



OPENING OF GLENORCHY CHAPEL, EXMOUTH

Tuesday 24th September 1867

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As reported in
The Western Times, Exeter,
Friday, September 27th 1867

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Researched by Michael R. Hooper

On Tuesday the new chapel under the above designation was opened for worship. The Corner-stone was laid on 16th of last November by Samuel Morley, Esq. of London; on Tuesday, figuratively, they put on the “top-stone with rejoicing, crying grace, grace, unto it”. It stands on the same site as the old one which was built in 1777. Nobody would think of putting a chapel there if it could be helped – at one end of the town, in a little bye-lane, and hid from public view. It is at the Withycombe Raleigh side of the town, where the prohibitory laws ruling the Rolle property do not extend. There was a good deal said about the Rolle leases at the time of the laying of the corner-stone; more than some quiet people – even among dissenters – liked. Easy souls there were always ready to lay down their bodies and ask their big neighbours to walk over. The words of the leases were “and shall not use or convert, or suffer to be used or converted the whole or part of the said demised premises to or for any religious meeting dissenting from the Church of England, or to or for any such purpose whatsoever.” Some people like to be kicked about; others object to it decidedly – dissenters are of the number. The Exmouth leases are not alone – there are other members of the aristocracy who make laws equally tyrannical in favour of the Church. *The British Quarterly*, in an article on “Church Buttresses,” thus notices the subject of talk on the day of laying the corner-stone:- “Another of the questionable means intended to serve the church may be found in the prohibitory clauses which are sometimes inserted in the building leases of great landowners. Mr S. Morley, who is always to be found where religious liberty needs an advocate, or religious work a helper, was lately engaged in laying the foundation stone of a new chapel in the quiet little town of Exmouth. He had a special reason for undertaking that service which he is reported to have stated in these words:- “The object of any visit to Exmouth is to confer with my friends on a subject in which I feel some interest. I read in the *Western Times*

a paragraph stating that on the Rolle Estate, to which a good part of the town belongs, no nonconforming place of worship is allowed to be built; and that every leaseholder is bound not to permit any praying or preaching on his premises. It is said that a man has a right to do what he likes with his own. In one sense he has; in another he has not. I hold it to be a prostitution of the power of property to attempt to crush or interfere with religious liberty. Therefore I am glad to come amongst you and strengthen your hands as a body of Nonconforming Christians, where there may still exist – and where there does *still* exist, a disposition to use the enormous power which the possession of vast territorial property gives to individuals to interfere with personal rights”. The article goes on to give extracts from the leases, and to expose a tyranny which the imperial legislature ought to make impossible by making such lease illegal. The notice of the fact as above stated in this paper is said to have been worth at least £100 to the chapel funds, as it induced the noble minded and generous gentleman above-named to add that sum to his contribution

How this chapel came to bear the name of “Glenorchy” arises from the fact that the original one owed its existence to a lady of that name, the widow of Viscount Glenorchy, son and heir of the third Earl of Breadalbane, who was one of a small company of devout and zealous titled ladies of that period, the joy of whose lives it was to carry the gospel wherever they went. She visited Exmouth in 1776, when she hired what was called the “Long Room” in which her chaplain preached, until a neighbouring *justice* sent a press-gang to disturb the congregation, and ordered the landlord to give no more admission to such preachers on pain of having his house taken away. This persecution did its natural work – it led Lady Glenorchy to buy a house for preaching the year after, which in due time grew into a chapel, the first minister of which was her ladyship’s good

chaplain, the Rev. Robert Winton. He served it two-and-forty years, dying in 1863. It is worthy of being repeated that the first sermon preached in the old chapel was by the Rev. Sir Harry Trelawney, Bart. A descendent of that precious limb, the Cornish Trelawney, Bishop of Exeter, who was one of the over-belauded seven, sent to the Tower by that stupid bigot, James II. The stately John Clayton assisted in the service.

As soon as the present minister came on the ground after the death of Mr Clapson, a new chapel was felt to be an absolute necessity. It required the faith and vigour of youth in the minister, as well a much resolution and self sacrifice in the congregation. They have succeeded very remarkably. The cost was a large sum, considering the people and the place – where they have got it all is the marvel.

The building opened on Tuesday, presented a good appearance, and would be an agreeable object to the eye in passing out at that end of the town if the block of buildings in front were removed. The apology for a spire which rises at the south-west angle, with its gilded vane, as seen above the houses, serves as a way-mark to tell the passer-by that there is a chapel of some sort behind. When you get to it you discover a neat building designed in the early decorated style, if it may be so dignified – the walls built of Berry-head rock, with dressings of Bath-stone. The windows are filled in with Cathedral glass, and there are enough to well light the interior. The roof is open timbered, carried out in fir, and stained and varnished. It has a nave and south aisle, which, though it gives the place a one-sided appearance, does not produce an unpleasant effect, an arcade being formed between the two, with wooded columns of the most inartistic conformation. From these diagonal struts support the roof plates, the spandrels being filled in with quatrefoil piercings and other devices. Tastes differ – some

