Robert Townley was the minister of the Charlestown Universalist Church from June 1849 to Sept. 1852. He is listed in the Universalist Companion (the almanac/year book for Universalists) as a "former partialist" (meaning he had former pastorates in non-Universalist churches).

His arrival in the US in 1848 is described in the Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate for Nov. 10, 1848, p. 354, which I've attached as a pdf. The second half of the article is not displaying very well in the pdf. I'll be happy to transcribe whatever you can't make out, although it's largely more about his character.

The book that got him into so much trouble in England is in Google books at http://books.google.com/books?vid=OCLC05272423 (that's our copy, by the way).

His farewell sermon to the church in Charlestown, preached Sept. 26, 1852, was printed as "Christianity in the Nineteenth Century." In it, he explains his reason for leaving the ministry: scientific discoveries are making him no longer able to take the Bible seriously (and what his congregation really wants are Bible-based sermons). This is available on microfiche from the American Theological Library Association (ATLA monograph preservation program ATLA fiche 1991-2150).

We have the records of the Charlestown Church off site. I will request them and look through to see if there is any additional information I can get to you.

The only additional piece of information I could find is his marriage to Mary Wilkinson of Exeter, England, on Aug. 24, 1848, in Charlestown. This from the Massachusetts Ploughman and New England Journal of Agriculture, Aug 18, 1849, p. 2.

I hope this helps.

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A Visit from England.

We have received a call from Rev. Mr. Townley, who came passenger by the steam ship "Niagara," and here to us a letter of introduction from Mr. David Tilley, of Liverpool. As we wish to introduce him to our American fraternity, we may do better than publish Mr. Tilley's letter entire:

[Christ. Freeman.

Liverpool, Eng., Oct. 5th, 1843.

DEAR MR. COBB.—I have great pleasure in introducing to you my friend, the Rev. Robert Townley, B.A., T.C.D., a clergyman of the Established Church in England, and formerly minister of St. Matthew's Church in this town.

Mr. Townley has recently been satisfied of the truth of God's universal love to man in Jesus Christ. And now, excluding from the Establishment, kept at arm's length by the ordinary classes of Dissenters, he seeks your less trammelled country to have an opportunity of proclaiming the glorious gospel of the Grace of God.

In Mr. Townley you receive no ordinary man. With a moral character unimpeachable he unites abilities of a very high order. These have been most sedulously cultivated. Reared at the University of Dublin, of which he is a graduate, he has there devoted himself to literature and science, and has there passed honorably through the strict and searching examination, to which aspirants to literary honor are subject. He is truly a superior

October.

October has come—the sweetest month in all the year. Its sunsets are like a gem—a gem of the most exquisite, how beautiful—and bright with the gorgeous dyes.

There is a pensive beauty in the autumn. The leaves are not yet dry; the sky is not yet put on its frigid aspect; the breeze and the falling leaf, for her fallen glories; soon all things will have lost their beauty, and kings their brightness. The

Historic Society
of
Ancashire and Cheshire.

Proceedings and Papers;

Session IV.

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Printed under the direction of the Council, for the use of the members.

MDCCCLII.

I may here mention the fact of my having heard from the pulpit of St. Matthew's Church, in the autumns of 1823 and 1824 respectively, two most logically composed and impressive discourses addressed to the Jews, by the reverend and celebrated Charles Simeon, M.A., Fellow of King's College, Cambridge.

The Rev. Henry B. W. Hillecoat, D.D., who for many years was incumbent of a chapel in Bath, had long been proprietor of St. Matthew's, as well as the party by whom its officiating ministers had been appointed. By him the church was disposed of to a Railway Company: its site, as already stated, having been required for the Liverpool terminus. Having received in exchange,

3.—St. Matthew's, (present),

he removed to, and took possession of it about three years ago, with his congregation.

The particulars connected with the origin, building, and early history of this religious structure, which stands in Scotland Road, are so remarkable, that I shall not merely be excused, but probably thanked by the members of the Society for bringing them under their notice. They may be relied on as authentic. Joseph Robinson, Esq., of Falkner Square, in this town, who had no small share in the transactions which I am about to mention, and was one of the original Trustees, is, by the high respectability of his character, a sufficient guarantee for the truth of the facts with which, from documents in his possession, he has been polite enough to furnish me.

troversy in 1840, and 1841. A retiring pension of £60 a year was allowed him by the Corporation, in the spring of the year last-named. It will, no doubt, be in the recollection of several members of the Society, that Dr. Buck did duty, in a very zealous, and efficient manner, as Curate at Trinity Church here, during the autumn, winter, and spring of 1848 and 1849.

* Mr. Townley published in 1845, a work, entitled, "The Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ a Past Event," in which are contained many startling positions.
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1850.
falls with the Judgement and Second Coming of the Lord.” He shuns this point where the interest of the argument is greatest.


This work enters at great length into an attempted Scripture-proof that the following events are already past, viz. “the Restoration of the Jews, the First Resurrection, or Millennium, the End of the World, the Resurrection of the Dead, the Day of Judgement, and the Last Day; for now there is no more time.” It is a book of much thought, and gives proof of laborious and critical study of the Sacred Writings. The spirit manifested towards the Priesthood and the Established Church is fiery enough, and the general temper of the argument is far from being commendable. But there is very much in the work worthy of attention.