



THE CHADWICK ACADEMY

One of the earliest private educational institutions in Upper Canada, was founded over one hundred years ago. Situated in the Township of Charlotteville, about two miles south of Vittoria, it is in an excellent state of preservation and is a centre of interest for historical students.

On the right, the Rev. Eli Chadwick (1784-1844), Founder and Master of Chadwick Academy; also for some years Master of the London District Grammar School; on the left, Mrs. Eli Chadwick, his wife.

The Revd Eli Chadwick *and the* *Church of England, 1827*

By A. H. Young,
President of the Ontario Historical Society.

In 1826, aided by the Right Revd the Hon. Charles James Stewart, second Bishop of Quebec, to the extent of more than £25, the people of Woodhouse had completed a church, largely under the leadership, it would appear, of Mr. George C. Salmon. He was described by the Bishop, when writing to the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, in London, as a Gloucestershire gentleman who had been fifteen years in Canada, and who was the father of the Revd George Salmon, at the time (and for eleven years more) missionary of the S.P.G. at Shefford, Lower Canada.

On March 14th, 1827, Mr. Salmon informed the Bishop that the church had been opened in the preceding Decembèr by the Revd William Hough, of the Indian Reserve, near Brantford, and the Revd William Leeming, the former of whom was giving the inhabitants a montly service. Mr. Leeming, who was in charge of Chippawa, preached on this occasion "an appropriate and excellent sermon to a large congregation whose orderly conformity to the usages of the church was strikingly observable to those who were aware of the few real members of that establishment present."

Confessing regret that "our being so long without a place of worship should have given dissenters such a hold upon the public mind in this part of the country," Mr. Salmon noted that "Methodism is prevailing to a much greater extent here than I have before witnessed. I may truly say to a degree of enthusiasm."

Though appreciating the fact that Mr. Hough was "an excellent young man—much liked at his Mission," Mr. Salmon deemed his monthly visits to Woodhouse insufficient to meet the necessities of the situation. Therefore, with 22 others of the principal inhabitants, he ventured, "with the utmost deference and respect," to recommend Mr. E. Chadwick to His Lordship's notice with a view to his ordination and appointment as their missionary.

On Mr. Chadwick, according to Mr. Salmon, the people of Vittoria were also centering their hopes. "Coln. Ryerson told me lately that he had proposed to some of the gentlemen of Charlotteville to purchase a vacant building at Vittoria and fit it up for Mr. Chadwick to preach in till their means increased and enabled them to get him a better, many of the names to the memorial were previously in favour of that proposal—being confident that Mr. Chadwick's appointment to our church would be the means of uniting many that would not otherwise join, I consider it my duty to state these facts to your Lordship."

Mr. Chadwick, in the estimation of the twenty-three principal inhabitants, was "a person of high classical attainments & of parts & genius equal to his learning and [possessed of] a moral character that adorns both. . . . He is a gentleman well known to us, & held in high esteem by all parties; though he has been a Minister among the Congregational dissenters in England, we have ascertained his willingness to conform to the Established Church, & we think it highly probable that he might be the means of attracting many from different parties to the Church, & from his active zeal in the cause of religion well calculated to be extremely useful in the neighbourhood."

Speaking modestly for himself, Mr. Chadwick, in deference to the wishes of his friends, wrote to the Bishop on March 13th: "Your Lordship will easily realize the delicacy of the circumstances in which I am placed. For whilst I feel unable to refuse compliance with a request so cordially expressed, I am still more unable to say one word on my suitability for discharging the duties of the sacred office with which they are anxious that I should be invested. As I was born, & educated for the Ministry, among the Dissenters in England, probably Your Lordship may wish that I should advert to the circumstances by which my attention has been turned towards the Established Church in this Province.

"During my residence in this neighbourhood in 1820 & 1821, I became considerably known amongst the people from preaching on various occasions in different places. I was then strongly urged by many of the most respectable inhabitants to settle amongst them as a Minister of the Gospel. The excessive sickness which I experienced, both personally, & all the members of my family, induced me to return to England. During my absence of four years & a half from the Province, scarcely ever a day elapsed in which I did not feel serious regret, that I had quitted a country in which there was so

great a want of ministers of the Gospel; & especially a part of it, in which I had been so pressed on all hands to devote my Ministerial labours. Hence I early determined on returning again to the Province as soon as circumstances would justify such a step. This determination I was enabled to realize about a year ago. Almost immediately on my arrival here, several of my friends solicited me to turn my attention to the Established Church, assuring me of their sanction, & cordial recommendation to the Bishop of the Diocese.

