that time she was brought into great distress, and after a time was sweetly brought into the liberty of the gospel, and we sang and praised the Lord together. I can never describe my feelings of thankfulness to the Lord

THOMAS GODWIN

for bringing my dear wife unto Himself with me. I had indeed travailed in birth for her; and as she had lived with me in all manner of sin, and had been a persecutor to me, and was now brought to fear and love and serve the Lord, how my soul wept for joy! I said, "Now my soul will have a heaven on the earth, and shall never have trouble; for the Lord has answered my prayers on the behalf of my dear wife. 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'"

I now opened my house for prayer and reading. The Lord greatly honoured it; for the Lord called five or six by His grace, so that we had some blessed times together, my dear wife being one among the number. So the persecuting wife was turned into a good companion in tribulation. The sweet meetings we had together in my house at Shaw I cannot forget. They were golden days indeed.

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

CHAPTER 5

MY BAPTISM AND CALL TO THE MINISTRY

Now begins another long and heavy trial. All at once, the thought of preaching fell upon me, and sprang up in me. I tried to shake it off because I had no human learning and never was taught a word by man or woman. I said, "Lord, I am in debt, and I cannot stand up before Thy people in the world, and not be out of debt."

While I was a hearer in the Church of England, the Lord laid believers' baptism upon my conscience, and He opened it up in my soul. I felt that I must go through it. As there was going to be a baptizing at Uffington, in Berkshire, off I walked on a cold winter's morning, and a friend went with me. I had never seen a baptizing. I took a change of raiment with me. When I arrived at Uffington, I was sent to Mr. W——'s to see the minister, and give in my experience. I went with a willing heart, for my soul was full of the love of Jesus; therefore I longed to walk in His ordinances. I was asked into the parlour to see the minister. I began where the Lord began with my soul, and entered into a law-work on my conscience, and told when my soul was quickened into divine life, and how my soul sank under the curse and bondage of the law, the power and guilt of sin and transgression; and then in what way the Lord Jesus came and delivered my soul, and brought pardon and peace into my heart. He said, "That will do." When I went down into the water, my soul was so happy. There for the first time I saw Mr. Shorter [at this time pastor at Blunsdon Hill]. He gave out the hymns at the water side; Mr. Husband [founder of South Moreton Chapel] addressed the people; and Mr. Hitchcock [a seceding clergyman who also baptized William Tiptaft] baptized.

And then came on persecution from the Church people.

About this time Mr. Gadsby, of Manchester, came to Swindon to preach in an Independent chapel. I heard of it, and went to hear the dear man of God. This was his text: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in

THOMAS GODWIN

righteousness, mighty to save” (Isa. 63. 1). And O, how I loved that dear man! for he entered into all the ins and outs of my pathway. I had about half an hour's talk with him after the service, and our hearts were closely knit together in love and affection.

But to return to the deep exercise of soul about the ministry. Day and night, at home and abroad, I told the Lord over and over again, that I was such a fool, and again He told me that He had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. And then again the Lord poured into my heart His precious love, and then my soul wanted to give vent to my feelings, and felt willing to go. Then darkness and temptation came upon me; and then I said, “No, I will not go; I cannot”; for I had been led to count the cost over and over again. I saw what a host of enemies I should have. But still it came upon me again with such an overwhelming weight.

This went on for about twelve months, so that I had no rest. Then my soul said, “Lord, if Thou wilt make it plain to me, I will go”; but feeling jealous of my own heart, my soul cried unto the Lord for Him to apply a word to my soul in my sleep, and awake me up out of my sleep, and then I should be sure that it came from Him and that I did not steal His Word; for, Gideon-like, I wanted the fleece wet and dry. I followed this on for some time.

One Wednesday night, a little past one o'clock, these words came with such power: “Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.” This awoke me up in a moment, and set me up in the bed. A horror of great darkness fell on my soul, and all my faith, hope and confidence seemed to leave me. I thought I must die, and my poor dear wife thought so too. She tried hard to get a light, which was not so easy in those days as at the present; and I sat trembling, fearing every breath would be the last, under this awful horror of darkness and distress, and the perspiration running down my face. But before she could get a light, the Lord Jesus Christ revealed Himself to my poor distressed soul in such a powerful way and manner that I fell down in my bed, and said to my wife, “I do not want a candle. The Lord is come, and has brought life and immortality to light.” And the Holy Ghost led my soul into heaven, to hold communion with the Lord Jesus Christ for about one

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

hour in such a sweet way and manner that I felt saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. The Holy Ghost showed me that my name was written in the Lamb's book of life. My soul well understood the meaning of "setting my house in order," for He had done it Himself, and I felt willing to die. O how my soul longed to be with Him! But He told me that I should not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. I could not let my wife speak a word to me. I could join holy John and say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us," or upon *me*, that I should be manifested a son of God!

The glorious truths of the gospel were opened up in my soul at that time as my soul had never seen them before. The precious blood of the everlasting covenant, and my soul's interest in it, were opened to me in such a way that I never saw before nor since. Nor do I expect to have it opened up to my soul's view again in the same way in this world, for my soul saw all my sins washed away in and through this precious atoning love and blood. As I had an invitation to go out to speak some time before this took place, at once I said, "Lord, I will go and tell the people what Thou hast done, since Thou hast done so much for my soul." I said to my soul that I would not consult with flesh and blood any longer. This took place in the month of August 1834.

I had told my wife to get my clean things ready on the Saturday night, for I should rise early in the morning. But I got but little sleep through the night, thinking about standing up before a people and carrying a message to them from the Lord. As I sat up in the bed, thinking this solemn matter over, I began to fear and tremble, fearing I should run and not be sent by the Lord; and such a cloud of gloom and darkness came over my soul that I sat and trembled in my bed. Then I lay down again; and then my vows and promises came to my mind and memory which I had promised the Lord under that glorious revelation. Then I got up in the bed, and I followed this up and down until it was too late. Then, after this, I cannot tell what I went through in my mind until the following December, but I kept it all to myself. I said, If the Lord wants me to speak in His name, He knows where I am and what I am. And my prayer was this: "Lord, if it is Thy will that I should speak in Thy name, incline Thy people to press me."

THOMAS GODWIN

Soon after, the preacher at Swindon was taken ill, and they published me to speak. I said, "Well, if the Lord inclines my mind to do so, and will give me a text, I will try to come and speak." On December 25th, 1834, I stood in a pulpit for the first time. After I came out of the pulpit I received invitations from two different quarters. So my labours commenced at once, and although I was such a poor ignorant fool, yet I do not remember ever having an idle Sabbath day from that time to this. The first year of my speaking, I have walked twenty-six miles and preached three times at three different places on one day.

After I had had an invitation to preach at Pewsey, in the county of Wiltshire, and had been there a few times, the people there wanted me to settle over them. But I had a good business; therefore I could not see my way to do so. Therefore, I engaged to go up on a Saturday and return on Monday. This commenced in December 1835. I often walked the twenty-two miles, spoke three times on the Lord's day, and went off on the Monday morning early, getting home after walking the same distance, all winds and weather, hail or snow, rain or frost; and then off with my coat, and went to work until the next Saturday. The Lord only knows what trying journeys I had when passing over the Wiltshire downs, the winds and weather meeting me, and my fleshly mind looking back. Sometimes, through the winter months, I have turned round and looked back, and thought, Well, I will not keep on. But then the fear of the Lord began to move in my soul, and that noble word was felt: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Then my soul would press on again.

SETTLEMENT AT PEWSEY

And now began another trying time. The people would have me go to live among them. So the church gave me a call to become their pastor. This put me into a trying box because I had a comfortable home of my own, and the Lord had enabled me to pay all my debts; for my soul had told the Lord over and over again that I could not stand up before a people until I owed no man anything. Bless His dear and precious name, He enabled me to do so! But to return. How can I leave my home and my good business? But the Word of the Lord

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

followed me up day and night, that I must forsake all to follow the Lord Jesus Christ – house, land, wife, children, father, mother, sisters and brothers, for the Lord's sake and the gospel's. So, at the beginning of November 1836, I put a bill up in my window: "A House to be Let." In came a gentleman to say a lady wanted to buy it. But I did not want to sell it, though I was compelled to do so. The day was fixed for my removal from my pretty home at Shaw, where the Lord had so favoured my soul for the last ten years, to Pewsey.

On the Saturday morning before my removal on the following Wednesday, God only knows what I went through. I had sold my house, given up my business, and then the Lord hid His face, and my soul was left in such a state of rebellion. I left my house, and could not wish my wife goodbye. I walked on for about six miles, and felt ready to burst with grief, sorrow and rebellion. But before I got over two miles through Swindon, the Lord broke in upon my soul with these words: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." This subdued the anger and rebellion, and the words returned again with double power, and brought my soul out into a wealthy place. My soul began to sing and rejoice in the Lord, and I took my little Bible out of my pocket and soon found the words, and they so enlarged within my heart and soul that I walked on to Marlborough as strong as a giant refreshed with the new wine of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and as happy as I could live. The house and business were nothing at all to me. I felt I could give up anything for His name's sake. This day, and the blessings my soul received, I cannot forget, for it was a hill Mizar. This was on November 19th, 1836. On the following Wednesday, the 23rd, we removed to Pewsey, and remained there until September 18th, 1846.

CHAPTER 6

But again. What did my soul undergo there during nearly ten years! I arrived at Pewsey with my wife and two children and my household furniture, and owed no one a penny, and had about £100 of my own money. I went into a house at about £10 per year. As I had gone backwards and forwards for about eleven months, I thought there never was such a loving people as those I was going to live amongst. And now, I thought, I have done with my long journeys twice a week, and am come to live amongst such a loving and religious people that I must be happy. I could not see how I could have any trouble.

So, when we had our house in order, I commenced my business, and took the pastoral charge of the church there. My salary amounted to about nine or ten shillings a week. I went on preaching and working at my trade. The church increased, and the congregation was large; and I thought things were going on well. But, after some time, I began to see that there were many that I had thought to be good people who were loose livers. And here begins my trouble at Pewsey; for truth and conscience compelled me to take the sharp two-edged sword, and use it Sabbath after Sabbath until the fire became very hot.

About this time I walked over to Allington to see Mr. Philpot, as I had heard a good report of him. He was then living with Mr. Parry, before his marriage. When I entered the house, he just looked at me, and then turned almost his back upon me, and spoke roughly; but as I spoke a few words to Mr. Parry about the grace of God, Mr. Philpot spoke up, and said, "What do you know about the grace of God?" I began to tell him what my soul knew about the grace of God that bringeth salvation; and he turned himself round with such a smile on his countenance, and with such heartfelt affection towards me. This was in the year 1837. Now I am writing in 1867, and our hearts have been knit together in the affection and spirit of the gospel from the first time of our meeting to this present time.

