

## WILLIAM GADSBY (1773 - 1844)

by John Gadsby, from *Memoirs of the Principal Hymnwriters and Compilers*, 1855



WILLIAM GADSBY was born in the village of Attleborough, Warwickshire, about Jan. 3rd, 1773. As his parents were poor, he had little or no education. When 13, he was apprenticed to a ribbon weaver, but was subsequently compelled to leave that trade, in consequence of a tenderness of the chest; and he then became a stocking weaver. In 1790, he went to see men hung, and the horrid spectacle had such an effect upon his mind that he was never afterwards like the same youth; for the thoughts of eternity preyed much upon his spirits. The lengths of folly into which he ran prior to this time were often related by him in his ministry; but as perhaps nearly every one whose eye this may meet will have read the Memoir of him which was published shortly after his death, I shall not give the account here, nor yet of his experience, his call to the ministry, &c.\* Suffice it to say, that, in 1793, he was baptized, and joined Mr. Butterworth's church at Coventry. In 1796 he received his dismissal from that church, and joined a few people who met in a barn at Hinckley. The first time that he stood up and took a text was on Whit-Sunday, 1798, in an upper room in a yard at Bedworth, Warwickshire. His text was 1 Pet. ii. 7. In 1800, a chapel was built for him at Desford, Leicestershire, and he at the same time often preached in the barn at Hinckley. The word is said to have been greatly blessed. In 1802, a chapel was built at Hinckley. In 1805, he removed with his family to Manchester, to the chapel in which a Mr. Sharpe formerly preached, in St. George's Read, now called Rochdale Road, where he remained until his death, Jan 27th, 1844.

While over the church at Manchester, he travelled for preaching more than 60,000 miles, (railways were unknown during many of his earlier years,) and must have preached nearly 12,000 sermons. In the "Gospel Magazine" for 1824, there is an account of the laying of the foundation stone of Mount Zion Chapel, Plymouth Dock, (Devonport) when an address from 1 Cor. iii. 11, was delivered by Mr. Gadsby, in the presence of upwards of 6,000 persons." His Selection of Hymns, to which this little work is designed as a "Companion," was first published in 1814. In 1838, a new edition was issued with a Supplement, now called the "First Supplement," many of Mr. G's original hymns being curtailed to make room for it. In 1846-7, (that is, after his death,) the whole of Hart's hymns which did not already appear in the Selection, were added thereto, making the total number of hymns in the book 882. In 1849-50, in consequence of a fire at my premises in London having destroyed the stereotype plates of the hymn book, the Second Supplement, by Mr. Philpot, of 256 hymns, was added, increasing the total number to about 1130, several of Hart's being omitted, as not suitable for general use. My father also published a Selection of Hymns for Sunday Schools.-Many of his own hymns were inserted in various volumes of the "Gospel Magazine," signed "A Nazarene," which was in deed his usual signature in that magazine. These hymns, with many other originals, were published by him in a separate volume, under the title of "The Nazarene's Songs." His signatures in the "Gospel Standard" were, "An Old Soldier," "A Lover of Zion," &c. He was buried in the vault No. 1450 in the Rusholme Road Cemetery, Manchester, Mr. Kershaw, of Rochdale, Officiating, and several thousand persons being present. \* \* \*

For the particulars of my father's life, I must refer to the Memoir already alluded to. I could not do justice to him in less than or 20 pages, and this space I cannot possibly spare here. His last words were, "I shall soon be with him, shouting, Victory, victory, victory,"

(raising his hand) "for ever." \* \* \* "Free grace, free grace, free grace t" - He died without a struggle, without moving hand, or foot, or head.