



THE OLD MEETING-HOUSE AT PLUMPTON.

Photo. by Mr. Geo. Reed.



THE OLD MEETING-HOUSE AT GREAT SALKELD.

Photo. by Rev. J. M. Rodger.

TO FACE P. 41.

ART. IV.—*Great Salkeld Presbyterian Meeting-house.* By the Rev. J. H. COLLIGAN.

Read at Carlisle, April 18th, 1907.

THERE are no registers or books in connection with the congregation at Great Salkeld. In 1822, the Rev. Timothy Nelson, who was then eighty-four years of age, drew up a list of ministers who had been connected with Great Salkeld and Penruddock. It was copied in 1894, by the Rev. Thomas Colligan, but the original has since been lost. The legal documents in the Synod safe of the Presbyterian Church of England are as follows :—

I. AN INDENTURE, DATED MARCH 30TH, 1823.

The trustees had been reduced to the Rev. Timothy Nelson of Great Salkeld, and Mr. Samuel Hall of Brocklemoor, in the parish of Lazonby. In accordance with the instructions of an earlier deed (apparently lost) new trustees were appointed. The original deed enjoined that when the trustees were reduced to the number of two, an addition of two or more should be made. The 1823 deed states that when the surviving trustees shall be reduced to the number of two, six or more shall be appointed, and perhaps this is a comment upon the ruin that had come to many of the meeting-houses through the investment of their property in the hands of a small number of trustees. The trust consisted of the two meeting-houses at Great Salkeld and Plumpton, and the town-fields at Great Stainton, called Knott Dalt, containing 2 acres 17 perches, for the use of the joint congregations of Great Salkeld and Plumpton. Should a vacancy arise, the congregations were to receive the

rents, and to use them for the supply of the pulpits. Should the congregations dissolve, or the meeting-houses be converted to any other use, the rents (during such vacancy only) might be used by the Protestant dissenting ministers at Penrith. "The trustees or the major part of them shall appoint a minister for Great Salkeld and Plumpton, and at discretion dismiss him for misbehaviour and misconduct." (This was the Presbyterian practice.—Dale's *Congregationalism*, p. 483.)

2. AN INDENTURE, DATED FEBRUARY 28TH, 1862.

This is evidently a deed on the terms of document No. 1, with new trustees in it.

3. A DEED, DATED MARCH 1ST, 1862.

This is the conveyance of Harvey Side to the trustees of deed No. 2, by Frederick Winder of Liverpool, for £100. Harvey Side is described as "formerly part of the commons and waste ground within the forest of Inglewood." It contains 1 acre 2 roods 23 perches.

4. HONOR OF PENRITH, DATED MAY 6TH, 1879.

Evidently referring to the land upon which the present place of worship stands.

5. A DEED, DATED 1879.

This document is a new trust deed, giving the power into the hands of the Presbyterian Church of England. It refers to the present place of worship, built in 1876, at a cost of about £500.

6. HONOR OF PENRITH, DATED JULY 6TH, 1891.

7. INDENTURE, DATED JUNE 23RD, 1891.

This is a new deed for the conveyance of the old meeting-houses of Great Salkeld and Plumpton, together with the lands of Knott Dalt and Harvey Side, according to the terms of document No. 1.

With regard to the buildings there is not much information. The Plumpton meeting-house has always been closely associated with Great Salkeld, but there are no separate particulars of this cause. The meeting-house, which has the date of 1709 on the headstone, was transferred to the Wesleyans some years ago.

The original meeting-house at Great Salkeld is in the field called "The Croft," and is now used as a barn. The date of its erection cannot be given, but it was probably during the "meeting-house building era, 1690-1710" (Drysdale's *English Presbyterianism*, p. 441, f.). The present place of worship is in the village.

We are unable to discover the origin of the cause at Great Salkeld. It is highly probable that it originated in the ejection of Simon Atkinson, the vicar of Lazonby (Calamy's *Nonconformist Memorial*). This is probably the person who is described in the registers of the Cocker-mouth Independent Church on March 13th, 1670 (O.S.), as "pastor of the church about Kirkoswald," and the phrase is interesting. The Puritan movement in Cumberland appears first in the parish church (called by the Puritans "public meeting," and by George Fox "steeple-house"). Some of the vicars formed "churches" within their parishes, and as this was before the Act of Uniformity (1650-1661), there was nothing anomalous in such procedure. The best illustrations of this method were at Greystoke (Richard Gilpin), Bridekirk (George Benson), and particularly at Cocker-mouth (George Larkham), where the registers of the Independent Church fully explain the practice. Upon the operation of the Act of Uniformity (1662), the Nonconformists withdrew from the Established Church, and became pastors of the "churches." The Act of Parliament of 1670 pressed heavily upon the Cocker-mouth "church," and on May 8th it is recorded:—

The Church brake up their public manner of meeting together in regard of an evil Act of Parliament passed against meetings above five in a company. The same day the Pastor spake from Ezek. iii.,

24-27. In the evening it was agreed that the church should meet every first day of the week in parcels, sometimes at one place and sometimes at another, till this cloud should blow over.