But to return to my troubles at Pewsey. Still they were not all troubles. No; blessed be the name of the Lord, He often blessed my

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

soul with His precious smiles, and gave me much life and power in the pulpit, and much pain and persecution out of it. But, as I said, I found many loose livers amongst the congregation. Still, we went on for some time. The Lord led me more and more into myself, and also into others; and the Holy Ghost led my soul more and more into the experimental part of the gospel, and also what the gospel, received in the heart and conscience with life and power, produced in the life, conversation and actions of the elect vessels of mercy. As the Lord continually led me and kept me to those three great points in preaching, viz., doctrinal, experimental and practical religion, and much favoured me in my own soul in the pulpit and also out of it, and after I had been kept on in those things, closely insisting upon a feeling religion, and that it made a man honest and upright in his movements in life; then I began to find that there were many ungodly characters standing in a profession, and my soul was much tried to see them still attend the chapel. I feared I was not honest; and continually kept begging the Lord to make me honest and upright before Him and the people, and also with my own conscience, as I was such an ignorant fool that I could not read a chapter through without making some blunder, or pronouncing some word wrong.

So I was continually under correction in every sense of the word. Now the Lord kept my soul begging by night and by day. Therefore the Lord fulfilled in me this word: "Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth; thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away" (Isa. 41. 15, 16). The people began to give up their sittings by whole pews together; the congregation grew less and less; the deacons began to fear that the cause would never be carried on; and things began to take such a turn that many of the poor sheep feared that they should never stand their ground, but that they should follow the goats.

Before this, the friends had talked of enlarging the chapel by building a side gallery; but I told them there would be plenty of room for the congregation in a very short time, without enlarging. But they thought there was going to be a wonderful church and congregation there; but I did not think so. After I had been among them for some

THOMAS GODWIN

time, I found the foundation was rotten; therefore I knew the building must decay, and the rubbish come down. Then I began to find out that one whom I had baptized before I went to live there was a loose liver and an unprincipled man; and then my troubles began in such a way that my soul had not witnessed before, and sometimes I really thought it would be the death of me.

This went on until Christmas Day 1837, when I was led to preach from this text: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4. 4-6). I spoke twice on the Christmas Day, and also the Lord's day morning following, and God favoured my soul with much life and power. The Lord fastened the truth of it home on my dear wife's conscience, as she had been in a backsliding state for some time. I had charged it home upon her; but still she kept it from me, as she knew I was then very severe against any one that made a profession of religion yet lived in any known sin. God had made and kept my conscience very tender in His fear, so that I had no mercy whatever on backsliders, nor did I then think any poor soul could backslide which had had pardon and peace brought into the heart and conscience by the blood of sprinkling. I had so suffered for my sins under the curse and killing power of the law that I thought I should never sin again; but I little knew what was before me. In the afternoon of the same Lord's day, I was led to speak from these words: "Be not afraid; but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee" (Acts 18. 9, 10).

I saw for some few days that my poor wife was in a dreadful state of mind; but at last she had to speak out and confess her departures from the Lord, and beg me to pray for her. After a short time, God made manifest His pardoning love and blood to her conscience, and washed all her guilt away; and it was the means of bringing us nearer together in soul union and communion from that time.

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

CHAPTER 7

But the enemies of the cross continued to rage against the truths the Lord enabled me to bring forth; and as I was still using the sharp two-edged sword from Sabbath to Sabbath, and cutting up and cutting off all who did not come up to the Bible standard, and kept threshing away upon empty professors and rotten hypocrites, the chapel began to get emptier than ever, and the friends fearing that the cause could not be kept on. Still, our collections kept up every year whether there were many or few people at the chapel. The devil roared, the enemies gnashed, and professors persecuted; so that, between one thing and another, my path got more and more trying.

There were a few that used to meet at an inn on week nights and Sabbath days to make up all the lies they could against me, and send it to the newspaper. One of the party used to come to the chapel to hear what he could pick up to make sport of me at the inn; but little did he know what lay before him, for after he had followed this on for some time, he was left to commit suicide. He would have destroyed my character, but the Lord took care of me and left him. There were four other men who would have destroyed me and the dear tried few, and the Bible also; but the Lord took care of us, and cut them down one after another in a solemn way and manner. They fell into the pit they would have dug for us.

The dear Lord wonderfully supported my soul under all my persecutions and made His truth very dear to me. I had a few dear friends who were knit very closely to me for the truth's sake, but still it was trying to them to hear such lies reported about my preaching. They could not find anything else, because the Lord had kept me upright in my movements. Sometimes it seemed more than I could endure, to stand against the scandals and persecutions I had to pass through; but still it was no more than what the Lord promised me; for, "In the world ye shall have tribulation"; and, "They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

About this time, too, I was much tried with Satan's temptations, and I used to sink very low when out of the pulpit. One Thursday

THOMAS GODWIN

evening I had been preaching, and had had a sweet time. But soon after I came out of the pulpit, my soul sank so low and such a mist of darkness and gloominess came over my mind that I wandered away into the fields. I called upon a friend, but was so dumb that I could not talk. I went home, could not eat my supper, crept off into my bedroom, and fell down before the Lord, and begged Him to tell me why I was so low, entreating Him to show me whether there was any secret sin that I was practising, and yet ignorant of it.

After a time I got into bed. I had very little sleep all that night but kept on begging the Lord to bring it to light in my conscience if there was any one thing He had not stripped me of. I got up in the morning as low as I went to bed, and got out in the shop to work under deep examination of heart, lip and life. I came in to my breakfast as low as ever, and could not talk to my wife. While I sat at the table I took up a little book by William Huntington that had been lent to her. I opened just at the very spot where he speaks of the bosom sin, and backs it up with the Word of God. I threw down his book, took up the Bible, turned to the chapter and verse, and looked at it, showed it to my wife; and from that day that snare was broken, and my soul escaped.

And now came another thing to try me and exercise me. My enemies were so bitter against me, both little and big; and as my little boy was ill in bed, one Saturday night, a crowd of men got together and broke my bedroom window. The stone went near my boy's head as he lay in bed. I was sitting in my house and heard the crash. I took to my heels and ran after the fellows in such a rage, and overtook them. I felt determined to give them the law. I found out which man it was, and returned back to my house very angry, and knew not how to contain myself.

But, all of a sudden, the Lord broke in upon my soul. I cried out before my wife that I did not care if every window in the house was broken. I thanked, blessed, praised and loved the Lord for ever making manifest His love, mercy and goodness to such a wretch, at such a time, when I seemed more like a devil than a man. So that it was not for works of righteousness which I had done, but according to His great mercy that He saved me through and out of that trial.

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

But some of my friends wished me to make him pay for the mending of the window; but no, I could not. The dear Lord had given me such a blessing in and through it, and He had freely forgiven me all my sins in my rage and anger, and therefore I freely forgave them for breaking the window.

But I was not long in this sweet spot. I had been speaking on a Lord's day of what grace did in the hearts of the children of God, what fruits it produced in their lives, conduct and conversation, both in the master and servant, mistress and maid, father and son, mother and daughter, wherever the life and power of God was received in the heart and conscience. And as there ever were and ever will be, as long as there is a sinner left upon the face of the earth, characters that are full of religion in the head, tongue and judgment, but have none in the heart, conscience and life, these are sure to kick and fight against that religion which makes a man honest and produces fruits to the honour and praise of the Lord.

So, on the following Saturday night, one of the enemies of the truth put a note under the door, the contents of which so wrought on me that I was determined not to preach that Lord's day. When near chapel time, off I started quite another way, to run from my work; for I felt I could never stand against nor bear up under these persecutions that I then had on every hand. But I had not run far before these words dropped into my heart: "The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." The power of these words stopped me, and I dropped my guilty head, and returned back like any thief.

After I entered my house, I took up the Bible and opened it at the thirty-second of Jeremiah, and these words laid hold of my heart: "And they shall be My people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32. 38-40). And as I preached then three times, so I spoke all day from those verses, and my soul never had a better day in the pulpit. So that my soul can testify that all things work together

THOMAS GODWIN

for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

Again, soon after this trouble and deliverance there was something else to try my faith and patience; and that was on a Lord's day evening. I had had a good day in speaking of the Lord's dealings towards me and His tried children, and after calling on a friend, we went home. I was unlocking the door, when one of the children saw something the matter with the front door. On putting her hand to see, she found a hole right through. On looking, I found all the bottom part kicked in, so that there was a road into the house. What to do we did not know. After a little while I said, "Let us go to bed, and leave all in the Lord's hands," for the Lord had wrought faith and patience in my heart, and enabled me to bear it just then. But I often cried out with Jeremiah, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth!"

My two dear children were a great anxiety to me to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. How I watched their every movement! But here I would give God's people a caution. Beware of making your children professors, as it is easily done, if they are steady. My two children would deceive any in a strange place if they were left to talk about religion, as they had heard but little else from time to time at home all their growing up, so that they knew the truth in their judgment. The grace of God will not suffer you to let them go on in their own ways without checking and warning them; but I fear and believe that there are many brought up in a religion from their childhood, and some even get into churches, and yet die destitute of grace and spiritual life at last. This is a solemn fact. But grace will lead the parents to do all they can to bring their children under the sound of God's blessed truth, and they will use all lawful means to do so. "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Now began another trouble. Some of the people got in my debt. I felt compelled to pay for everything, both in my business and in the house; and my salary for preaching was small, so that my money began to get short, and troubles set in fast upon me. I feared we should be obliged to get in debt again. Then my cry to the Lord was: "Do

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

open some way for me to keep from getting into debt again.” Well, I thought, we will make little do, as we have but little. I went over to Allington to hear that dear man of God, Mr. Warburton, of Trowbridge [John Warburton (1776-1857), author of *Mercies of a Covenant God*]. As I had never seen him before, when he stood up in the pulpit I looked him through and through, and when he began to preach, he soon looked *me* through and through. I had never heard but one such a preacher before. In the following year, I heard for the first time that beloved man of God, Mr. Philpot, and a searching sermon he preached. But I never heard a man preach too close for me yet. Many times since then I have heard him with pleasure and profit.

CALLS FROM OTHER CHURCHES TO SUPPLY

But again. I very soon received an invitation from Mr. Warburton to go to Trowbridge to preach for him. I answered him in this way: “I am such a fool; therefore I cannot think about standing in your pulpit.” He answered, and said, “Our people want fools to preach to them. They have too many wise men.” So that he would make me engage to go; but God only knows what I went through before the time was up to fill this engagement. The devil set in upon my soul in such a way that I wished I had never made this engagement. This made my soul groan and sigh to the Lord day and night for help; and then the cursed pride of my heart sprang up and said, “Why, I shall become a great preacher now. I am invited to preach in the great John Warburton's pulpit.”

But when the Saturday morning came for me to start off to Trowbridge, and I had about twelve miles to walk, my soul sank fathoms within me. I trembled and shook from head to foot. I walked out into the little back kitchen, and fell down upon my knees, ready to faint, and poured out my soul before the Lord. He spoke these words into my heart, with life and power: “The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.” And, bless His precious name for ever and ever, He went before me, and gave me life and liberty in the pulpit, and comforted the dear people's souls together. Mr. Warburton had told the deacons before he left home that, if they heard the stranger well, they were to try and get him for the

THOMAS GODWIN

following Sabbath. So I returned home to Pewsey, a distance of about twenty-two miles. I travelled the first ten miles by coach to Devizes, and walked the other twelve to Pewsey. They gave me a sovereign for my labour and travelling expenses. This did not make me very fat; because there was no business going on at home. I went on the following Saturday morning. The Lord was with me again; and the people's souls were all alive under the word, for there were some precious jewels at Zion Chapel, Trowbridge, at that time.

