

# *The Theological Education of the Ministry*

## *Soundings in the British Reformed and Dissenting Traditions*

Alan P. F. Sell

Unwilling on conscientious grounds to submit to the religious tests imposed by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the English and Welsh Dissenters of the second half of the seventeenth century established academies in which their young men, many of them destined for the ministry, might receive a higher education. From the eighteenth century onwards, theological colleges devoted exclusively to ministerial education were founded, while in Scotland historically, and in England and Wales over the past 120 years, freestanding university faculties of divinity/theology have provided theological education to ordinands and others.

These diverse educational contexts are all represented in this collection of papers, but the focus is upon those who taught in them: Caleb Ashworth (Daventry Academy); John Oman (Westminster [Presbyterian] College Cambridge); N. H. G. Robinson (University of St. Andrews); Geoffrey F. Nuttall (New [Congregational] College, London); T. W. Manson (University of Manchester); Owen Evans (University of Manchester and Hartley Victoria Methodist College)—the lone Methodist scholar discussed here; and W. Gordon Robinson and J. H. Eric Hull (University of Manchester and Lancashire Independent College). Between them these scholars covered the core disciplines of theological education: biblical studies, ecclesiastical history, philosophy, doctrine, and systematic theology.

“Most current discussions of doctrine and theology show little regard for the historical context in which specific positions were developed. The work of Alan Sell is an outstanding exception to this, and of particular value as he engages with great skill in explicating the complexities of non-Anglican and non-Catholic history. In this volume we are provided with a number of insightful vignettes ranging across the centuries but with a particular focus on the twentieth century.”

—DAVID BROWN

Institute for Theology, Imagination, and the Arts, University of St Andrews



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Alan P. F. Sell

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ALAN P. F. SELL

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THE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION OF THE MINISTRY  
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The cover illustration is of Lancashire Independent College, Manchester (1843–1958). © Mr. Mike Widdas. Source English Heritage.

In Memoriam

George William Curry (1900–1991)

Dales Minister *extraordinaire*

εἰς ἔργον διακονίας (Ephesians 4:12)

—The motto of Lancashire Independent College,  
Manchester (1843–1958)

“It is too often forgotten that the ideal ministerial education is not to send a man out with some knowledge of every subject he will afterwards find useful. It is to send him out with a mind that can tackle with success any subject as the need arises.”

—Robert Sleightholme Franks (1871–1964),  
Principal of Western (Congregational) College, Bristol

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# Preface

I HAVE LONG HAD a general interest in education and, more particularly, in theological education and the preparation of ministers. As the Introduction following will make clear, in this book I have gathered together some of my studies of the varied institutions in which British Reformed and Dissenting ministers were theologically educated, and of some of the principals, professors and lecturers who devoted themselves to that task. For the present I wish first to thank those who have given permission to reprint papers that have been published in widely scattered places. I have updated references where necessary, and I leave to textual critics the challenge of discovering which chapter contains a substantial quotation which did not appear in the original published version because I was in danger of exceeding the permitted number of words. Secondly, I shall thank those involved in the publication of this book. Thirdly, I shall pay brief tribute to George Curry, to whose memory the book is dedicated.

An abbreviated version of Chapter 2, on Caleb Ashworth, was delivered at the Summer Event of the Friends of the Congregational Library held at Dr. Williams's Library, London, on 12 June 2010. I am grateful to the Friends' committee for their kind invitation. The paper is published here for the first time.

The provenance of chapters 3 to 8 is as follows. "Scottish Religious Philosophy," written at the invitation of Dr. William Mander of Harris Manchester College Oxford as a contribution to the *Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (2013), appears here by kind permission of Oxford University Press. Chapter 4, on John Oman, is in Adam Hood, ed., *John Oman: New Perspectives*, Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2012. I thank Dr. Hood for inviting me to present an abbreviated version of this paper at an Oman colloquium at Westminster College, Cambridge, in September 2009, and Dr. Michael Parsons of Paternoster, for permission to reprint it in full.

Chapter 5, on N. H. G. Robinson, first appeared in a *Festschrift* for my friend and colleague of Calgary days, Dr. Irving Hexham: Ulrich van

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der Heyden and Andreas Feldtkeller, eds, *Border Crossings: Explorations of an Interdisciplinary Historian. Festschrift for Irving Hexham*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008. Permission to reprint has been granted by the publisher. Chapters 6 and 7, on Geoffrey Nuttall, first appeared (the latter in two parts) in *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 8 (November 2009), 8 (November 2011), 8 (May 2012), whose editor, Professor Clyde Binfield, has kindly consented to their being reprinted here. I was honoured to be invited to contribute my recollections of my teachers of New Testament to the *Festschrift* of Professor Zsolt Geréb of the Protestant Theological Institute, Cluj/Kolosvár, Romania. It appears in the celebratory issue of *Studia Doctorum Theologia Protestantis*, 1, Kolosvár: Protestant Theological Institute, 2011, and is reprinted, as chapter 8, by kind permission of Dezső Kállay.