plain people think there is too much ornament, though it would be difficult to find it; and but for these quatrefoil piercings the roof would have a very bald appearance. The pulpit or desk is on a raised platform, behind which a recess is formed with a view to relieve the end wall, which, however, does not sufficiently accomplish that purpose. The seats are open, and of stained deal, according to the fashion of the age. It is lighted at night by gasoliers suspended from the roof. It has 430 sittings, 72 of which are free, the front seat nearest the pulpit being among them for the use of those whose infirmities may render it necessary to be near the preacher. There are two vestries for ministers and deacons, arranged so that as to be thrown into one by means of a moveable partition, and are entered through a side porch, and communicate with the chapel by doors on each side of the pulpit. The contract for the building was taken at £1,257 by a party who became bankrupt some time after the chapel was commenced, when the work passed into the hands of Mr Henry Searle, builder, of the town, who has, with conscientious diligence, brought it to a satisfactory finish. The architects are Messrs. Habershon and Pite, London.

Several articles of the temple furniture are the gifts of members of the congregation, in addition to their ordinary subscriptions. First, and principal, is the Bible for the pulpit, which a writing within says was “Presented by Mr. And Mrs Joseph Eales for the use of Glenorchy Chapel, Sept. 23, 1867”. The hymn book is the gift of a “Few young friends”, through the pastor. The pulpit cushion comes through Mrs Standerwick; the “Fontlet” by Mrs Searle, the wife of the builder. Miss Southcott gave the “cloth” for the Communion-table; three ladies – Mrs Periam, Mrs Hayman, and Mrs Cole – gave the carpeting; Mrs Cox, the cocoa-nut matting; Mrs Grigg Snr, the door mats; Mrs Tom Turner, Mrs Hore and others, methink them of the needfuls in the vestry; Mr Hore did the lettering on the seat ends on the

same principle. Mention of Mr. Veal, watch and clock maker, must not be omitted, who gave the handsome time-piece curiously placed on the side wall to the right of the pulpit, about half way down the chapel. The design of the frame which encloses the dial is a Roman star composed of two right-lined triangles, reversed on each other. Several contributors have no doubt been omitted, and goodness knows how many of those who are fretting because they have not given anything until they found they could be done without.

The opening services had been really commenced the evening before, very appropriately, by a prayer meeting led by the Rev. W.T. Bull B.A. the respected pastor of Ebenezer, the other Independent chapel in the town. The ordination service of Tuesday commenced at 11, the Rev. D. Hewitt, of Exeter, opening with prayer, and conducting the subsequent proceedings. He explained that it was the wish of the worshippers that there should be an ordination service at the same time the chapel was opened. They did not by that act profess to confer any authority or install in any office. When the great age and infirmities of his venerated friend the late Mr Clapson compelled him to relinquish the pastorate he had held for many years, the church and congregation invited Mr Lovell to be his successor, and he having laboured there now several years with great acceptance and success, it was deemed desirable that the opening of the chapel he had done so much to raise should be signalized by his ordination. Several ministers from the neighbourhood, and some from a distance, had come to take part in the services of the day; it would be for them to assist by their prayers, and to endeavour to strengthen the hands of their minister from week to week, that so the purpose of erecting that house of prayer might be fulfilled.

Mr James Grigg, the senior deacon, was then called upon to state the grounds upon which the church had been led to invite Mr Lovell to be its pastor. He began by expressing his devout gratitude for the event of the day- the completion of the chapel and its being opened for worship. With respect to their call of Mr. Lovell, he said that on the retirement of their late minister the pulpit was supplied for a while by students from the Western College, among whom, meanwhile they were looking for a man to suit them. Until Mr. Lovell came, the people were divided in opinion, but when he first preached to them, the united voice of the people was "That's the man". The necessary steps were taken and Mr. Lovell became their pastor, and from that time to this he had been growing in the affect of the people. The Rev. R.H. Lovell was then called upon to give his reasons for accepting the call, and also an account of his religious belief and experiences.

This being deemed satisfactory, the Rev. F.E. Anthony, M.A., professor of classics and mathematics, Western College, Plymouth, read Ephesians iv. and put up, what we suppose should be considered the ordination prayer.

The presiding elder then called on the Rev. J.M. Charlton, M.A., professor of theology and philosophy, in the above named college, to deliver a charge to the newly-ordained minister. The discourse was read- The counsels, cautions, and consolations it contained were founded on ii. Cor. vi. 7 – "By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left." If the minister asked how he was to fulfil the duties of his solemn and arduous calling, the text furnished the answer. He must be a teacher, defender, and propagator of the truth, the truth of the gospel, and nothing but the truth. The "power" to do it was of God, the internal force of deep conviction, of overmastering love; to which must be added

the moral force of a holy and beneficent life – the “armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” The discourse was ably composed, and well delivered, displaying at once a highly cultivated intellect, and a heart baptized with the gospel spirit. The charge to the minister was followed by a charge to the people, a discourse full of what was useful and practical; the text, Ezra x. 4 – “Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee: we will also be with thee; be of good courage and do it”, delivered by the Rev. J.G. Guenett, of Point-in-View, Lymptone. It lost much of the value that belonged to it, in the estimation of carnal people, by the circumstance that it had to be delivered after the hour – one – published for dinner, the congregation being detained until nearly two. The serene manner in which the audience sat then, and through the day, attending to the solemn business on hand with all eternity before them, regardless of mundane arrangements, showing themselves to be true descendents of the Puritans of 1662, from whom they claim their origin, was very admirable.