After these two visits to Trowbridge, the people wanted me when Mr. Warburton left home. Then I began to feel the pride of my heart rise very high, and I thought, Surely, now Mr. Warburton's people have heard me so well, I shall soon be sent for to go to London. But upon the back of this Satan was let loose upon me. His temptations and the pride and lust of my heart worked together; and enticements of one kind and another almost drove me mad. I used to walk about, and wring my hands, and stamp my feet in an agony of soul night and day, and was trembling and fearing lest I should fall into the temptations, and bring a reproach upon the cause of God and the truth. For about three years my poor tortured and tormented soul passed through floods and flames of temptations. Sometimes I thought, if I crossed the broad ocean, I should be out of the reach of these temptations; but then, I thought, I shall carry my wretched heart with me, and the devil will be there. Here my soul cried heartily unto the Lord for deliverance; for I felt I could not live under it.

I stood engaged to preach with Mr. Warburton and Mr. Philpot at Calne anniversary on May 23rd, 1843, and a most trying time it was to me to go into the pulpit. But the Lord helped me. I returned to Allington with Mr. Parry and Mr. Philpot, and stopped there that night. My dear and much esteemed friend wanted to send me part of the way home on the morning of the 24th; but I said, "No, I would rather walk." So off I went. It being such a hot day, I took off my coat. After I got about two miles on the road, a sweet spirit of meditation fell upon my soul, and I walked on through the village of Alton. As I was mounting the hill, under prayer and supplication for the Lord to appear and subdue the sins of my base heart, and rebuke the devil, and open His hand to me in providence, just as I had got up to the top of the hill, the

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

Lord Jesus revealed Himself to my soul in such a blessed way and manner by these words: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And truly my soul did behold Him as taking away all my sins and transgressions, and washing them away in His precious atoning blood.

I had still between three and four miles to walk, and the sun was shining hot upon my body; but the Sun of righteousness was shining so gloriously into my soul that I walked and sang by the way, with the sweet tears of love and joy running down my face, with all my inward sins slaughtered, and the devil driven into his den. My soul came forth with a shout of "Victory!" through love and blood. I have never felt the power of sin and temptation in such a trying way and manner since. The Lord raised my faith so high that day on the road to believe that deliverance was near at hand in temporal matters.

As my soul was delivered out of that awful state of captivity, I longed to get home to my house to give full vent to my feelings; for my soul was as full as it could hold of the love of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. My soul loved the Father for making choice of me, the Son for redeeming me, and the Holy Ghost for calling me by His grace. When I got into my house, I shut myself in my room, and fell down and gave the Lord thanks for all His goodness and mercy to me and mine; and, strange to say, when I got home, there was a letter from London for me to go and preach at Eden Street for the first time for two Lord's days in the month of July 1843. Here I saw the hand of the Lord towards me in opening doors for me and supplying my every need.

When I had filled those two Lord's days, they gave me an invitation for the month of December. The Lord was with me to bless His own Word. Then I received an invitation to go to Woburn, in Bedfordshire, to preach; and I engaged to go for two Lord's days in the month of April 1844. I was then called out a great deal from place to place, so that I was at home at Pewsey very little.

CHAPTER 8

LEARNING TO WRITE

But to return to Pewsey. I must recall here a thing which took place in the year 1840. For eleven or twelve years before this time, this scripture was applied with power to my mind: "Write"; and it followed me up. Sometimes I thought I would put myself to school, but I had to support my wife and family. I kept promising myself that I would try, but when I had a little time, then I had no will. My soul kept on praying for the Lord to open the way. So in the year 1840, in the month of May, I had nothing much to do; then what to do I could not tell. Sometimes I thought I would try; and then again something said it would be of no use for me to try to learn to write. I was too old. But something said, Try, try.

At last I got a strip of writing paper, and asked my son to put down the alphabet in large letters on one side, and small on the other. I went up into my bedroom, fell upon my knees, and asked the Lord to teach me to write, as He had taught me to read Himself; for if there were letters to write my wife had to do it. I took the pen, ink and paper, and began to make a trial. I tried all one day and the next, and kept on through the week until I was almost beside myself; down upon my knees, and pleading that word "Write," and up and trying again.

At last I gave it up, and walked into my garden, groaning and crying to the Lord, saying, "Lord, didst not Thou tell me to write?" I could not form a letter for the life of me. I went up into my room again, took up the pen, sat down, and thought that I would just have one more trial, and then give it up for good. The Lord guided my pen, showed me how to form a letter, and I went on writing without any copy being set for me, and wrote anything that sprang up within my heart of the Word of God. After I had been writing for some little time, down I fell on my knees to thank the Lord for teaching me to form a word or letter. After I had followed this on for a few days, I began to think, How shall I put this together?

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

Some time after this I received a letter from Exeter to go and supply at the late Mr. Tanner's¹ chapel, called the Tabernacle. I felt that I must write a few lines to my dear and much esteemed friend, Mr. Philpot. But, I thought, such a fool as I am, with no human learning, to write to an Oxford scholar and eloquent orator as he is! It seemed like presumption. Still, I could not get it off my mind; but I felt I could not spell or put words together. Then I went to a bookshop and bought a spelling book; but I could not learn to spell a word. So I got a little writing paper, pen and ink, and went up into my bedroom and tried to ask the Lord to teach me; and then I began to write to this great preacher. And the Lord broke in upon my soul, broke my heart all to pieces, and the tears ran down my face; so that my soul by precious faith had such a sight and felt sense of the great Saviour, and my interest in Him, that I lost sight of the great preacher. My tears ran down on the paper as I scribbled.

O! what a precious time my soul had! I sent it off to Stamford to him; and in a short time I received a letter from him. And then I had to cry to the Lord to ask Him to teach me to read it. And, bless His dear and precious name, He did. I could not tell any one what my soul enjoyed in reading it. He encouraged me to press on and lose no time. And on I went with fresh courage, and never spent an hour's idle time for years. As I was continually asking the Lord to teach me how to spell and put the words together, it seemed to me as though there was a voice within my heart telling me how to spell and put words together. And what my soul has enjoyed in writing to friends, and feeling thankfulness and gratitude to the Lord for teaching me how to read and write! And He Himself hath done it. No man nor woman ever taught me anything of the kind. Then "bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

FURTHER TRIALS AT PEWSEY

As persecutions continued, we were anxious to get out of the High Street; and as there was a house, garden and a little land to be let,

¹Henry Tanner's autobiography appeared in the *Gospel Standard* in 1982.

THOMAS GODWIN

and I had some money left to take it, one of the deacons and my wife and self went and took it. My mind was swallowed up in it. We began to reckon what stock we should want, and what money it would take to stock it; and off my wife went to call my money in. This was on a Saturday. I was left at home and got no sleep, I was so busy with this new place. All of a sudden the word came into my soul: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life," and truly they cut me up root and branch.

After evening service, the sister of the widow woman that I took this place of was standing at the chapel door; and she said: "You are not to have this place now." I answered her, "But I *will* have it, in spite of any one." Then this scripture came with such killing power into my heart: "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." And O! what a night I had on my bed between these two scriptures cutting me all to pieces, like so many swords, when my mind was hard at work in it: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life." As I did not like to give way to the son-in-law, who was a lawyer, therefore I said, "I will have it, in spite of any one." Then this scripture came again with double power; and it made me cry, "Lord, what shall I do?" And the Lord showed me what I must do; and that was to give it up, and let Himself inflict the vengeance on the man. And, solemn to say, the Lord soon struck him blind; and one Sabbath evening, as he was eating, a bone got into his throat and killed him.

The Lord laid a heavy affliction upon my poor wife. She was a great sufferer; and my engagements at this time lay so far from home – at Manchester, Liverpool, Wolverhampton, Stamford and Oakham; so that I have come out of the pulpit hot, gone off to the railway station, and have travelled all night to and from these places to go home and see the dear sufferer.

INVITATIONS TO MANCHESTER AND WOBURN

About this time, I had an invitation from the church at Manchester to supply for them for so many months on probation [this would be after the death of Gadsby]; but I could not see my way to do so. The first time of my preaching at Woburn, in Bedfordshire, was in April 1844; and the first time of my supplying at the late Mr. Gadsby's

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

chapel, Manchester, was in September 1844. So that doors opened to me on every hand. This supplied me with everything needful to meet my heavy expenses through my wife's long illness. But, being from home so much, I was obliged to give up my little business, and had wholly to live on the ministry. As I only received £25 a year from the friends at Pewsey, and had about £15 to pay for house rent and taxes out of that, I could not live to stop at home; and as the greater part of the people were poor, and God's grace in my conscience would not suffer me to impose upon them (because the poor that oppressthe poor is like a sweeping rain that leaves no food), so, when I went from home so much, my conscience was impressed to give up my yearly pay, and only receive pay for the Lord's days that I was at home. Then I received ten shillings (50p) for the Sabbath; and I trust the Lord gave me a conscience towards my brethren, as well as one towards myself.

After going to Woburn two or three times, the friends wished me to settle amongst them, which caused me much exercise of mind. But I could not then see my way, but continued to supply for them as often as possible, and felt the power of the truth the Lord enabled me to deliver from time to time.

At one time, when I went to supply at Eden Street, London, in 1845 for the first two Lord's days in July (I had been to Zoar before), and came to my lodgings at Southampton Street on the Saturday night, there was a note for me. I opened it, and saw that it contained but a few words, and no name on it. I read it. The first words were: "Be sure your sins will find you out," and the other words: "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known." I turned it over and over in my mind, and as my wife was with me, I read it to her and showed it to the friends in the house.

I went to bed, but had little sleep. I got up, looked at this note again: "Be sure your sins will find you out." Well, I felt that this was a truth, for I knew it by every day's experience, and had done so for many years past; and the other portion troubled my mind at times. I could not think what it could mean, for I greatly feared there was some secret sin in me, or practised by me, that had never been brought to light. I was much perplexed and cast down, and had no text. So, between one thing

THOMAS GODWIN

and another, I verily thought it was all over with my preaching for that day. But I thought I would take my Bible and look at the connection.

When I had found it and had read the whole verse, the words entered into my soul with such life and power that I had a text. The person who wrote it took care not to take the whole verse, which reads thus: "Fear them not, therefore; for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known." And the whole secret was opened up within my soul, which had been hid in those words from my understanding. So Satan missed his mark and was confuted, and my soul drew sweetness out of the text whilst I was speaking from it; and the Word of the Lord ran and was glorified.

I have had anonymous letters since then; for many are the trials and afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord will deliver them out of them all. And "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord."