A bibliography follows every chapter, and a Bibliographical Appendix follows chapter 8. In the latter I have supplied the names of all the English and Welsh Dissenting and Nonconformist theological teachers on whom I have written, and in a footnote I have referred to some Anglicans, Scots and one Irishman who have not escaped my net.

Far from being a mere formality, it is a great pleasure to thank Dr. K. C. Hanson, Dr. Robin Parry, Christian Amondson, and their colleagues at Wipf and Stock for once again serving me so well with their prompt attention and professional expertise. Nor is it a mere formality to thank my wife, Dr. Karen Sell, who features regularly in my prefatory expressions of thanks because she is such a constant encourager of the several aspects of my work.

I dedicate this book to the memory of the Reverend George William Curry (1900–1991). A larger than life character, his enthusiasm for the gospel was infectious, his preaching was gripping, and his pastoral care was exemplary. Following an engineering apprenticeship in Sunderland, his ministry began in 1920 among the Methodists as a horse-back circuit rider in Saskatchewan, from which rigorous pursuit he returned to the gentler Isle of Wight, removing thence to Mount Tabor Church, Sunderland. Having become persuaded of the Congregational Way, he trained for the ministry at Yorkshire United College, Bradford, and was ordained in 1937. There followed ministries in Newport Pagnell, Bolton, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne. By the time my wife and I met him he was the Dales Minister. This post gave him a roving commission as a resource to churches scattered over wide area of rural Yorkshire, which territory he traversed, at hair-raising speed, in a Mini, the boot of which was weighed down with

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sizeable rocks during winter snow and ice by way of aiding traction. It was through him that we came to our first pastorate at Sedbergh and Dent. I could have had no better companion in ministry. George never interfered, but was always available. He was as happy photographing birds on the Isle of Skye as he was photographing three babies on their successive arrival in our manse. His final pastorate was in the Dales, at Grassington. He was “an all round good egg” (not that, as a down-to-earth north-easterner, he would have countenanced such a high falutin’ Wodehousian expression). He gave me two pieces of advice. The first was spoken with such a twinkle in his eye that I knew that he did not follow it, and that he did not expect me to follow it either: “Do thorough exegesis for all your sermons in your first pastorate, and you’ll never have to bother with exegesis again!” The second was more to the point: “Know when it matters! If you turn every trifling bugbear into a question of high principle, the church members will never know when you really think that something significant is at stake.” Thanks be to God for one whose like we shall not see again.

Alan P. F. Sell  
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# Abbreviations

BTL	<i>Better Than Life: The Lovingkindness of God</i>
CC	<i>Christ and Conscience</i>
CCPD	<i>Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge, DD, (1702–1751)</i>
CHST	<i>Congregational Historical Society Transactions</i>
CM	<i>The Claim of Morality</i>
CPH	<i>Christian Pacifism in History</i>
CQ	<i>The Congregational Quarterly</i>
CYB	<i>The Congregational Year Book</i>
DECBP	<i>Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century British Philosophers</i>
DMBI	<i>A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland</i>
DNCBP	<i>Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century British Philosophers</i>
DSCHT	<i>Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology</i>
DTCBP	<i>Dictionary of Twentieth-Century British Philosophers</i>
DVURC	Daventry United Reformed Church (records at NRO)
FD	<i>Faith and Duty</i>
GCE	<i>The Groundwork of Christian Ethics</i>
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
HSO	<i>The Holy Spirit and Ourselves</i>
HSPFE	<i>The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience</i>
JURCHS	<i>Journal of The United Reformed Church History Society</i>
NCL.MSS	New College London Manuscripts
NRO.MSS	Northamptonshire Record Office Manuscripts
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
PS	<i>The Puritan Spirit</i>
RB	<i>Richard Baxter</i>
RH	<i>The Reality of Heaven</i>
URCYB	<i>The United Reformed Church Year Book</i>

*Abbreviations*

VS	<i>Visible Saints</i>
WTW	<i>Who They Were</i>
WWW	<i>Who Was Who</i>

# 1

## *Introduction*

WHEN PURITANS THOUGHT OF a learned ministry, they characteristically thought of one learned in the things of God. This by no means precluded a concern for the education of ministerial candidates in relevant disciplines. When, between 1660 and 1662 (the Great Ejection) some 2,000 ministers resigned, or were dismissed from, their livings because of their conscientious inability to give their “unfeigned assent and consent” to the *Book of Common Prayer*, and to use it only in worship, the question arose, How may we provide a higher education for our young men who will not submit to the religious tests imposed by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge? They answered by establishing Dissenting academies, which were open both to those destined for the Dissenting ministry, and to those whose career aspirations led them in other directions. The earliest tutors had themselves been schooled at Oxford or Cambridge. For example, John Woodhouse (c. 1627–1700), who conducted a significant academy at Sheriffhales from 1676 to 1697, was an alumnus of Trinity College, Cambridge, while Matthew Warren (1642?–1706), of St. John’s College Oxford, was in charge of the Taunton Academy from 1687 until his death. None, however, lived more dangerously than Richard Frankland (1630–1698), who had studied at Christ’s College Cambridge. His academy, begun at Rathmell in 1670 was, owing to authorities intent upon persecution, forced into a peripatetic existence. He removed with his academy on four occasions until 1689 when, with the arrival of the Toleration Act on the statute book, he returned to Rathmell. Despite the difficulties under which he worked he educated no fewer than 304 students, many of whom became the mainstay of the Dissenting ministry in the north of England, while some made a name for themselves as far afield as London.