“After several months serious consideration of the subject, I must confess, that I see no substantial reason why I could not conscientiously conform to the ritual of the Established Church, and as to her doctrinal Articles, from them I never dissented; whilst I feel strongly assured that in ministering at The Altars, I should be introduced to a far more enlarged sphere of usefulness, than I could possibly otherwise enjoy.

“I can only add that my classical & Theological education was pursued under the late Dr. Williams & the Revd. Mr. Phillips, in connection with an attendance of several of the Classes at Glasgow College. My classical attainments have however, for several years past, been slumbering in almost entire neglect.

“Should your Lordship feel so much interest in the subject of this letter as to deem it necessary to make any further enquiries I should be glad to meet an interrogation, or to give any explanation of which I am capable.”

The Bishop had of necessity to make further investigations regarding Mr. Chadwick's character, motives, and beliefs. Among other people of whom he sought information was Mr. Hough; and he testified as follows: “I have been in company with him several times. He has always attended our service. I believe him to be a gentleman of talent & information. He has gained the esteem of the people of his neighbourhood, & he is spoken of as a very eloquent preacher.”

The Bishop requesting a definite opinion as to the propriety of his ordaining Mr. Chadwick for the mission at Long Point, Mr. Hough replied: “I believe that his appointment to that Mission would be a measure best calculated to promote the interests of our Church in that place; for I am convinced that no candidate for Holy Orders in our Church in this country can possess qualifications for Missionary duty equal to those of Mr. Chadwick. . . .

"Mr. Chadwick was some years a Minister of a Congregation at Preston in Lancashire, & a master of a very respectable school at that place. Ill health, caused by assiduous attention to his duties, obliged him to relinquish his advantageous situation, & having a large & growing family, he sought a country where he could more easily provide for their future settlement in life than in his native land. Since his arrival in this country he has not been allied to any congregation nor has he received any remuneration for his labours, excepting perhaps some gratuitous presents, having preached as he says only because he thought preaching was necessary. He is universally esteemed in the neighbourhood of Long Point."

A footnote added: "Teaching has been his chief occupation since he came to Canada." This and everything else that the Bishop heard was satisfactory. Therefore with confidence he begged "to solicit the favourable consideration of the Board" for the appointment of Mr. Chadwick to be one of the S.P.G.'s missionaries. As everybody in Norfolk knows, however, Mr. Chadwick remained in the communion in which he had been brought up and devoted himself to teaching.

On August 2nd, 1828, the Bishop wrote from Niagara a letter that was reassuring, even though it gave no reason for not ordaining Mr. Chadwick. That, certainly, was due to the non-approval of the Board in London.

"It is expedient for your sake that I should write to you without delay in regard to my conferring on you Holy Orders. Having considered to the best of my power the circumstances connected with your situation at Woodhouse & with that Mission, my decision is such as you seemed to apprehend it would be. I need not state to you the reasons which confine me in coming to this conclusion. They do not involve any aspersion or impeachment of your character, & therefore ought not to lessen the respectability you have maintained in society. I am glad that you have sent to England for Books which I recommended for your perusal, & I hope they will prove acceptable to you, & profitable to your scholars; some of whom I am willing to expect may hereafter be ornaments to the Church over which I preside. In the meantime, towards defraying the expense which you have thus incurred, I desire your acceptance of the enclosed £10 Currency. I trust that maintaining a good conscience, & continuing to lead a useful life, you & your family will be happy & comfortable in your future career in this country."

In sending you this brief account of an incident in the life of an early schoolmaster of this province, Mr. Young offers his kind regards and his best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

The material used in the sketch was found in the archives of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec and in those of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which is still a generous nursing mother to the Church of England in Canada.

The paper, which is reprinted from The Simcoe Reformer, was read on the lawn of the Academy at the meeting of the Norfolk Historical Society, held in the afternoon of Friday, July 29th, 1932. To the Academy, or Grove House, which has both architectural and historic value, the Society has acquired title and has saved it from demolition, an example which may well be followed elsewhere.

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