SETTLEMENT AT WOBURN

As the Woburn people would not let me rest unless I would accept their call to become their settled pastor, I was greatly tried and exercised between the Manchester and the Woburn people. But I gave the Manchester friends a denial, and the leading gentleman at Woburn was continually pressing me until I would go and settle among them. He said he never heard any preacher like he heard me, and showed me great kindness; not that I received so much of his money; for after I had paid my travelling expenses from Pewsey to London and from London to Woburn, and back home again, I had but a few shillings left, because I had a great many miles to travel by coach in these days. My salary at Woburn was to be thirty shillings a week. At last I consented to go to Woburn, and the time and day were fixed for our removal. But the Lord only knows what my soul went through until about one hour before we left Pewsey.

There were a few poor souls there that my heart was closely knit to, and I could not get a word from the Lord. My poor wife was ill in bed, and I had but little bed that night, and less rest and sleep. I went

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

up to my wife in bed about four o'clock in the morning to get her up, when she said, "I cannot get up. I cannot stand that long journey." My soul sank fathoms. I walked downstairs and into the garden for the last time in such distress of mind; and the dear and blessed Lord spoke to my heart and soul: "Fear thou not; I will help thee, and go before thee." I walked into the house quite happy, and felt sure that my wife would be able to take the journey, though a long one; and she was much better when we arrived at Woburn on the morning of the 18th of December, 1846, than when we left Pewsey.

We went into an empty house; for one cab took me, my wife, son and servant, and all our luggage and furniture from Paddington to the North-Western Station. My daughter was just married, and we left them in the house with the furniture; and now we had to furnish this house. I thought, of course, they would pay our travelling expenses; but no, not one shilling. The gentleman often asked me whether I did not want some money; but I always said No. I never borrowed any money of him; and he never gave me but one £5 note all the years of my friendship with him, which was about seven; and then his wife told him that he had not given me enough to pay my travelling expenses, as I had got my wife in London, she being unwell. He sent it to me there in a letter. Neither did I want his money, for I wanted to keep a good conscience towards both God and man.

My wife got better, and the Lord was with me in the pulpit. The church increased under my ministry, and we had peace among ourselves. Invitations came from every quarter, and the Lord greatly favoured my soul with life and liberty, and kept my conscience tender in His blessed fear.

After I had been there some time I received an invitation to go to Leicester. The first time I went there, the Lord blessed the Word to the people's souls, and Mr. Harrison² spoke of the Word coming with power into his heart and soul; and therefore he showed great kindness to me. But I am sorry to say that my Woburn friend began to be a little jealous. But still, I took no notice of that. We still walked together in

²There is an account of Isaac Harrison in *The Seceders, Volume 2*.

THOMAS GODWIN

a friendly way and manner for about five years and two months until, after a church meeting, on the following morning, we got a little crooked because I told him my own faults, and then told him his.

And now began my troubles and deep-felt grief because I could not endure to see the poor of the flock trodden upon. So then troubles came in upon me like a wide breaking in of waters; but the Lord stood by me and enabled me to come up into the pulpit Sabbath after Sabbath with a "Thus saith the Lord," and with sword in hand. I had much enmity manifested against me; but I had a good conscience before God and man, and therefore the Lord stood by me.

This went on for over twelve months. Before the year was ended, some of them wanted me to leave quietly; but I said the church brought me there, and the church should send me away, and that I came there in an honourable way and manner, and that I wished to leave in the same way. But no, they would not send me away, so I stood my ground. God only knows what my soul went through during the twelve months. As I called a church meeting, some few sent in their resignation because they would not meet me.

During this trying year, my son left his situation. My daughter, her husband and children came to us in the month of May, and remained with us to the end of September; and I had them all to keep. This was a trying time indeed; it was in the year 1851, and some of the people said they should starve me out. But my Lord and Master fed me and all my family. Soon the dear Lord opened a way for my son-in-law at Oakham, in Rutland, and my son went into business at Luton, in Bedfordshire. Then we were only three left – myself, wife and servant. But here I was, with only the poor of the flock; but the Lord greatly blessed our souls, and the other few that left us opened a place close by our chapel, in the very place where I used to resort in my trouble.

And there is another thing that took place with me at Woburn. The Lord laid affliction upon my body. I was preaching at Eden Street, London, and went into the country to preach, and lay in a damp bed. I cannot say that I *slept* in it, because I lay and shook all night. I was obliged to return home before my engagement was completed, and very ill I was, and I thought I must die. The Lord hid His face from my poor soul, and shut me up in darkness and confusion, and the devil set in

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

upon me in such a way, and told me my religion was a cheat and delusion. I lay and groaned and sighed like a poor prisoner in deed and in truth. My poor wife would say to me, "Why, father, it is all well with you." "Ah!" said I, in answer to her, "it is very well for you to say so, because you are out of the furnace, but I am in it." She would try to comfort me, for she had witnessed so much of the Lord's goodness and mercy towards me, but all the past mercies and deliverances would not do for my soul in that trying affliction and hot furnace. This was the first bodily affliction that ever I had. I had flattered myself that, if ever I was ill, how I should lie and love and serve the Lord. But, alas! alas! I had no love, no faith, to love and serve the Lord with.

A few days before I was taken ill, as I was walking down the City Road in London, before I got to the city toll-gate, these words were applied to my heart and soul with such power: "Have faith in God," and they kept on speaking in my heart. I wondered what was coming upon me. But in this furnace and fire my soul was led to understand them, for I felt that my soul needed faith in God.

This affliction brought down both body and soul. On the Friday, my soul sank so low, when all of a sudden these words came with such power: "Be still, and know that I am God." My little faith laid hold of the Lord Jesus in a moment. My soul was delivered from all my doubts, fears, groans, sighs and cries, and I came forth with a shout of "Victory!" through the blood of the everlasting covenant. These words: "Be still," sounded in my soul so sweetly that I said to my wife, "It is indeed all well with me now." I also added, "I shall dress myself and go and preach on Lord's day." She could not believe me, but I felt I must crawl out and preach from this text, for it seemed to me that there was not another such an one in all the Bible, because it so enlarged within my soul.

All day on the Friday, and also on the Saturday, my heart and soul was all on fire under the burning love of God in Christ Jesus. On the Lord's day morning I dressed myself, put on a large travelling cloak, and into the chapel I went and preached twice that day from my text; and truly the pulpit medicine, with the words: "Be still," was the best remedy and physic my body and soul had through all my illness. And now, my dear fellow preachers, *beware of sleeping in damp beds.*

THOMAS GODWIN

As the house we lived in belonged to the party who had risen up against me, during an engagement of mine from home my poor wife was driven out of it, and she took four top rooms in a house in the market place. It being such a hot summer, and living day and night close to the blue slates, her poor head was affected. Here we were for fifteen months, and could not get a house anywhere. But when I was called out to preach, and saw a house shut up, O how I did long for that place! Now, my dear readers, I will leave you to judge the state and condition of our poor minds. I did not care so much about myself as I did about my poor afflicted wife, because she had been brought up more tenderly and better than I had; and she would often say in those rooms, "I am afraid I shall lose my reason." What trouble this gave me! I saw nothing but poverty and distress before me.

But at about the end of fifteen months there was a house to be let a little way out of town on the Leighton Road. I went with my wife to see it, and took it at once, and went into it; but all to no use and purpose. The malady was set in upon my wife, and she grew worse and worse daily. What to do I could not tell. Our old servant married away; and here I was, left to do as I could. I was compelled to try and fill my engagements; so I got a young woman to come and stop with her during the time I was gone to Leicester. At the same time, my daughter and her husband lay down at Oakham with fever, one on one bed and one on another. And although the Lord gave me such good health and strength, yet the enemy told me that the hand of the Lord was gone out against me, and my enemies would have an opportunity to say, Aha, aha, so we would have it; and that into deep poverty I must come, and all my family. But the dear Lord opened the hearts of the dear friends at Oakham, Stamford and other places, so that the needs of my poor daughter, her husband and children were well supplied. My dear and much esteemed friend, Mr. Philpot, was a great friend to them.

My poor soul kept crying to the Lord to open a way for me, that I might be able to pay my way, as I had done for many years; and I felt that faith and confidence in the Lord that He would do it. But I could not see in what way He would do it. But He knew the way that I must go; and when He had tried me, He brought forth my soul as gold. "For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me."

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

As my wife still grew worse and worse, my little faith was sharply tried in every way. The enemy of my soul tormented me, and told me I should never be able to stand my ground in this town as an honest man, for the people were all so poor. Poor dear things, they did all they could; and when I was out, they paid their supplies very well. And the Lord enabled us to do more to the inside of the chapel when the rich were gone than ever was done in their time. For we had made a new baptistery in the chapel, and brought the gas in, which cost over £16.

CHAPTER 9

AN INTERPOSITION OF THE LORD'S PROVIDENCE

But to return. Now the time was up for a great door to be opened for me in providence. My dear and much esteemed friend Mr. Harrison, of Leicester, died on the 3rd of March, 1855, and left me a farm at Besthorpe, in Nottinghamshire. As Mr. Harrison died on the 3rd of March, the first rent was due to me on the 6th of April. I said to myself, "Now I will preach to the poor things at Woburn free." So I published from the pulpit that I should not take anything from them for preaching after Lady Day. But this caused me another great trial; for the people whispered among themselves that Mr. Harrison left it as much to them as to me. Poor things, they did not understand the meaning of "absolutely" – "I give and bequeath to my friend Thomas Godwin, minister of the gospel, the farm at Besthorpe *absolutely*." So I had to get a copy of the will to convince them. On the 7th of April, 1855, another friend died, and left me £20.

So you can see, my reader, that my covenant God and Father had appointed some good things for me, a vile wretch, so that I could feelingly say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want"; and "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over."

Now it was all over with that class of people; their hope was lost respecting starving me out. And there was another thing nearer than all this: there was no room for my devilish heart to fear that they would have their ends, and distrust my God. What hath God wrought? Then, my poor tried brother and sister, trust in Him, and commit thy way to Him, and He shall direct thy ways.

DEATH OF MY FIRST WIFE

But the Lord gave me ballast; for my poor wife grew worse and worse, and became very violent and as strong as a lion. She took me by the throat and almost strangled me, but the Lord gave me just strength enough to escape out of her hand. Then I strapped her hands to show

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

her that I could master her. Then the devil set in upon her to destroy herself; and as the Lord had now given me the means to send her away, and she wished me to do so, I had made up my mind to go to Bedford to the asylum, and make an appointment to take her there. But, before the time came for me to go, she became more calm and quiet, and said, "Father, do bear with me. It will not be long." This broke my heart all to pieces, and I said, "No, I will never put you into an asylum." When I went from home, I used to get someone to take care of her, and when at home I used to look after her myself. I often used to hear her say in the night, when that awful spirit was upon her, "I will kill him"; but I used to sleep by her side very comfortably, for the Lord had assured me that she would never destroy herself nor yet her husband.

One day, when my son and daughter drove over to see their poor mother, they took her back with them while I got the house painted and papered; but she never returned home again. I then engaged a person to look after her, and I lived by myself, and travelled backwards and forwards from Woburn to Luton. She lived about a year and six months after she got to Luton with her daughter.

Now, there is no one on earth that can enter into these trials and troubles but those that have been in them, because they are always set against their best friends; and this is killing work to the poor husband or wife that has great affection towards the afflicted one. If ever this little work should fall into the hands of those who may have the same affliction to do with and to bear, be sure and be kind to them, and pray for patience to bear with them.