## The Theological Education of the Ministry

It might be thought that with the passing of the Toleration Act in 1689 the way ahead for Dissent would be eased, and to a certain extent it was. Orthodox Protestant Dissenters could now worship according to their consciences, build meeting houses, and establish academies. But they were still second-class citizens, barred from the professions. Moreover, throughout the eighteenth century there were those who wished to turn back the clock of toleration, not least where the work of the Dissenting academies was concerned. In this context Caleb Ashworth conducted his significant Daventry Academy—the successor to that of Philip Doddridge at Northampton. Chapter 2 comprises the first full account of Ashworth's work and influence, and it may represent the continuance into the eighteenth century of the Dissenting academies after the original pattern—albeit Doddridge had introduced teaching through the medium of English rather than Latin, and Ashworth followed suit.

In chapter 3 we proceed to the nineteenth century and cross the border to Scotland, with its strong philosophical tradition in which many ministerial candidates were schooled. In the absence of some acquaintance with this intellectual background it is harder to appreciate the context in which John Oman (chapter 4) and N. H. G. Robinson (chapter 5) learned their trade. Oman taught at the college of the Presbyterian Church of England—a theological college as distinct from a Dissenting academy—which, on its removal to Cambridge took the name Westminster College, and became closely related to the University. Norman Robinson was professor in the Faculty of Divinity at Scotland's senior university, St. Andrews, at a time when such faculties educated a high proportion of ministers for Scotland and further afield, and did so within the university, rather than the seminary, context.

Returning to England, we come to two chapters on Geoffrey Nuttall, the most distinguished and meticulous historian of Puritanism and Dissent of the twentieth century. He spent his teaching career at New College, London, the Congregational College which resulted from the amalgamation in 1850 of Coward, Highbury and Homerton Colleges. It came to be associated with the University of London; students read for London degrees, and the full-time tutors were members of the Faculty of Theology. The College closed in 1976. Charles Duthie was its last Principal, and the distinguished alumnus from the days of P. T. Forsyth's principalship, H. F. Lovell Cocks, preached the closing sermon.<sup>1</sup>

1. For Duthie and Lovell Cocks see the Bibliographical Appendix below.

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## Introduction

For the final chapter we head north to Manchester, where Lancashire Independent College was established in 1843, in succession to Blackburn Independent Academy, which had been founded in 1816. In December 1903 the University of Manchester resolved to inaugurate a Faculty of Theology, the first academic session of which began in 1904. This was “the first entirely free faculty in the kingdom in which theological instruction formed a part of the regular curriculum of the University itself.”<sup>2</sup> Religious tests were eschewed, from the outset provision was made for women to take theological degrees, and the Faculty pioneered the study of comparative religion and, later, Christian ethics. The eight theological colleges in the city in 1904 were involved in the Faculty’s work. The University appointed its own scholars, A. S. Peake among them, and also drew upon such distinguished theological college colleagues as J. T. Marshall (Baptist), W. H. Bennett, W. F. Adeney and Robert Mackintosh (Congregationalists), J. H. Moulton (Methodist) and Alexander Gordon (Unitarian).<sup>3</sup> The New Testament scholars recalled in this chapter epitomize the easy relationship between the University and the theological colleges at the middle of the twentieth century; for while T. W. Manson held the Rylands Chair of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis, W. Gordon Robinson, Owen Evans and Eric Hull all taught both in the theological colleges of their denominations and in the University. Of these, Evans, the Methodist, is the sole non-Reformed/Dissenting scholar to figure significantly in this book.

The soundings taken here indicate the variety of ways in which British Reformed and Dissenting Christians sought, in significantly different socio-political contexts, to educate a confessing ministry: from the early academies offering a general higher education to young men, through the free-standing theological colleges, to the various permutations of college-university relations. In such places a learned ministry was sought and frequently achieved.<sup>4</sup> But while, in what follows, appropriate reference will be made to a significant academy, and to some colleges and universities, this is not primarily a history of institutions. Rather, the emphasis is upon a selection of those whose vocation<sup>5</sup> it was to educate ministerial

2. Parsons, “The Commemoration of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary,” 53.

3. For Bennett, Adeney and Mackintosh see the Bibliographical Appendix below. The scholars discussed in this book will also be found therein.

4. I do not overlook the fact that some Nonconformist denominations provided non-collegiate routes into the ministry. In my experience some of those recruited in this way were gifted preachers and devoted pastors. To the best of my knowledge, this is a field which remains to be tilled by scholars.

5. Note to those who have ears to hear: it was not a “job,” still less a stage within, or the culmination of, a personally-devised, progressive, “ministerial career plan”!