We are not surprised therefore to read of "the church branching forth, or rather swarming," as it moves, a living but invisible organism among the villages in the neighbourhood of Cockermouth. This is the explanation of the phrase, "the church in and about Kirkoswald."

As early as 1653 the church at Cockermouth deputed three of its elders to go to "the church gathered in and about Kirkoswald at y^e ordination of their pastour." Who he was we do not know, but he may have been Simon Atkinson, the vicar of Lazonby, although this event was nine years before his ejection. He would not require ordination from the Puritans if he had been previously ordained, and we know that they were careful in this matter, as the following incident proves. When the church at Cockermouth was formed, George Benson, M.A., the vicar of Bridekirk, was admitted (inducted) to the office of a teaching elder.

The reason why the said G: B: was not ordained was because he had been before ordained by the bishops, and the church was fearfull of iterating his ordination lest they should have offended, though in their judgment were satisfied they might.

As George Benson was one of the three elders sent by the Cockermouth church to Kirkoswald, this delicate point could not have been overlooked.

The church at Kirkoswald, formed in 1653, probably embraced Parkhead, Huddlesceugh,* Great Salkeld, and possibly Plumpton. The records of Kirkoswald are lost. In 1824 they were in existence (*Home Missionary Magazine*, 1824, p. 134, footnote), when it was stated that they were begun during the ministry of Caleb Threlkeld, M.A., *circ.*

* Rev. George Nicholson of Huddlesceugh entered Cumberland shortly before 1662, and was silenced by the Bartholomew Act. He laboured in the district until 1697 (*Calamy*).

1702-1717. Mr. Threlkeld had carefully entered into the registers a copy of the original church covenant, which had presumably been drawn up in 1653. The church at Kirkoswald appears to be the second oldest Nonconforming congregation in the county, and is still active. From the formation, up to the end of the eighteenth century, it is possible to trace the names of nine or ten ministers. At the Indulgence of 1672, three licences were requested for Kirkoswald—(1) a general one for Giles Nicholson, (2) a Presbyterian one for William Jameson, (3) a licence (not specified) to Thomas Threlkeld. In Dr. Evans' list (1712-1729), the congregation is described as consisting of 235 hearers, with 20 county voters, and four gentlemen. It is probably from this influential source that the congregation of Great Salkeld was formed, although it maintained a separate ministry from the beginning of the eighteenth century, if not earlier.

The following ministers are known to have been at Great Salkeld:—

I. RICHARD RIGBYE.

He came from Lancashire (Nelson MS.), and was probably connected with a leading family that played an important part in the history of that county, taking the Parliamentary side during the Civil War (*Eccleston Parish Register*). The date of his settlement at Great Salkeld is unknown. It was during his ministry that Archdeacon Nicolson, having been made Bishop of Carlisle, took "a final leave of sweet Salkeld," and removed to Rose Castle (these *Transactions*, N.S., ii., 194). On May 13th, 1714, Rigbye graduated M.D. at Edinburgh University (*Edinburgh Medical Graduates*, 1705-1865), so that he had probably left Salkeld before that date. He was minister of Broad Street, Reading, about 1715. The famous Salter's Hall Synod was in 1719 (Drysdale's *English Presbyterians*, p. 502). Rigbye took the side of the non-subscribers in that

controversy (*vide* James' *Legislation*, p. 705). He published two sermons, one of them being on Gunpowder Plot (Nelson MS.).

2. JAMES CROSSLAND.

Born in 1687. In early life he was minister of Carnforth, Lancashire, working with that meeting-house a meeting at the adjoining village of Tatham. The building in which Crossland preached at Carnforth is now a smithy. In 1718 he went to Great Salkeld, where he remained until 1733. During his ministry there he married Rachel Benson of Great Salkeld, the second sister of the Rev. George Benson, D.D. His congregation is described in Dr. Evan's list as consisting of 100 hearers, one being a "gentleman," the rest being "the meaner sort of yeomen and poor farmers." His next pastorate was Swalwell, near Newcastle, where he died in 1752 (articles on Swalwell congregation, 1906, and Great Salkeld congregation, 1907, in *The Monthly Messenger* of the English Presbyterian Church).