But now comes the closing scene. I was in the country preaching, and was just going to remove on to Bedworth to my dear old friend's house, the late Mr. Congreve [G. T. Congreve, a book of whose letters was published], when a letter came to say that my wife was a great deal worse. This was on the Friday morning, December 26th, 1856. A friend at Winslow drove me to Leighton to take the train for Luton, but it was gone; then another friend drove me on to Luton, and I sat and watched her all night by myself, and attended to her until about five o'clock in the morning, when she fell asleep, as quiet as a lamb, with a beautiful smile on her countenance, December 27th, 1856. I lost one of

THOMAS GODWIN

the best wives any man could have before her deranged state of mind came upon her, which was about three years before her death. Many a sly blow she gave me; but the Lord ever preserves His people, because He keepeth the feet of His saints. When I used to ask her if I should go out to preach and leave her, she used to say, "Go, father; you must be about your Master's business." Her mortal remains lie in the Luton cemetery.

A HEAVY AFFLICTION

Now, this change of life set me thinking; and as I had lived by myself eighteen months, and had done everything in the house for myself, I felt I would not keep either servant or housekeeper, as my wife took her servant to Luton with her; and that I would do for myself. But as I was called out so much, I came after a long journey into a cold, damp house, and nothing to eat; but I had some good drink in the pump, as I had been a water drinker for many years, and I used to call at the butcher's and get a chop, and go home and light my fire, and cook it.

But before the month of January was out, I went to Alvescot to preach, and on my return I called to see the late Mrs. Day. She was a member at Abingdon with that dear and precious man of God, the late William Tiptaft. As she was ill in bed, she wished to see me, so I went up into her bedroom. As soon as I saw her, I said, "You have got the fever"; for I felt it go down my throat. As dear friend Tiptaft had engaged to change pulpits with me, he went to Woburn for the Lord's day, and I preached at Abingdon for him morning and afternoon. Then I went over to Oxford and preached in the evening, and left Oxford by the first train to Bletchley, and walked the six miles to Woburn to meet Mr. Tiptaft at my house, my daughter being there to provide for Mr. T. When I got home, Mr. Tiptaft told me he was going out to preach that evening, and he said, "Mr. Goodman is coming after me at such an hour." "Then," I said, "I shall hope to go with you." So we went, and returned home after the service.

We took our supper together, and went to bed about eleven o'clock; and at one I was taken very ill with the fever. My dear friend

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

and brother Tiptaft left me in the morning, and my daughter left me the next morning, because her husband and children needed her at home. There I was, left ill in bed, and no one to do anything for me. I used to get a man to get me a little milk, and took a little at a time. Here I lay until the following Monday morning. And in connection with this heavy affliction, I received a letter from my much esteemed friend Mr. Philpot, which contained heavy tidings. Between the painful feelings this letter gave me in soul, and the affliction of my body, I thought I should soon be in the grave with my poor departed wife. But, on the Monday morning, a friend came in to see me. I said to him, "Will you go and order a fly [a one-horse carriage] for me? I must try and go to Luton to my son's." Although it was a bitterly cold morning, yet I dressed myself and got into the fly; but the snow being so deep, the poor horse could not make any speed at all. But before we had got four miles on the road, we met my dear son with a fly and two horses, coming for me; so they drove close up by the side of our fly, so that I managed to get out of the one into the other. But when we got to Dunstable, the poor horses were so done up that the driver was obliged to take them out and give them a feed of corn.

As I sat in the carriage, I thought the Lord was about to make a full end of me, I was so dark and dead in my soul. When I got to my son's, I went to bed, and still grew worse and worse; but the affliction of my body was nothing to that of my mind. God only knows what I went through on that bed. My flesh wasted away on my bones, my strength of body and soul was gone, and Satan set in upon me, and said, "Your wife has only been dead a month, and now the Lord is about to cut you off at a stroke." My soul said, "Lord, what? Am I to die in this awful state of death and darkness, after so many deliverances and blessed testimonies that my soul has had from time to time?" My poor children kept coming to look at me, and my poor dear daughter who knew the Lord, and also her husband, and my dear son's wife, who herself attended to me all through my affliction. They would not let the servant come near me, neither the children, because mine was a very bad fever.

THOMAS GODWIN

One night my soul was led out in nearness to the Lord, and two lines of a hymn dropped into my mind. My soul kept on repeating them. The lines were these:

“A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they”;

the only two lines of a hymn that ever were made useful to my soul. After some little time, the Lord Jesus, the great sacrifice for sin, was opened up in my soul and manifested to my heart, so that my soul was brought out into a “large place” again, because the Lord delighted in me. And He made my soul delight in Him, so that I could lie and love the Lord Jesus, His people and His ways. Now I felt sure I should be raised up again to declare the truth and faithfulness of the Lord; and from that time I began to get better. I longed to go forth again into my labours, as the love of the Lord Jesus Christ flowed into my heart like so many warm springs from the fountain of everlasting life. So, without saying a word to my good nurse, I dressed myself for the first time, walked down stairs, put on my hat and cloak, walked out the back way, and went to see my dear daughter, as she then lived in Luton.

On the Saturday morning I rode five miles in the omnibus to the Dunstable railway station. It being the month of February 1857, the roads were so very rough that I thought it would have shaken me to pieces. I was ready to faint; but I got into a first-class carriage, and travelled about seventy miles to Leicester, and on Lord's day morning walked up into the pulpit more like a dead man than a living one. I preached twice that day, and the Lord was with me to bless His Word to the people's souls.

I began to gather strength fast, and my soul was very happy. I had been at Leicester but a few days before a lawyer's letter came to me. When I read it, down my soul sank lower than before; and what to do I could not tell. But very soon these words came with great power: “I will overturn, overturn, overturn.”

My highly-esteemed friend at Oakham said that he would stand in my shoes, and that all letters that came to me I was to forward to him. I did so. I stopped at Leicester for three Lord's days, then came to Godmanchester for one, went to Hitchin for a week evening, and from

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

there to Luton to my son's. There I found another letter from another lawyer at Woburn, for my enemy lived at Woburn. He said, "Godwin has some money, and I will ruin him." But these words kept on running through my heart: "I will overturn, overturn, overturn." So my soul committed all my case into my Lord and Master's hands.

When I reached Woburn, I went to the lawyer at once, and told him that I had received his letter, but that I never raised the report about his man; it was a common byword in the town. In a few days the lawyer came to me and wanted to know why I did not attend to his letters myself. I told him I should have nothing to do with them. And I heard no more about it. So the dear Lord overturned all their craftiness, and made their wisdom foolishness. "For He taketh the wise in their own craftiness."

Now my soul loved my blessed Lord and Master for making His own Word good again to me; and I wanted to honour Him and glorify Him in body and spirit, which are His.

MY SECOND MARRIAGE

Now I travelled on a little more smoothly for a little time, but very lonely, having nobody to speak to, and having to do all the household work myself, for I had made up my mind not to have a woman in my house. But after a few months, I felt that I could not live such a lonely life, and come home so often into a damp house. Then my soul began to cry to the Lord to give me another good wife, one that He Himself had appointed for me, one that was in the possession of the life and fear of God. "O Lord," cried my soul, "do not let me be deceived. Do not let me set my mind on one of my own choice. Do lead me to the one that Thou hast appointed for me." And the dear Lord answered my cry, and gave me a good, kind-hearted wife, liberal to the Lord's poor people. And never was a better nurse or more diligent wife in the house, and she cannot do enough for me. She is indeed a helpmeet. No man ever had two better wives than myself.

DEATH OF MY SON

THOMAS GODWIN

As my house at Woburn was too small, and there was not another in the town to be let, I took a house at Linslade, near Leighton Buzzard station, because we were continually travelling the country over. But soon there was another trouble and deep trial for me in the death of my dear and only son, who I hoped would be a comfort to me in my old age. I was preaching at Allington, in Wiltshire, when the heavy tidings of his illness reached me. I said that he would die, because my soul had been led to pray for him day after day.

After we arrived at home, we took a cup of tea, and started by the last train to Luton. My dear son had been crying out all day, "Has father come? Has father come?" and then, I believe, when it got so late, he gave me up. But when we drove up to the door, his dear wife met us with her baby in her arms, and the first words she said were: "Dear grandpapa, you are just in time to see the last of your dear son." My heart seemed almost to come into my mouth. I ran upstairs, and saw him with his eyes closed and nearly gone. I could not speak to him. His wife said, "John, my dear, here is your dear father come." He opened his eyes, turned, and fixed them upon me, and said, "Father, I am saved! Saved with an everlasting salvation!" I said, "Are you sure that you are saved, my son?" He said, "Yes." Then my heart and mouth were opened, and I preached the Lord Jesus Christ to him in that powerful way and manner, so that he did not seem like my son. Then he made motions for me to pray, and the heavens were opened to my soul. I could not pray for his life, but for an easy dismissal to glory, after which he made some motions to me about his three little children. Then he said, "Free grace; free grace. It is all of grace," and was gone in a moment. We had been with him just half an hour.

This was a trying stroke for my soul to pass through; but the blessed evidence and testimony that the Lord had given his soul, and the dying testimony that I witnessed myself of his soul being saved with an everlasting salvation, buried and covered all my sorrows for some time. But I had to witness this truth: "Thou broughtest us into the net; Thou laidest affliction on our loins. We went through fire and through water; but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." Little did we think, when his poor mother died, that he would so soon be laid in the same

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

grave with her. He departed this life September 21st, 1859, aged 32. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

INVITATIONS TO LIVERPOOL, ALLINGTON AND GODMANCHESTER

About this time I received a call from the church at Shaw Street, Liverpool. This caused me great exercise of mind for a long time, and much prayer to the Lord to know His mind and will respecting the matter; because sometimes it is the voice of the church, and not the voice of the Lord. Therefore I have been obliged to look closely into this matter. As I could not feel any leadings of the Lord within my soul that way, therefore I gave them a denial. But they would not receive it as such; so, after a long while, I gave them a second.

After this, two other churches asked me, but I wanted to see my way out from Woburn. At last, the Lord led me to give up my charge over them as a pastor. I still drove over to Woburn from Leighton every Lord's day when I was at home, and preached to them. But in the year 1860, the friends at Godmanchester gave me a call to become their pastor, and my dear and much esteemed friends at Allington wanted me to go and be settled over them. Here again my poor mind was so tried, night and day, to know the mind and will of the Lord in this trying matter. I had known the dear friends at Allington for about twenty-five years, and had proved their kindness to me over and over again, and my heart and soul was closely knit to them in the bonds of the gospel. But Godmanchester kept following me so closely until it was quite a trouble, for I had said, over and over again, that I would never settle over any other church, for I had had so many church troubles for so many years, again and again, that when I gave up my charge at Woburn, I made up my mind not to take the charge of another church. And the Lord only knows what trouble and sleepless hours this caused me on my bed, until the month of January 1861.