## The Theological Education of the Ministry

candidates in these diverse contexts; and it will be noted that the scholars on whom I have concentrated: Ashworth, Oman, Norman Robinson, Nuttall, Manson, Gordon Robinson, Owen Evans and Eric Hull, between them represent what I continue to regard as the core disciplines where the theological education of the ministry is concerned: biblical studies, ecclesiastical history, philosophy, doctrine and systematic theology.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Parsons, R. G. "The Commemoration of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Theological Faculty in the University of Manchester with Some Reference to Its Origins and History." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 14 (1930) 53–58.

## 2

# Caleb Ashworth of Daventry

## *His Academy, Church, and Students*

IF THE ETERNAL DESTINATION of parents is to any degree conditional upon the adoption by their offspring of correct doctrinal views then Richard and Mrs. Ashworth had some of the most prominent bases covered; for their son Thomas became a Particular Baptist minister, John a General Baptist minister, and Caleb a Congregational or Independent minister. Richard himself is said by Alexander Gordon and W. N. Terry<sup>1</sup> to have been a Particular Baptist lay preacher, and, no doubt, they are reliant upon Caleb Ashworth's student, Samuel Palmer, who uses that phrase;<sup>2</sup> but the relevant records refer to him as pastor and minister. He was born in 1667, and on a document of 11 February 1705 that records Robert Litchford's donation of a building in Clough Fold to the Baptists, he is listed among the trustees as Richard Ashworth of Tunstead.<sup>3</sup> He subsequently lived at Carr House, near Rawtenstall, Lancashire, about a mile and a half from Clough Fold in Rossendale. In 1699 Richard had assumed a position of leadership in what was known as "the Church of Christ in Rossendale."<sup>4</sup> This was a group of scattered Particular Baptist causes which included Clough Fold, Bacup and Tottlebank in Lancashire, and extended into the Yorkshire towns of Bradford, Rawdon and Keighley. By 1705 Richard

1. See "Caleb Ashworth," in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (hereinafter ODNB).

2. Palmer, "Memoir of Dr. Caleb Ashworth," 693.

3. For the document see Parry, *History of the Cloughfold Baptist Church*, 145. Hardman draws on this book in his article, "Caleb Ashworth of Cloughfold and Daventry."

4. See Overend, *History of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, Bacup*, 111, 112.

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Ashworth was listed among the trustees of the group. In 1715, by which time he was designated pastor of the Rossendale church and addressed as ‘the Reverend’, he and others conveyed to a meeting at Rawdon the names of members who wished to be dismissed from the Rossendale roll with a view to forming a new church at Rawdon and Heaton, where they lived. On 28 August in the same year he and others signed a document dismissing further Rossendale members with a view to constituting a further church at Gildersome, Yorkshire.<sup>5</sup>

A glimpse of the worship at Clough Fold was recounted to Palmer by Caleb Ashworth in the following terms: the congregation, “carrying the matter of extemporaneous devotion to such a length as not to allow of singing pre-composed hymns, required [Richard Ashworth] to deliver extempore ones, line by line, with which requisition he continued to comply for some years: in what manner [Palmer drily adds], and with what success, I presume not to say, and leave your readers to judge.”<sup>6</sup>

The Clough Fold church had been inaugurated in 1675, and from 1695 the Baptist causes in Rossendale had been in fellowship with one another. But in 1718 Richard Ashworth, who is described as “a man of considerable ability,”<sup>7</sup> was instrumental in organizing an Association, which first met at Rawdon in May 1719. Messengers from seven churches were present and on this occasion, and at three subsequent meetings, Ashworth was elected Moderator, Association Preacher, and Letter Writer. A Calvinistic confession of faith was adopted, and such topics as closed communion, hymn singing and the place of women in decision-making were discussed. Following the first meeting there was circulated *The Letter to the Churches of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Association, 1719. Drawn up by the hand of Richard Ashworth*. Replete with biblical quotations and references, pastors and people are exhorted to be faithful in their duties and, not least, “to spend one day weekly in prayer and supplication, as everyone’s convenience may allow, by meeting together or retiring into our closets, or with our families, or in the frame and temper of our mind—which last especially may be done by all, without exception . . .”<sup>8</sup>

5. For the churches planted from Clough Fold see Parry, *History of the Cloughfold Baptist Church*, ch. 9.

6. Palmer, “Memoir of Dr. Caleb Ashworth,” 693.

7. Wylie, *The Baptist Churches of Accrington and District*, 2.

8. Quoted by Parry, *A History of the Cloughfold Baptist Church*, 90. The letter is reproduced in its entirety, *ibid.*, 86–90.

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*Caleb Ashworth of Daventry*

We may suppose that the confession of faith adopted was the Particular Baptist *Second London Confession* of 1677/1689, and that moderate Calvinism was the order of the day at Clough Fold. This would seem to be confirmed by the fact that, as we shall see, the evangelical moderate Calvinist, Alvery Jackson of Barnoldswick, had good relations with Richard Ashworth; and above all by the fact that in the 1719 *Letter to the Churches* Ashworth included such a tellingly anti-antinomian charge to the ministers as the following: "Let ministers and all gifted brethren 'declare the whole counsel of God,' and compel sinners to come in by proclaiming salvation and the terms of it. A minister thus moulded cannot miscarry in his work. He will certainly succeed to some comfortable degree . . . [and] shall have his crown and reward of his labour."<sup>9</sup>