3. JAMES ALDERSON.

He was probably a native of Westmorland, and was educated at Dr. Rotheram's academy at Kendal. He ministered to the Great Salkeld congregation for a short time about the year 1735. He removed in 1737 to Lowestoft, where he died in 1760 (MS. in Williams' Library). His son, Rev. Robert Alderson, Octagon Chapel, Norwich, ultimately became Recorder of Norwich (Brown's *Congregationalism in Norfolk and Suffolk*, p. 281).

4. JOHN WHITESIDE.

He was born at Lancaster. His training was received at Dr. Rotheram's academy, where he was a fellow-student of James Alderson. He was at Great Salkeld

about 1739-1743, when he removed to Yarmouth as minister of "the Old Meeting." A secession had taken place from this meeting on doctrinal grounds. (A copy of the minutes of "the Old Meeting" are in the Williams' Library.) Whiteside went to Yarmouth as assistant to Mr. Milner in May, 1743, and was chosen pastor on Mr. Milner's death (Brown's *History of Congregationalism in Norfolk and Suffolk*). In 1772, Mr. Whiteside chose the Rev. J. M. Beynon of Knowsley, Lancashire, to be his assistant (*Manchester Socinian Controversy*, 1821). In 1784 Mr. Whiteside died at Yarmouth.

5. JOHN HELME, JUN.

He was the son of the Rev. John Helme of Penruddock (these *Transactions*, N.S., v., 165). A student of Dr. Rotheram's, he was minister at Great Salkeld *circ.* 1745-1749. His subsequent career has become confused with that of his father, but probably it was he who went into Lancashire, and was drowned in a flood, while crossing a brook near Bolton in 1760. Nightingale's work on Lancashire Nonconformity has several references to a John Helme, but may not have been aware that there were two persons of that name (Nelson MS.).

6. JAMES RITCHIE.

A native of Scotland. He attended the University of Glasgow nine sessions (Nelson MS.), and was called to Ravenstonedale in 1732 (Nightingale's Westmorland volume; the date is given as "about 1735" in *The History and Traditions of Ravenstonedale*, by the Rev. W. Nicholls, a copy of which is in the Jackson collection). In these times "the saints' bell" was rung at Ravenstonedale to call the Dissenters to sermon after the Nicene creed had been repeated, and this practice continued as late as 1777 (Burns and

Nicolson). Ritchie became involved in a lawsuit with the trustees, and appears to have left about 1737, when he removed to Alston Moor. While in that charge, he graduated M.D. at Glasgow University in 1740 (Addison's *Roll of Glasgow Graduates*). During his stay at Alston, the Red Wing estate was purchased (in 1749) for the Protestant Dissenters, (*Alston Church*, by the Rev. H. C. Hopton, 1904). Ritchie preached at Alston and in Weardale alternately, till about 1750. (The Nelson MS. states that Weardale was connected with Alston Moor.) His next pastorate was at Great Salkeld.

That country being cold, and his health declining, he accepted a call from my father and the other members of the Great Salkeld congregation, where he preached, and at Plumpton alternately until 1753 (Nelson MS.).

He became minister of Mixenden, near Halifax, in 1753, (Miall's *Congregationalism in Yorkshire*), and died at Shaw Booth, Warley, Halifax, in October, 1763, aged 65. He is buried in the Old Presbyterian Chapel, Mixenden, where a monument, with an elaborate inscription in Latin, has been erected to his memory. On it he is described as a V.D.M. (Verbi Dei Minister) as well as an M.D. He appears to have been a man of considerable ability. In 1761 he published a work in London (in 8 vols.), entitled, *A Criticism upon Modern Notions of Sacrifices, being an Examination of Dr. Taylor's "Scripture Doctrine of the Atonement"* (Taylor's work was published in 1751, vide Gordon's *Heads of Unitarian History* and Turner's *Unitarian Lives*). In *The Monthly Review* for September, 1761 (a copy in Williams' Library), this work is referred to in kind, but cautious words. Ritchie's name is not mentioned in the review, and our impression is that his book is more advanced than that of Dr. Taylor.

The author treats Dr. Taylor's notions with great freedom, but the Doctor himself with great respect, and seems to have no other view than the discovery of truth.