I was preaching at Oakham, and in the bedroom, on the morning of the 13th of January, the dear Lord decided the matter for me; for I felt I could not live any longer under the painful exercise. My

THOMAS GODWIN

poor soul cried out in the distress of my mind, “O Lord, do tell me what I am to do. I am so troubled. Am I to go to Godmanchester, or am I not?” The word came with such power: “Go; and I will be with thee”; and my soul was delivered in a moment, and I was as happy as I could be.

SETTLEMENT AT GODMANCHESTER

As I stood engaged to supply at Godmanchester in the month of March 1861, I then engaged to take the pastoral charge over the church. My labours were to commence on the first Lord's day in July. When this was settled in my mind, I wrote to my much esteemed friend Mr. Parry and told him in what way the Lord had settled the matter, and that I must go to Godmanchester.

After we had settled to go to Godmanchester, we wanted a little improvement in the chapel house. So one thing was suggested, and another; at last it was agreed upon to build two more rooms, and I gave twenty pounds to start with. All the money was soon raised. It cost a hundred and thirty pounds, and it is now a good family house – five rooms above, and five below. The Lord greatly blessed my soul on the first Lord's day in a marked way and manner, for I felt such life, liberty and power through the day in the pulpit from this text: “Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.” I felt the Lord Himself ordained me over this church and people, and He gave testimony to the Word of His grace.

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

CHAPTER 10

And now begins a new scene in my poor life. On the 10th of July, 1861, we arrived here at this house, Chapel House, Godmanchester, with our household furniture. A vast number of kind-hearted friends were waiting to help us unload our furniture at the Chapel House. There was no road then to the house, but there were two green fields in the front of it, therefore the friend that rented them gave us liberty to draw the waggons across his field, and we cut down the hedge, and the furniture was soon in the house. Mr. J. Gadsby and Mr. Harper sent their waggons to Leighton Buzzard, and brought the furniture all the way by road; and although the waggons did not arrive until six o'clock in the evening, yet the bedroom and parlour were ready by supper time. So that we could lie down to rest under a feeling sense of the Lord's goodness and the kindness of the people. The house is called "Chapel House," although some little distance from the chapel; but it is the sole property of the church, therefore it is called Chapel House.

The dear Lord was with me in the pulpit, and fed His church and people under me, so that our hearts and souls were united together in the bonds of the gospel, and we walked together in love and union. On the 6th of October, I baptized in the River Ouse, and in the afternoon received them into church fellowship; and among them my present wife, who had been a member for years at Stadhampton before I married her. The church increased under my ministry, and we walked together in love; peace and prosperity ruled and reigned among us, each one esteeming others better than themselves. And we all pulled together, as we were all of one heart and one soul.

We began to see that something must be done to the chapel. One side was all decayed; we therefore saw that there must be a new wall built. A few of us met together, and we mutually agreed to do so. We collected the money among ourselves, and we set the men to work, and pulled the wall down, and got the new wall up before the Sabbath; and it was finished and paid for at once, which cost £90.

THOMAS GODWIN

Soon something else came to cause us a little exercise. That was a Sabbath school. At once a few of us met together, and talked the matter over, and we found that there was no room for the children to sit, although the chapel is large. Then one of the friends said, "Shall we build a new gallery?" After a few minutes' consultation, one friend said, "We will have one, if we pay for it ourselves" (the committee). We began to see how much money we could raise; and the builder was sent for, and the contract entered into. The school was opened in the new gallery on the 1st of May, 1864, commencing with eighty-one children. This cost £97 13s., and the builder came and took his money as soon as it was done.

Surely the Lord is on our side; therefore we need not fear what man can do unto us. The cause prospered, and the Lord was truly among us, so that we could say that the Lord had done great things for us as a church and people, whereof we were made glad.

[Mr. Godwin then gives an account of how a drive to his house was made and a new kitchen built. Later the chapel was extensively repaired, a new floor, new seats and a new pulpit being put in. For all these improvements the money was remarkably provided.]

Now, my dear readers, I will leave you to judge what our feelings must have been, for I cannot describe them. During the time this work was going on, we met in the British School, and when we re-opened the chapel, we had no public collection because the kind friends made up what was wanting, so that all the money was ready when the work was completed. And I do believe that the Lord re-opened our hearts to bless, praise and thank Him for all His great favours to such unworthy wretches. We were like Manoah and his wife, and had nothing to do but to look on and wonder at the great things the Lord had done for us; for now we had built a new side wall to the chapel, a new gallery and a new inside to the chapel, and all was paid for when it was done. O my Lord, surely Thou hast made Thy promise good, which came with such power into my soul in the bedroom at Oakham: "Go, and I will be with thee." And, bless His precious name, He *has* been with me. And although we have lost by death twenty-two precious saints since I have been here, yet we have added between thirty and forty

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

members [this would be over a period of nine to ten years], so that “the Lord is good; and a stronghold in the day of trouble.” Also we have lost by death many out of the congregation, so that the congregation is not so large; but the great blessing is that we are walking in peace and union.

[Mr. Godwin then tells how a stable and coach house and a horse and carriage were bought for him.]

But none of these things moved me. The Lord keeps the running sore opened in my heart, and the old serpent is for ever tempting and tormenting me; so that the pride of my heart is kept down, for there is nothing in this world but what is connected with trouble and sorrow.

Just upon the back of this great gift, the dear teachers of the Sabbath school gave me a new Bible for the pulpit; and this broke my heart, and the tears of love and joy sweetly ran down my cheeks. Then a few of the poor members gave me one of Mr. Gadsby's best hymn-books. This I record to show their love and affection towards me as their minister. And I must record this – that the first seven years of my ministry here were the most peaceful and the happiest time of my life in the ministry; for we never had any unpleasantness in the church and congregation, and we have walked together in love, spiritual union and affection, and I believe have had each member's prosperity in view, and have wept with them that wept, and rejoiced with them that rejoiced. And the school prospered, and the teachers agreed together in the school; and although many teachers have been removed, yet others have come forward; so that the number has been kept up.

[Here follows an account of the building of a schoolroom, the enlarging of the burial ground, and the provision of a minister's vestry.]

But to return. Many years ago, I was much tried that, if I should be laid aside, and be a burden to the people, what should I do, as I never had been a burden to any people, and hoped I never should. In the year 1867, a member of this church in Cambridge Street died, and left me three hundred pounds, free of legacy duty. My dear readers, I cannot tell you what my feelings have been, from time to time, under the great goodness and mercy of the Lord to me and mine. “O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works

THOMAS GODWIN

to the children of men!" I cannot bury these things, but must bring them to light, and lay them open before the public, that they may encourage some of the poor ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ when my body shall be laid in the grave; for here is an old man, nearly sixty-eight years of age, whom the Lord hath brought through many troubles, trials and sorrows, and given his soul such sweet testimonies and deliverances out of all his troubles and temptations, and made His promises good to my heart and soul: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." And again: "Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls?"

These two portions of God's Word were applied to my soul, and the Lord gave me strength and courage to cast myself upon Him when I left the Church of England and all my former friends; and, notwithstanding all the bitterness and enmity of friends and foes, the Lord hath stood by me. And He has gone beyond His promise to me and mine, for He is not only a promise-making and a promise-keeping God, but He is a promise-fulfilling God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for ever toward them that fear Him, and hath said that He will never leave nor forsake His poor tried family that are scattered abroad all over the earth. So that His name is still "Jehovah-jireh" – "The Lord will provide."

I must just say, to the honour and praise of His great name, that I have received four small legacies from strangers in blood, besides the two large ones. So that you, my dear reader, can see that the Lord has made His goodness to pass before me in the way on every hand and on every side; and He hath made me willing to labour among His poor children. And He hath led me about in His vineyard, and given me health and strength to travel the country over. I have preached in nearly two hundred different pulpits, and have had a large circle of close friends scattered over the land. And my unprofitable life has been lengthened out to see the end of most of my old friends in the ministry. They are gone to the place appointed for all the living family of God. What changing scenes I have witnessed, both in myself and others, and in churches and congregations! And now I am waiting for the last solemn

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

change to come to myself. I am living to prove that this is not my rest, because it is polluted. But there is a rest remaining for the people of God; and we which have believed do enter into that rest by precious faith.

But to return to my narrative. I have stated that the first seven years of my pastoral charge over this church were the most peaceful and the happiest time that I ever knew since I have been a preacher.

But lately I have had some changes, and have been much cast down, at times, through people failing in business, and their removal from this church and congregation. A great deal of this took place through pride, indolence and extravagance; and this has tried me much. And I am still tried respecting the carelessness and slothfulness of some men in business. When I was in business, after the fear of the Lord was put into my heart, I was obliged to work hard and live hard; and never spent one shilling unless I gave it away to the needy. I am sure that no man can get on through life in business without very close application. For many years I feared I should not be able to get through life honourably.

And there is another thing that I greatly feared – that I should live to be a burden to the Lord's dear people. These feelings and fears have sunk me very low from time to time. But my dear Lord and Master has opened His hand so bountifully to such a poor, blind, empty, vile sinner, that I can feelingly join Agur, and say, “Two things have I required of Thee, deny me them not before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lies, give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.”

But my dear Lord hath provided such bounties for me, and given me more than I ever asked Him for. For many years I felt a desire to be in a position, and also in possession of a little money to give to the Lord's dear needy people; and the Lord has granted me my desire. When the dear Lord put it into the heart of my dear friend, Mr. Harrison of Leicester, to leave me the farm at Besthorpe, two good cottages and gardens, and between eighty and ninety acres of land, I

THOMAS GODWIN

thought it would have killed me. O how my soul cried day and night to the dear Lord to keep it out of my heart, and my heart out of that! And, bless His dear name, He has done so; for my dear friend died March 3rd, 1855, and now I am writing this on the last day of January, 1871. When the contents of the will were read to me, and I heard it: "I give and bequeath to my friend, Thomas Godwin, minister of the gospel of Woburn, my farm at Besthorpe, absolutely." O my dear readers, trust ye in the Lord for ever, and cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. And remember and forget not what a rich Father you have, who declares that the gold is His, and the silver is His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are His, and the whole world and the fulness thereof. And is there anything too hard for the Lord to do?

Now that I am unable to walk, through increasing infirmities, to see the friends when sick who live at a distance (for ours are a very scattered people), the Lord has given me a four-wheel, so that I can drive to visit them. But my readers must remember that all this has not made a gentleman of me. No, I never felt myself to be such a poor, empty, ignorant creature in all my experience as I feel now, from time to time; groping and groaning about the house and garden. But I am as fond of work, if I could do it, as I was when I worked for one shilling per week, or when a milk boy and cut my own loaf, and used to put the knife down to see how long it would serve me. O Lord, what hast Thou done for a poor ill- and hell-deserving sinner!

And from the first entrance of the fear of the Lord into my heart, the Lord hath appeared for me in every trouble and strait. And many times, when I have had sums of money to pay, the postman has again and again brought me letters with £5 or £10 notes in them. And once at Woburn, after my first wife fell into that low state of mind, after we had removed from the rooms in the Market Place and I had taken a place a little out of town at £14 per year, and the first year's rent was due, I received two letters from friends – one had a £10 note in it, and the other a £2. So here was £12 towards the £14. This was a year before Mr. Harrison left me the farm and Mr. Holmes left me £20. And although my soul was then sunk so low, through the heavy affliction of my wife, yet my soul was like David's when he danced before the ark.