The Association gathered for its third session at Bacup on 7–8 June 1721, and Ashworth is designated minister of that church. At the previous meeting he had been charged with preparing a statement addressing the question of "the propriety of administering the Lord's Supper to a dying person unbaptized."<sup>10</sup> Ashworth read his carefully-argued and biblically-based paper to the messengers at Bacup, concluding that "whatever countenance soever our answer, rightly considered, gives to such a practice, it is rather intended as a harbour for the humble broken soul after shipwreck than a port for the presumptuous."<sup>11</sup> He delivered a sermon on Malachi 3:14; 1:13; and Job 21:17 at the Sutton meeting of the Association, in 1724, and following that gathering records cease.<sup>12</sup> The Association gradually weakened, and ceased *circa* 1738. By that year Richard Ashworth, who now had the help of his son Thomas, was losing his sight.<sup>13</sup> Formal gatherings of Baptists in the area were not resumed until 1787, when the Yorkshire and Lancashire Association was constituted. At its third meeting, held at Clough Fold in 1789, the writer of the Circular Letter was Thomas Ashworth.

The Baptist cause at Bacup gave one of its sons to the metropolis, for on 19 August 1716 Thomas Dewhurst, became a member of the Turners' Hall Particular Baptist Church, London, and on the 29th of the same

9. Ibid., 88; cf. *ibid.*, 112–13.

10. Ibid., 91.

11. Ibid., 97.

12. So Parry, *ibid.* But Whitley had in his possession a copy of the 1738 circular letter. See his *Baptists of North-West England*, 101.

13. See Overend, *History of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, Bacup*, 126–27; Sellers, *Our Heritage*, 12–13.

## The Theological Education of the Ministry

month he was ordained to the ministry there. On that occasion the charge to the church was delivered by the High Calvinist John Skepp; and further evidence of Dewhurst's doctrinal inclinations are seen when, in 1719, he joined the list of subscribers to the statement devised at the Salters' Hall conference.<sup>14</sup> The conference participants differed over whether doctrine of the Trinity, which had by then been under discussion for some decades, should be formally subscribed to or not.<sup>15</sup>

In 1724 the Baptist work in Rossendale was divided, when David Crosley became pastor at Bacup, while Ashworth remained at Clough Fold.<sup>16</sup> In March 1745 an appeal was launched for a new meeting house at Bacup, and to this fund Richard Ashworth contributed £5/0/0. Such was the success of the appeal that building work began four months later, in July. Richard Ashworth died on 28 May 1751, in his seventy-fourth year. Alvery Jackson delivered the funeral sermon, and the burial took place in the garden of Carr House.

Thomas the Particular Baptist was the eldest of Richard Ashworth's ministerial sons. Having assisted his father at Clough Fold he succeeded him there and remained until 1755. On 26 June of that year he was ordained at Gildersome. He is said to have been "a man of great piety and an amiable temper. He continued a Baptist, and was many years the pastor of a Calvinistical congregation, at Heckmondwick [*sic*], in Yorkshire. Though he possessed no great share of learning, and was remarkably plain in his manner and appearance, he was a very useful preacher, and his prayers were peculiarly excellent."<sup>17</sup>

14. See Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches*, I, 144–45. John Butterworth (1727–1803) of Goodshaw was greatly impressed by John Wesley's preaching in Rossendale in 1745, and by that of other Methodist preachers but, being a Calvinist, he was baptized by Richard Ashworth. He was called to the pastorate of Jordan Well Baptist Church, Coventry, where he remained until his death. He compiled a Bible concordance, and in 1793 a larger chapel was built for his congregation in Cow Lane. See Sibree and Caston, *Independency in Warwickshire*, 114–15. George Burder wrote a memoir of Butterworth in *Evangelical Magazine* (1804) 243–49. John and his three brothers were pupils of the school at Tatop Farm, near Goodshaw, conducted by David Crosley, the "Northern Baptist Apostle." James ministered at Bromsgrove, Lawrence at Bengeworth, Evesham, and Henry at Bridgnorth. Lawrence preached sermons on John 1:47 and Luke 2:29 on the Sunday following his brother's interment on 6 May 1803. See Langley, *Birmingham Baptists*, 28; Binfield, *Pastors and People*, 24–28.

15. See Sell, *Dissenting Thought*, ch. 5. ODNB, again relying upon Palmer, describes John Ashworth as a "colleague" of Foster's. He was, clearly, a friend, but as far as I can discover they were not at any time pastoral colleagues in the same church.