Mr Lovell gave a few facts about the chapel before making the collection, the chief of which have been already anticipated. He spoke of the small cost of the building compared with chapels in general, as at £1,257, the cost per seat had been only about £2 8s, whereas the general estimate was £3 per seat. In making up the accounts he found there would be about £300 more required, which he trusted would be raised in the course of the year, so that by this time twelvemonth the chapel would be out of debt. The reverend gentleman subsequently stated that he had recently received two sums – one of £25 and another of 22 guineas in aid of the funds.

The collection amounted to £18. At the conclusion of the service those who chose went to the schoolroom for luncheon. That place had been profusely decorated for the occasion with

all sorts of floral devices, flags and festoons. Out of doors a line of flags stretched across the street, which was all the external demonstration visible. At the meal, which was attended by between fifty and sixty, the pastor presided, and at the conclusion the health of the Queen having been given and disposed of, Mr Lovell expressed his obligations to the Western College, and moved thanks to the Rev. Professors for their attendance, who in their responses spoke in high terms of their *alumnus* as to his character and capabilities for the work in which he was engaged. Professor Charlton believed him worthy of the place, and from what he saw believed the place was worthy of him.

At three there was a meeting of the Sunday School children in the chapel, of whom there were about three hundred, where they were addressed in a very apt and forcible manner by the Rev. R.M. Davies, of Hope Chapel, Oldham, who had come on some errand of inspection. A bun to each child commemorative of the event closed the ceremony. A public tea was provided in the schoolroom, which was attended by a very large number of persons - the trays were contributed by friends.

In the evening, the Rev.J.M.Charlton preached an eloquent and impressive sermon from Mark i. 8 – “I indeed have baptised you with water, but He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost”. The discourse dwelt with the assumption by the priest of power to give the Holy Ghost. The heads of the discourse were- the great importance which Christ and his apostles attached everywhere in scripture to the baptism of the Holy Spirit; second, the remarkably indifferent manner in which they ever spoke of, and treated, water baptism. Christ never baptised at all – Paul was not sent to baptise, but preach, and did not remember how many he had baptised. The inference of this was that they never considered water baptism as the channel, or time, when the Holy

Ghost must be given, or believed the two things were concurrent. Could Paul thank God he baptised so few, if in baptism he could give the Holy Ghost? Would he thank God for so few being saved through him? The preacher then supposed the objection – “but Christ is the fountain; the priest is only the channel” – and remarked that spacious as this seemed it came to this – the priest really took Christ’s power out of his own hands, for first he claimed to give the Holy Ghost; he then made out of the elements in the sacrament Christ’s body and blood to sustain the life given; he then took God’s providential sceptre to rule the life in imposing penance; he then affixed his seal of extreme unction, and at last sent the soul with a certificate from him to glory.

All this was to make Christ nothing, the priest all – fountain and channel too. He then showed that God never delegated his omnipotence to any Old or New Testament prophets or apostles for them to use as they chose but only at His will; therefore it was contrary to all His dealings to delegate a power such as this to men to use or withhold just when they pleased. He also proved that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was not promised to come on account of any Church, or to be given because of a man’s wearing alb or chasuble, but on the ground solely of personal application to God himself in humble penitence and trust by the sinner – not to a priest, but to God – and that this was in harmony with God’s character, because it met a universal ability in man to come, since all men were able to trust it was wise and loving to found the condition of the gift on a universal principle of our nature, not in the device of man. A closely reasoned and impressive argument was concluded by a most earnest appeal to all to ask at once God himself for this baptism.

The chapel was crowded in every part. The entire proceeds of the day, including contributions of friends sent on this occasion

by cheque, amounted to over £60. Other sums are to follow in a few days, which are expected to increase that sum by a third.

All concerned were highly pleased and much profited. Amongst those present in the course of the day, besides those named, were – Rev.W.T. Bull, Rev. N. Hellings, Rev. S. Mann, Exeter; Rev.F.Wagstaff, Dawlish; Rev.J. Hoxley, Honiton; Rev. A. Popham, Rev. Mr Cooper, Topsham; Rev. T. Collings, Messrs J.P. Nichols, Bounsell, Grigg, sen, Grigg, jnr, Cox, Crews, Norrie, Manning(clerk of works), J.Eales (Treasurer), etc.

Michael R. Hooper
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