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

O how my soul loved the dear Lord for opening His dear children's hearts to supply my need! So that He is a God of providence as well as a God of grace.

I have endeavoured to keep these things separate from the work of the Spirit of God in my soul, to show to my readers that God's divine providence towards His children is one thing, and the applications, manifestations and revelations in the soul another thing. These are everlasting testimonies from God the Father, through God the Son, and brought into the soul by God the Holy Ghost; and these divine things make poor fools wise unto salvation.

This concludes Mr. Godwin's own account of his life.

THOMAS GODWIN

CHAPTER 11

We now include the little pieces Mr. Godwin afterwards wrote from time to time.

January 21st, 1869

A memorable day of bliss and blessedness, revealed and sealed home into my heart and soul by the anointing power of God the Holy Ghost, under which my soul has been as happy as I could well live.

I have been travelling through a painful path for some days of hard conflict and deep-felt sorrow under the power of darkness and temptation; and have had some heavy sighs and groans pressed out of my soul for another sweet visit of His great salvation.

My soul has been longing for a new year's gift, and wondering whether I should ever have another sweet visit of His great salvation this side of the grave. The latter part of last week, my soul was tormented with indwelling sin, infidel thoughts and the devil's temptations; so that the war was so hot, and the conflict so hard, and my faith and hope so low. But I felt like this: It may be to meet some of the cases of the poor tried children of God on Lord's day, the 17th. And truly I found it to be so. And last night, the 20th, I read these words for a text: "Lord, be Thou my helper"; and it was the very cry of my soul.

This morning, I felt life in reading and prayer, so that my faith and hope revived. "His mouth is most sweet; yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" (Song 5. 16).

On December 9th, 1869, I lost my dear and valued friend and brother, Mr. Philpot, one with whom I had enjoyed sweet communion for many years. I went to Croydon to see his body well laid in the grave. Although dead, he yet speaketh by the many able works he has left behind him. "The memory of the just is blessed" (Prov. 10. 7).

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

February 10th, 1870

I had been asking the Lord to give me a new year's blessing; and, bless His name, on the 10th of February, after reading in the family part of the 24th of Luke, the word being so sweet to my heart and soul, I took it up again after prayer, and life and light sprang up in it. And the Holy Ghost shone so sweetly upon it that it began to enlarge itself in my heart; and my heart enlarged in that; and these words swelled in my heart like leaven: "He showed them His hands and His feet." And a blessed sight it is to my sin-oppressed and devil-tempted soul! And His precious love poured into my heart in such a blessed way and manner, so that my cup has been full and running over with love to the dear Lord Jesus Christ and His dear redeemed people.

The savour of this lasted several days. On the following Lord's day, I spoke from these words: "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17. 19).

On January 18th, 1871 a heavy affliction fell upon me in my left shoulder, arm and hand. My soul was shut up in a state of darkness, hardness, death and sorrow; and Satan seemed to be let loose upon me; and the rebellion of my vile heart began to work within against the Lord for laying all this suffering upon me, until I felt more like a devil than a saint. This lasted until Friday morning, when the dear Lord broke my hard and rebellious heart all to pieces, and filled my soul full of love, joy and peace. And sure I am that "He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind."

February 1st, 1871

A day to be remembered by me, notwithstanding all the suffering I have passed through for the last fortnight, and left my bed as full of pain as I could well bear.

As I sat by the fire, looking out of the window, feeling that it was a trying time for the poor, many suffering privation as well as pain, the postman came to the door with the letters. When I opened one, the

THOMAS GODWIN

writer said, "I have sent you a few of my *pills*, hoping they will do you good." And, dear readers, what do you think these pills were made of? Why, four ten pound notes, and two fives, which made £50. The Lord came into my heart, and I began giving to the poor. And I am sure that I received it freely; and this has made me give freely through the day. And I do believe that a few such pills as these would do thousands of God's poor tried children good.

Now you can see, my readers, that the Lord will supply my need. If this narrative should fall into the hands of any of God's poor ministers who are tried in providence, be as careful as you can not to get further into debt. And when you are preaching, do not try to preach money out of your hearers, neither tell your hearers how badly you are off; but lay all your debts and troubles before the Lord, and ask the Lord to bless the testimony to the hearts of your hearers; and the Lord will open their hearts, and you shall witness His dear hand in helping you. When I was in debt, I never opened my mind to any of my friends until the Lord had brought out by hard labour and hard living. He brought me out by littles – here a little, and there a little; and now I can look back with pleasure and profit, and see the hand that opened the way, and brought me through to this day. Then "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

February 1st, 1872

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." This day was a day of days, not to be forgotten by me when the dear Lord visited my soul with the joys of His great salvation. O how sweet was His Word to my heart! And my faith laid firm and fast hold of my blessed Lord and Saviour, and held sweet communion and fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and felt as happy as I could live. But, alas! alas! I soon found that the Canaanites still dwell in the land, and will mar and disturb my peace; according to that word: "This is not your rest, because it is polluted."

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

January 20th, 1873

As I was looking into the fifth chapter of the Revelation, such a sweet spirit of meditation fell upon me and sprang up within me, and such an unfolding of the truth of that chapter to my soul; until my heart and soul were swallowed up in the great and grand truths therein recorded. I felt as happy as if my soul was about to enter heaven.

February 4th, 1873

The dear Lord shed abroad His precious love in my heart and soul in such a blessed way and manner, until my cup was full with these sweet words: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." How sure I am that every soul that God the Father loved with an everlasting love, that God the Son loved with an everlasting love and redeemed with an everlasting redemption, and that God the Holy Ghost loved with the same unchangeable love, will be loved unto the end! And His sweet comforting love now warms my heart, cheers my spirit, illuminates my mind, and works that assurance in my soul that I must endure unto the end, because my Lord and Saviour tells me that He loves His people unto the end. And bless His precious name for ever and ever,

"Whom once He loves He never leaves,
But loves them to the end."

And my heart loves the Three-One God in return. I love the Father for loving me and choosing me; and I love the dear Son for redeeming me, and paying my great debt for me; and I love the Holy Ghost for quickening my soul into divine life, and for sealing the killing power of the law home upon my conscience, and for taking the pardoning blood and justifying righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, revealing and sealing it home with power into my guilty soul, which made and still makes my soul rejoice in His great salvation.

THOMAS GODWIN

In 1873 we found it quite necessary, from the bad state that the roof and front of the chapel were in, to see what we could do to it. But after so much had been done, it was a great undertaking for us to collect such a large sum as it would take to put a new roof and front to it. But however, the workmen commenced their work; but it was a long job, and they did not get on very well, which tried my faith and patience. Having to preach in the schoolroom for several months, it was so hot and inconvenient for the accommodation of the congregation through the warm weather, that I often wished it had never been begun.

But on the first Lord's day in January 1874, we re-opened it, finished and paid for, at the cost of £736 14s. 4d. All the money was raised among the people, with the exception of £100 given me by two dear sisters, to whom the Lord has given the hearts and means to help the needy. May the Lord abundantly bless them. I spoke from these words (Haggai 2. 9): "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts," and had a happy day in my own soul. Truly we can say, "What hath God wrought!"

We now have a well-built chapel, good schoolroom and every convenience. During the last thirteen years, since I have been pastor here, we have spent in repairs for the chapel, etc., the large sum of £2,068 8s. 4d. And my desire is that during the few remaining days or months I may have to sojourn here, we may live together in love and peace, that the text may indeed be fulfilled in our experience. And when my work is done here below, may the Lord send the church a pastor, a man that shall go in and out before them, and feed the flock of slaughter.

[How blessedly God fulfilled this desire! Less than five years after Mr. Godwin's death, Joseph Oldfield accepted the pastorate.]

CHAPTER 12

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF MR. GODWIN'S LAST DAYS WRITTEN
BY HIS BEREAVED WIDOW

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

My dear husband had suffered for some years with feeble action of the heart. Dr. Brooks, who examined his chest, told me that his heart was in that state that any exertion might cause him to drop dead, and begged me not to let him work in the garden. This was quite a trial to him, for he was very fond of rising early in the morning to work in it. He said he often enjoyed sweet meditation in watching the wonderful works of God in creation. The opening of the buds, and the expanding of the leaves, often led his mind up to nature's God; and he would come in to breakfast cheered and refreshed. But after he was not able to work, he would walk about, feeling grieved, seeing so much to do, yet not able to do it. Being naturally of an active mind, he did not like to sit idle. And his weakness was such that he could write but very little for several months before his illness, his hand shook so much. He often said, "What a useless lump I am become! What a wonder the Lord bears with me!" At times, he sank very low in his mind, was often under a cloud, would burst into tears and mourn over his darkness and useless life. Yet the Lord helped him in the pulpit to speak to the tried and exercised.

The last time he entered the pulpit, he spoke from these words: "So will not we go back from Thee; quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved" (Psa. 80. 18, 19). He spoke with freedom, and in his usual way; and we little thought it would be the last time he would stand there. But the Lord's thoughts are not our thoughts.

From the "Gospel Standard," October 1877

"At one time, when a little water was given to him, he blessed the Lord for it, and said, 'There is not a drop of water in hell,' and burst into tears at the mercy of the Lord in delivering him from hell. He asked me to read to him Psalm 102, which comforted him. But, at times, he sank very low under the hidings of the light of the Lord's countenance and the powerful temptations of Satan. He often said he wondered he could stand up to speak at all, but, at times, he was much helped to declare a free gospel; and under that text: 'Christ is All and in

THOMAS GODWIN

all,' he very sweetly entered into what it was to have Christ dwelling in believers the hope of glory. He lived upon the sweetness for many days.

"On the following Tuesday night he was much favoured on his bed, and held sweet communion for hours. In the family service, in the evening, he was much drawn out, and felt liberty, and prayed for us that the Lord would comfort us if He removed him. He also begged for another song in the night season. In the morning, he said to me, 'Yes, I shall soon be landed. The Lord has told me so. He has sweetly revealed Himself to me on my bed this morning, and brought me up from the low dungeon, and set my feet upon the Rock of eternal ages. I can leave all now.' Seeing me distressed, he replied, 'It may not be just yet. I am willing to stay the Lord's appointed time; and He will take care of you.'

"On July 28th I noticed a difference in his voice, and his memory failed him very much, and he did not eat his dinner as usual. I said, 'You don't seem quite so well.' He replied, 'No, dear; I feel very strange in my head.' After trying to sleep in his chair, I advised him to go to bed and try some remedies which had relieved him before. I read to him one of his favourite chapters (John 17), thinking I might read him to sleep; but after lying for about an hour, he got up, and said he felt better. But he had no sleep; but afterwards he fell asleep for nearly an hour. He then had a cup of tea, but no appetite to eat. On taking up his Bible he sighed very much. Being Saturday evening, I said, 'Now you want a text.' He said, 'I don't know what I want. I feel a very poor creature.'