16. See Overend, *History of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Bacup*. 129, 252.

17. Palmer, "Memoir of Dr. Caleb Ashworth." 693.

### *Caleb Ashworth of Daventry*

When the youngest ministerial son, John, then pastor of White's Alley General Baptist Church, London, died in 1742, James Foster delivered a funeral sermon in that church on the text, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field" (Isaiah 40:6).<sup>18</sup> Foster had begun as a Presbyterian who sided with the non-subscribers at the Salters' Hall conference. In succession to John Gale, whose treatise against paedobaptism had persuaded Foster to turn believer Baptist, he became co-pastor of the General Baptist Church in Paul's Alley, Barbican, London; and, finally, he succeeded Jeremiah Hunt as minister of the Independent church at Pinners' Hall.<sup>19</sup> Of Foster it was said that he was "far gone in the Socinian scheme, and laid but little stress upon the peculiar doctrines of revelation."<sup>20</sup> It is almost unthinkable that John Ashworth would not have been in broad sympathy with his views, but there is no reference to doctrinally neuralgic matters in Foster's sermon. We are, however, informed by one who spoke from first-hand knowledge that with Ashworth's passing

The *world* has lost a person of most diffusive, flowing, uncontrollable benevolence of nature . . . who was a bright example of *every* kind and friendly disposition, and of *all* the social virtues . . . a composer of unhappy differences and animosities among Christians . . . *Religion* has lost an able defender . . . and the cause

18. See Foster, *A Sermon Preached at White's-Alley, on Sunday, October 31, 1742. On Occasion of the Death of the Reverend Mr. John Ashworth*. A certain caution is required when reading about Rossendalian John Ashworths. In addition to Richard's son, Caleb's brother, there was a John Ashworth of Newchurch in Rossendale who, following the death of Joseph Cooke, became the leader of the Methodist Unitarians of north-east Lancashire. Chapels were built for Cooke (who in 1806 had been expelled from the Wesleyan Conference on doctrinal grounds) and Ashworth in Newchurch, Todmorden, and Rochdale (Providence). The Methodist Unitarians had close associations with the cooperative movement, the home of which was Rochdale, and this Ashworth was proud to say that "Unitarianism is *adapted to the poor*." See McLachlan, *The Unitarian Home Missionary College*, 12; McLachlan, *Essays and Addresses*, ch. 13; Wilkinson, "The rise of other Methodist traditions," being ch. 7 of Davies, George and Rupp, *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, II, especially 326–29; Evans, *Vestiges of Protestant Dissent*, 185, 213; Herford and Evans, *Historical Sketch of the North and East Lancashire Unitarian Mission*, 105–8, 131; Anon., *The Unitarian Heritage*, 90. Another John Ashworth's mother was a founder member of the Baptist church at Lumb in Rossendale, where John was born. He was an "out and out Christian," who removed first to the church at Clough Fold, and thence to Accrington. "He died on November 18, 1917, aged 77, after an honourable record as Sunday school teacher for 55 years, and at the time of his death was one of the oldest deacons at Cannon-street Church." Wylie, *The Baptist Churches of Accrington and District*, 291.

19. For Foster (1697–1753) Gale (1680–1721) and Hunt (1678–1744) see ODNB.

20. Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches*, II, 279.



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of *virtue* a warm and zealous advocate . . . *This church* has lost an affectionate and vigilant pastor, of serious piety, but unaffected and free from ostentation . . . a judicious preacher . . . who was indefatigable in his work, and *watched for the souls* of those that were under his care, as one who knew he must *give an account* . . .<sup>21</sup>

If, as seems likely, John Ashworth and James Foster were likeminded, is certain that Philip Doddridge disagreed strongly with them. Indeed, this generally hospitable man refused to allow Foster into his pulpit;<sup>22</sup> and it was to Doddridge that the third of Richard Ashworth's ministerial sons, Caleb, was sent for his higher education, his father having been greatly impressed by Doddridge's book, *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* (1745).<sup>23</sup>

### I

We have no firm date of birth for Caleb Ashworth, though we know that it took place at Clough Fold, near Rawtenstall, in Rossendale. We also know that on 25 September 1732 he was baptized at the age of twelve in the open-air baptistery near Carr House, the service being conducted by Alvery Jackson of Barnoldswick.<sup>24</sup> It is further clear that he died on 18 July 1775, and in a note in his funeral sermon for Ashworth, Samuel Palmer laments that at the time of his death Ashworth was "but fifty-three years of age."<sup>25</sup> To this the inscription on Ashworth's tomb in the Daventry churchyard adds a further year,<sup>26</sup> while the year of birth recorded by Coleman, 1719, would have made him fifty-five or fifty-six.<sup>27</sup> We are on safer ground in saying that in 1739 Caleb enrolled at Doddridge's academy in Northampton. The authors of Caleb's entry in *The Oxford Dictionary of*

21. Foster, *A Sermon Preached at White's Alley*, 25–27.

22. See his letter of 27 December 1737 to Samuel Clark of St. Albans, and Clark's reply of 6 January 1737/8. Clark said that he would refuse Foster only if he thought that his coming would distress the congregation. See Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge, DD* (hereinafter CCPD), nos. 479, 480.

23. See New College, London MSS (hereinafter NCL.MSS), L54/3/44.

24. A quotation from Alvery Jackson's diary confirms this date. The diary entry is quoted by Parry, *History of Clough Fold Baptist Church*, 98.

25. Palmer, *The Want of Labourers in the Gospel Harvest*, 2 n.

26. As does Thomas Taylor in his notes on the early history of Daventry Independent Church. See Northamptonshire Record Office (hereinafter NRO) DVURC 24, 1.