Another work (2 vols. quarto, Warrington, 1761) was sent to the press before he died, but was issued by subscription for the benefit of his widow (Nelson MS.). The title was *The Piacular Sacrifices and rationale of them, illustrated in two essays, with two Dissertions on the person of Jesus Christ.* [For further particulars, *vide The History of Mixenden*, by Rev. J. Preston (1823-1841).]

7. JAMES McMILLAN.

From Scotland (Nelson MS.). Minister of Great Salkeld, 1754-1758; minister of Haltwhistle, 1759-1767 (*Records of Haltwhistle Presbyterian Church*). The remainder of his ministry was spent in Yorkshire.

8. THOMAS LOWTHION.

A native of the district, and a relative of the Rev. Samuel Lowthion. The father of Samuel Lowthion removed from Kirkoswald, and settled at Penruddock upon his marriage with Margaret, the daughter of John Noble of Penruddock, on June 21st, 1699 (Greystoke Registers). Samuel Lowthion became minister of Penrith Presbyterian Church, 1745-1752; and afterwards of Dr. Richard Gilpin's congregation in Newcastle, where he kept an academy. On August 14th, 1768, there was baptised "at Sauchel Gate, on the turnpike road to Carlisle, Peggy, the daughter of Tho^s Lowthion, blacksmith there, and Margaret, his wife" (Penrith Presbyterian Registers). These were probably the parents of Thomas Lowthion. He was educated at the academy of the Rev. Samuel Lowthion, and became minister of Great Salkeld, 1758-1763. He was called to Cockermouth in 1764, but as the result of the call a secession took place on

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account of Lowthian's doctrinal opinions. The two meetings united upon his death in 1781 (Cockermouth Records).

9. TIMOTHY NELSON.

There is a gap in the record of the ministers from 1763 until the ministry of Mr. Nelson in 1801, and this was evidently the weak, uncertain, and unsatisfactory stage of the congregation's life. From the historical point of view, the last quarter of the eighteenth century was the critical period of Non-conformity throughout England, and it is to be regretted that Mr. Nelson, who could easily have supplied the facts, has left us without a clue.

Timothy Nelson was a native of Great Salkeld, and was born in 1737. His father, Thomas, had been married to Sarah Rotheram in 1732 (Parish Register). After graduating M.A. at Glasgow in 1758, he was licensed by the Northumberland Classis, and became minister of Penruddock for a short time (these *Transactions*, N.S., v., 166). His next pastorate was at Alston Moor, 1762-1800. About 1801 he removed to the joint pastorate of Great Salkeld and Plumpton. He died at Great Salkeld, and was buried there in 1830. He was a careful historian of local events, and a number of his MSS. are in the possession of his relatives at Great Salkeld. The Nelson MS. referred to in this article is the copy of a letter sent by him in 1821, in answer to a letter of inquiry from Joshua Wilson, London. A relative of Nelson's, described as a stubborn Dissenter, is mentioned in "Bishop Nicolson's Diaries" (these *Transactions*, N.S., i., p. 21).*

* The diary of Richard Wright, the Unitarian missionary, gives an interesting glimpse of Mr. Nelson in 1814, but the inference in Mr. Wright's *Life*, pub. 1824, is by comparison with Mr. Nelson's MSS. and actions at that period, quite unwarranted.

10. GEORGE CHAPMAN.

A native of Kirkcaldy, N.B. He entered the Associate (Burgher) Hall in 1819 (Mackelvie's *Annals*), and was ordained at Great Salkeld in 1833 by the United Associate Presbytery of Annan and Carlisle. He died in 1881. From this date the congregation at Great Salkeld has been a preaching station, and has been supplied by probationers from the Presbyterian Church of England.

The ecclesiastical periods of the congregation (including Plumpton) may be traced by observing the source from which the ministers were drawn. The first two ministers were evidently of the earliest group of academy men, which, for religion and definiteness of conviction was the best group. (For articles on the Kendal academies by Rev. M. N. G. Gray, M.A., *vide The Monthly Messenger*, March, 1907.) The next three were from Rotheram's academy, which through the subsequent opinions of its students had its reputation shaken. Several of the ministers of Cumberland charges were afterwards suspected of heterodoxy, but not while they were in Cumberland.