"One of the members came in, and we noticed his voice was very feeble. The member read and prayed; to which he [Mr. G.] responded a hearty Amen. On his leaving, he said, 'You seem very poorly. Shall I call and send Mr. Lucas [the doctor] over?' He replied, 'O no, friend; I don't want a doctor, but the good Physician. Perhaps a night's rest will set me to rights.' At nine o'clock he said, 'Is my bed ready, that I may go and lie down to die?' I assisted him into bed, and watched by him. He was soon asleep, and slept until half-past eleven. He then got out of bed three times in about an hour; the last time I said, 'I should like to put your feet in mustard and water.' He said, 'Very

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

well.' I got it, and put his feet in; and also held his hands in a basin of hot mustard and water for about a quarter of an hour. Then he looked wearily towards the bed. I noticed it, and said, 'Do you wish to go into bed?' He replied, 'Yes, yes, yes.' He soon fell into a doze for two or three hours. About five o'clock I observed he breathed very hard, and looked different. I then sent for the doctor, who, when he came, said he had been seized with a fit of paralysis, which affected the muscles of the throat. He lay in an unconscious state for hours.

"Being Lord's day, several friends came in after the morning service; but he took no notice of any. But after the afternoon service, when the deacons came, he knew them, blessed them in the name of the Lord, and said he was happy, quite happy, his dear face beaming with heavenly joy and peace.

"To another friend, later in the evening, he said, 'Prepared – ready. I am ready to depart and be with Christ.' I believe from that time he was quite sensible, but not able to converse, except a few words at a time. He slept very much; we had to rouse him to give him nourishment. The doctor said he would sleep on until the heart stopped from sheer exhaustion. He was in no pain.

"At one time, seeing me in tears, he burst into tears, and said, 'Poor thing!' At another time, he looked at me, and said, 'No wrath, no wrath; no terrors, no terrors.' A friend said, 'If you were able, would you not speak well of Christ?' To which he replied, 'I would. Yes, I would.' Shortly afterwards, he said, 'He scorns thousands and thousands; and He saves thousands and thousands,' and more words we could not understand about professors.

"On a friend coming in, he was asked if he knew her. He said, 'O yes!' and called her by name. She asked, 'Is Jesus precious?' He at once replied, with much emphasis, 'O yes! He is.' She said, 'Then you are happy.' He said, 'O yes! I am on the Rock, on the Rock. "Rock of ages, shelter me!"' He repeated several times, 'Shelter me.' At another time he said there was an eternal weight of glory laid up for him, awaiting him; his face beaming with joy and peace.

"Early on Thursday morning he awoke out of a nice sleep. Noticing him looking round the room, a friend went to his side, and

THOMAS GODWIN

asked what he was looking for. He replied, 'I am looking for union and communion'; and other words which we could not understand. After a brief interval, he said, 'I have had union and communion with the saints.' On a friend leaving him, who had sat up with him, he sent his love to his wife, and said, 'Bless her! The Lord hath blessed her with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' On being asked how he felt, he replied, 'Very blessed. No wrath, no terror, no wrath.' When his daughter came, he knew her, burst into tears, and was much overcome at the sight of her and his son-in-law, and blessed them in the name of the Lord God almighty.

"On the Friday morning he seemed so much better that the doctor told him he believed he should see him about again. He replied, 'O no, doctor! I don't think so.' I said, 'Would you not like, dear, to stay with us a little longer?' He said, 'Yes, if the Lord's will.'

"The enemy, who had assaulted him all his life long, was not allowed to come near him on his dying bed. When asked by the deacon, on the Friday evening, if the enemy tormented him, he said, 'No; quite happy.' At another time, he said, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

"The last twelve hours he never moved hand or foot, and breathed out his soul to God who gave it at half-past nine on Sabbath night, August 5th, so entering into an everlasting Sabbath, leaving a sorrowing widow and many friends to mourn their loss. He was an affectionate, kind husband and father, and a faithful, loving pastor. His wish was granted him that, when his work was done, the Lord would take him quickly home to Himself.

"The friends were extremely kind in sitting up and assisting to nurse him; and everything was done that love and skill could suggest. He was attended by three medical men, who were very attentive and kind; but the time was come that he must enter into that rest which remaineth for the people of God. He is now singing, 'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own precious blood'; while I am left to mourn his absence; for in him I have lost a kind, sympathiz-

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

ing companion and a wise counsellor. And as we saw eye to eye in the things of God, we could converse together on spiritual matters, and I often had my strength renewed and heart warmed while he related the glories of King Jesus.”

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace” (Psa. 37. 37).

From the “Cambridge Express,” August 8th, 1877

“GODMANCHESTER”

“It is with much regret that we chronicle the demise of the late Mr. Godwin, who had for a period of about sixteen years been the much-esteemed and beloved minister of the Particular Baptist chapel of this place. The deceased had been in failing health for the past year or two, but was enabled to prosecute his ministerial duties up to a short time of his death. He was seized with paralysis, and lingered about eight days, and expired at his residence on Sunday evening last.

“Deceased was held in considerable regard and respect by a very large circle of friends and a numerous congregation that sat under his ministry. He was of a kindly and generous disposition; but his charity was without ostentation, not letting his left hand know what his right hand did. The poorer members of his congregation have lost a great friend and benefactor, as his house was at all times open to them, and his charity dealt out with an unsparing hand.

“As a preacher he was popular, although, at times, eccentric; but his admirers were numerous, and many would come several miles Sunday after Sunday to hear the gospel from his lips.

“A few years ago, when the chapel was enlarged and restored, the deceased was foremost in the work, and contributed most liberally towards it.

“His remains were interred in a brick grave in the new burial-ground appointed for the Nonconformists on Wednesday last. An immense number of people were present, and they came from all parts to pay the last tribute of respect to one whom they loved so well. A short service was held in the chapel, and the corpse was subsequently

THOMAS GODWIN

conveyed on a hand hearse to the burial ground. The obsequies were performed by Mr. Taylor, of Manchester, an intimate friend of deceased, and Mr. Gadsby's successor. Several hundreds of people witnessed the interment. The age of deceased was 74.”

The following is a copy of the inscription on the tablet erected in the chapel at Godmanchester to the memory of Mr. Godwin:

THIS TABLET WAS ERECTED BY
THE CHURCH AND CONGREGATION IN
MEMORY
OF
THOMAS GODWIN,
WHO FOR SIXTEEN YEARS FAITHFULLY
AND AFFECTIONATELY PREACHED THE
GOSPEL IN THIS PLACE,
DIED AUG. 5, 1877,
AGED 74.

“I KEPT BACK NOTHING THAT WAS PROFITABLE TO YOU.”³
—ACTS XX. 20.

A TRIBUTE FROM A. B. TAYLOR OF MANCHESTER

In attempting to pay a tribute of respect to the memory of one so retiring, and yet so endeared, I fear lest, on the one hand, I may say too much or, on the other, too little about my worthy friend; but, should I err, I may perhaps be excused if the sorrowing of intimate friendship be considered. Man is apt to lean to the side he loves and more so in the case of a brother minister, who could not be known

³A boy at Godmanchester chapel was so impressed by this text on the memorial that he never forgot it. Himself becoming a pastor, he felt there could be no greater tribute paid to a minister than that the Godmanchester congregation paid to Thomas Godwin by applying this text to him.

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

without being loved, yet one who did but little to make himself the property of the public; nevertheless one who was entirely the property of the church of Christ, and with the fondness of a kind heart breathed a true Christian spirit.

Brother Godwin was not a man of mere grammar, who could heap together in order words of scriptural truths, doctrinal, experimental and practical truths, all of which may be found in God's Word, but which, like the head of the axe the prophet caused to swim, may be borrowed. Alas! alas for all such! Not so Thomas Godwin. His matter, though somewhat rough, was worked out of his own system, and drawn out of his own well; as all who rightly knew him were and are willing to admit. Christ, the living Fountain, was the source from whence he drew all his supplies; and Christ being formed in his heart the hope of glory, he enjoyed much of Christ's Spirit. He was a man truly humbled, whose beginning and ending in the divine life ran one grand parallel. The grace of God had warmed his heart, and the fear of God regulated his life.

As a scholar, our brother stood on no high elevation, except in divine things. He had been at the best school, and was truly taught of God; and having learned of the Father something of God's most holy law, and the terrors of the Lord, as a perishing sinner he heard the sound of a great trumpet, and, drawn by the Holy Spirit, he fled for refuge to Him who says, "As soon as they hear of Me they shall run unto Me."

The uplifted Saviour was to him a wonderful sight. He learned that Christ received sinners; and, venturing, he felt the spirit of grace and supplication sustain him as he approached. Then, blessed with a sense of pardoning mercy, his mouth was opened amongst the people of God; and before he or the people well knew what he was doing, he was preaching Christ to sinners. This was something dreadful and unpardonable, especially in high circles, where priestcraft rode rough-shod round the parish while the "Meetings" were held up to ridicule and contempt. Our brother went on preaching Christ, and baptizing believers in the name of the Lord Jesus. Poor fallen nature around him, even where it might be called religious, could not see in him God's work, any more than the despising Jews could see in Jesus of Nazareth the eternal Son of God.

THOMAS GODWIN

As a friend, Mr. Godwin was open and kind. There was much simplicity of manners and integrity of character in his whole bearing that endeared him to his friends. He was extremely fond of meeting with one whose eyes were being opened to divine things. He did, without design, mingle cheerfulness with sedateness and, pointing the anxious one beyond the future, could throw a handful of purpose, which often endeared him to the troubled soul. Even grace had not altered the character of his mind. It is true, much was changed; but the fragments of youth were visible to the last.

In handling a doctrinal subject, or any point of discussion, Mr. Godwin seldom succeeded; and sometimes the balance of his judgment seemed in danger, so anxious was he to get at what he called "savoury meat." His heart was warm; discussion seemed too dry for him.

The strength of his ministry lay in relating the operations of the Spirit of God upon the heart – times of refreshing, sealing times, heaps of stones, Ebenezers, Bethels, Hermons and Mizar hills; all testimonies. On these subjects he could revel with pleasure when his heart was warm. He would, at times, burst out in his own provincial dialect, and this was rich indeed when his congregation happened to be in the "wilds of Wiltshire," when the more humble of his hearers felt themselves enriched under a shower of what to them was the most powerful eloquence. When his heart was thus warm, he seldom failed to invest his subject with considerable interest.

Throughout his ministerial life, quietness was dear to him, and seldom indeed could he be brought on the foreground, except in the pulpit.

Christian humility was very apparent in his character; yet no extent of misrepresentation or calumny could move him from what he believed to be his duty in observing the weakness, errors and evils of his brethren. He was clear-sighted and firm as a rock in claiming respect for the servant of Christ, in honour of his Master; yet in things personal he was very retiring. To blame his friend was a task to his tender heart; yet he stood firm where guilt was plain. He stuck to his friend in adversity as in prosperity. He could soothe the bed of affliction; and many a child of sorrow has he beguiled into holy resignation by his peculiar method

SIX REMARKABLE MINISTERS

of opening up the treasures of God's love, grace and mercy, in a way suited to the case in hand. And thus, though, like other servants of Christ, and mankind in general, he spent his years as a tale that is told, there is an eternity of real enjoyment for the ransomed of the Lord.

THOMAS GODWIN