27. Coleman, *Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire*. 195.

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*Caleb Ashworth of Daventry*

*National Biography* surmise that he “was probably not in sympathy with his father’s religious views.” I can find no evidence of this prior to his departure for Northampton, though it is “presumed” by Samuel Palmer that “he became a convert to Paedobaptism”<sup>28</sup> during his student days. The Baptist historian W. T. Whitley is bolder and less disinterested in informing us that Ashworth, who was baptized in 1732, was sent to study under Doddridge at Northampton, where “he inhaled too much of the atmosphere, and quitted the denomination.”<sup>29</sup> Palmer adds that “I have in my possession several letters of [Ashworth’s] relation to [the baptism] controversy, which he wrote to me on my application to him, when, in the early part of my ministry, I had some difficulties on that subject; and they were of considerable use in determining my judgment and practice.”<sup>30</sup>

Doddridge had himself been educated under John Jennings at his academy at Kibworth.<sup>31</sup> In a letter to Samuel Clark of St. Albans of September 1722, Doddridge wrote, “Mr. Jennings encourages the greatest freedom of inquiry, and always inculcates it as a law, that the scriptures are the only genuine standard of faith . . . [he] does not follow the doctrines or phrases of any particular party; but is sometimes a Calvinist, sometimes an Arminian, and sometimes a Baxterian, as truth and evidence determine him.”<sup>32</sup> This non-doctrinaire openness of mind which to the high Calvinist Abraham Taylor, for example, would surely have been denounced as ungodly wavering,<sup>33</sup> was carried forward by Doddridge into his teaching at his academy, which opened in Market Harborough in 1729, and removed with Doddridge to Northampton when he accepted the Pastorate of Castle Hill Congregational Church on 24 December in the same year. In 1732 Doddridge let it be known that he contemplated a seminary for ministerial candidates only, but David Jennings, John’s brother, dissuaded him from

28. Palmer, “Memoir of Dr. Caleb Ashworth,” 694. In Farrer and Brownbill, eds. *A History of the County of Lancaster* VI, Caleb Ashworth is wrongly described as a “Baptist divine,” and DNB is cited. See 437–41 and n. 13.

29. Whitley, *Baptists of North-West England*, 143.

30. S. Palmer, “Memoir of Dr. Caleb Ashworth,” 694.

31. For Jennings (d. 1723) see ODNB; H. McLachlan. *English Education under the Test Acts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931; Sell, *Philosophy, Dissent and Nonconformity*, 49–50. He had been educated under Timothy Jollie at Attercliffe. His daughter, Jane, married Doddridge’s first student, John Aikin, later of Warrington Academy. John and David (for whom see below) Jennings were sons of John Jennings (1634–1701), who was ejected from Hartley Westpall, Hampshire, in 1662. See Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, 297; Gordon, *Freedom After Ejection*, 292.

32. Nuttall, CCPD, no. 35.

33. For Taylor (fl. 1721–1740) see Sell, *Hinterland Theology*, ch. 3, and *passim*.

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this course on grounds financial and educational (in that order): “The support of our Interest,” he wrote on 9 December, “comes from the Layity, and they will not be obliged to bring up all their Sons ministers or Dunces . . . Make your Rules of Discipline as strict as you please; . . . but make no Rules to exclude any that will submit to your orders.”<sup>34</sup> He went on to say that unless this course were followed, students intending to become physicians or lawyers, or to live as gentlemen would either be sent to Oxford or Cambridge, or would become “rakes in the foreign universities.”<sup>35</sup> It was thus that a general higher education became the firm objective at Doddridge’s academy, and this tradition, as well as the open-minded approach to learning, was maintained by Caleb Ashworth at Daventry.

When Ashworth entered Northampton Academy the subjects on the curriculum ranged from Logic and Metaphysics through Algebra, Trigonometry and Conic Sections, to Anatomy, Jewish Antiquities, English History and Divinity.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Hebrew, Greek and Latin were taught in evening tutorials, and all was done through the medium of English, not Latin—a departure on Doddridge’s part from established practice, and another matter on which Ashworth later followed his teacher at Daventry.

His studies completed, Ashworth removed in the summer of 1746 to Daventry as assistant to the minister, James Floyd, and by the end of the year he had become co-pastor. Of Floyd it is written that he was “not possessed of very acceptable talents as a preacher, (though very eminent in prayer)” and that “upon marrying a lady of considerable fortune, [he] gave up the pastoral charge, to which Mr. Ashworth was then chosen, and he had a flourishing congregation, which after some years required a new gallery to be erected.”<sup>37</sup> During his student days Ashworth had met a Miss Hemmings of Northampton; they were married, and in due course had three sons and three daughters. Unlike Mrs. Floyd, Miss Hemmings brought Caleb “but a slender fortune; so that having a growing family, he found himself in those straits which many of his brethren have experienced; a circumstance which occasioned him to give his pupils some prudential

34. Nuttall, CCPD, no. 382.

35. For David Jennings (1691–1762) see ODNB. He was educated under Isaac Chauncy, Thomas Ridgley and John Eames at Moorfields academy. For these see Sell, *Philosophy, Dissent and Nonconformity*, *passim.*, and for Ridgley see Sell, *Hinterland Theology*, ch. 2.