It was the final developments of their students that gave the academies such notoriety. An examination of the famous "Manchester Socinian Controversy" (1821) shows that Lancashire continued to take their ministers from the academies, and to-day the county is dotted with Unitarian congregations; while Cumberland turned to the Church of Scotland for their supply, and there is only one Unitarian congregation in the county. The attitude of the Great Salkeld congregation is seen in the fact that two ministers were invited from Scotland, who were followed by two natives of the district. During the ministry of Mr. Nelson, the second of these, the congregation applied for admittance to the United Associated Presbytery of Annan and Carlisle in 1827 (Mackelvie's

Annals, p. 34). In the thirteenth year of Mr. Chapman's ministry, Great Salkeld was incorporated into the U.P. Church of Scotland, and when in 1876 the Presbyterian Church of England was strong enough to reconstitute herself, the charges of Great Salkeld and Plumpton returned to their English Presbyterian connection.

The interesting question of polity has been discussed in *The Monthly Messenger*, November, 1906—February, 1907, and the internal evidence is strongly in favour of a traditional Presbyterianism. For an examination of the complex relations between Presbyterians and Independents, *vide Dale's History of Congregationalism*, published 1907, where the Congregational position is thoroughly stated. Several eminent Nonconformists have been connected with the neighbourhood of Great Salkeld.

I. THE BENSON FAMILY.

Dr. George Benson's memoirs are attached to his *Life of Christ* (Jackson Library). Dr. Grosart's article on Benson, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, is a summary of these memoirs. There are at least twelve separate sermons by Dr. Benson, in the Jackson Library, with a volume that probably contains duplicates of these sermons. There are several other works by Benson in that collection.

The Benson family were originally from London. John Benson left London towards the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign and settled at Great Salkeld, "where the family made a considerable figure." He had thirteen sons, and from the eldest Lord Bingley was descended. The youngest son was George Benson, who took the side of Parliament in the Civil War.

Dr. George Benson was a well-known theologian in the eighteenth century (memoirs). The Benson family were influential, and widely dispersed. They appear at Great Salkeld, Penruddock (1646, *vide*

parish kist), Cockermouth (1653, George Benson, the ejected vicar of Bridekirk). They were probably connected with Bishop Nicolson (*vide* his "Diaries" in these *Transactions*). In Westmorland a branch appears at Kendal (*George Fox's Journal*). In Lancashire it is probably the same family that may be traced at Kellet, and that were until recently resident in Lancaster.

2. THE ROTHERAM FAMILY.

Dr. Caleb Rotheram and Rev. Caleb Rotheram. Rotheram Green, Great Salkeld, has recently been sold, but a number of family relics are in the possession of Mr. Francis Nicholson, F.Z.S., Windermere, including an unrecognised portrait of a gentleman, who may be Dr. Rotheram. For particulars of Dr. Rotheram's career, *vide Dictionary of National Biography*; also "Kendal Registers" (these *Transactions*, n.s., v., 177). His funeral sermon by the Rev. James Daye of Lancaster is in the Jackson Library.

3. THE THRELKELD FAMILY.

For the origin of the Threlkeld family *vide* "Papers and Pedigrees," vol. ii., by W. Jackson (*Extra Series* of this Society, vol. vi.

Thomas Threlkeld licensed his house for preaching on October 28th, 1672. This was either at Kirkoswald or within the parish. He was probably the father of Caleb Threlkeld.

Rev. Caleb Threlkeld, born 1676 at Ketberg, in the parish of Kirkoswald, graduated M.A. at Glasgow University in 1698. He became Dissenting minister of Huddlesceugh, Kirkoswald. He took the M.D. degree at Edinburgh University on January 26th, 1713, so that he and the Rev. Richard Rigbye, the minister of Great Salkeld, would graduate together. In 1713 he removed to Dublin, and eventually gave

up preaching. In 1727 he published *Synopsis Stirpium Hibernicarum* (Jefferson's *Leath Ward*, p. 482). He was the uncle of Samuel Threlkeld.

Rev. Samuel Threlkeld, minister of Penrith Presbyterian Church, 1728-1744. He was at Halifax North-Gate End Chapel 1744-1767, when he died there. He was the father of the Rev. Thomas Threlkeld, and was connected by marriage with Wordsworth (*Miall's Congregationalism in Yorkshire*.)

Rev. Thomas Threlkeld, minister of Risley Presbyterian Church, 1762-1778. His next pastorate was Rochdale (1778-1806), where he died (Dr. Drysdale's sketch of Rochdale Presbyterianism). His funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. Thomas Barnes, D.D., Manchester. He had a remarkable memory (*Monthly Repository* for 1807, p. 160, quoted in Nightingale's *Lancashire Nonconformity*). In the list of subscribers to Benson's *Life of Christ* (issued after his death in 1762), the names include those of the Rev. Joseph Threlkeld, Bladensburgh, Maryland, and Henry Threlkeld, Frederick County, Maryland.