36. For a fuller list of subjects see McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts*, 147.

37. Palmer, “Memoir of Dr. Caleb Ashworth,” 694.

hints with respect to matrimonial connexions.”<sup>38</sup> He was especially distressed at being unable to purchase books, and this prompted Doddridge to approach Isaac Watts who, in a postscript to a letter to Doddridge of 18 October 1746, writes, “I rejoice to hear so well of Mr. Ashworth. I hope my lady [Lady Abney] and I have set him up with commentaries, for which he has given us both thanks.”<sup>39</sup>

In 1751 Doddridge died in Portugal, whither he had gone on health grounds. In the meantime the assistant tutor, Samuel Clark, the son of Doddridge’s St. Albans friend of the same name, had held the fort, and did so until he and the students removed to Daventry in November 1752.<sup>40</sup> That Ashworth should take charge of the academy was in accordance with the recommendation in Doddridge’s will that, since his “friend and associate” Job Orton had, to Doddridge’s great distress,<sup>41</sup> left Northampton for Shrewsbury in 1741,<sup>42</sup> Ashworth was “a proper person to succeed him in the care of [the academy] and (as he there expressed it) to perpetuate those schemes which I had formed for the publick service, the success of which is far dearer to me than life.”<sup>43</sup> Doddridge had given his decision legal status in 1749 by deleting the name of Orton in his will, and substituting that of Ashworth.<sup>44</sup> Years later Ashworth “expressed undiminished surprise at the Doctor’s nomination and his own compliance.”<sup>45</sup> Doddridge had hoped that Ashworth would follow him in both the academy and the Castle Hill pastorate. In his will he wrote, “if it should so happen, as I think it very probably may, that the [Castle Hill] congregation should desire to put themselves under his ministerial care, I do hereby make my dying request to him that he would accept the united charge.”<sup>46</sup> Two explanations have

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid. Palmer quotes from the letter to which reference is made in Nuttall, CCPD, no. 1201.

40. For Clark (1728–1769) see Evans, *Midland Churches*, (beware confused dates); McLachlan, *English Education under the Test Acts*, where his surname is incorrectly spelled on p. 303 (an ‘e’ is added), while in the Index Dr. Samuel Clarke is deprived of his ‘e’.

41. See Nuttall, CCPD, letters of Doddridge to Mercy Doddridge of 16 and 18 July 1741, nos. 691, 692.

42. For Orton (1717–1783) see ODNB. He published *Memoirs of the late Reverend Dr. Philip Doddridge*.

43. NCLMSS, Joshua Wilson’s “Memorandum,” L54/3/43.

44. Arnold and Cooper, *History of the Church of Doddridge*, 146.

45. Thomas, “Supplementary hints,” 11.

46. Coleman, *Memorials of the Independent Churches in Northamptonshire*, 196.

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been offered as to why this did not occur. The first is that Ashworth did not wish to leave Daventry;<sup>47</sup> the second is that, “contrary to Doddridge’s assumption, [Ashworth] failed to be invited to succeed him as minister to the congregation in Northampton.”<sup>48</sup> The clearest extant evidence is in favour of the former explanation. With reference to Samuel Clark’s interim duties at the Academy and the Castle Hill Church, we learn that

Though the Doctor’s congregation highly respected Mr. Clark, and thought themselves greatly obliged to him for his services during their pastor’s absence, he was not sufficiently popular and Calvinistical fully to satisfy the generality of them, so as to be chosen assistant to the Doctor’s successor in the ministerial part of his office, which, it is well known, was the principal reason of the removal of the academy from Northampton to Daventry, where Mr Caleb Ashworth was then minister, whom Dr. Doddridge had warmly recommended to succeed him, both in the academy and the congregation, and who would himself have been acceptable at least to the majority of the people. But he knew too well the value of Mr. Clark as an assistant tutor to part with him, and therefore determined to remain at Daventry, where Mr. Clark was used to preach once in a month, with the consent of the people, who highly venerated his character, though his strain and manner were not quite to their taste.<sup>49</sup>

It is also known that in March 1752 attempts were made by Castle Hill representatives to persuade Orton to leave Shrewsbury for them, but to no avail.<sup>50</sup>

Since Ashworth himself had no personal fortune, and since many of his students were poor, the question arises, How was the academy maintained? Indeed, a prior question is, How was it to be accommodated? Enter Caleb Ashworth in the role of developer and disposer of property. First, he superintended the construction of the academy adjoining the manse in Sheaf Street. This entailed the purchase and demolition of two cottages. In

47. Ibid. This view is endorsed by Arnold and Cooper, *History of the Church of Doddridge*, 146. I am grateful to the Revd Malcolm Deacon for supplying the reference to this book.

48. Thompson, *History of the Coward Trust*, 18. Similarly, Alan C. Clifford writes, “Since Ashworth was not called to succeed Dr. Doddridge as the minister of Castle Hill Church, the Academy moved to Daventry . . .” See *The Good Doctor*, 104. This might be taken as implying that Ashworth candidated for the vacancy but was not called. The balance of the evidence is that he did no such thing.

49. “Brief memoirs of the Rev. Mr. Samuel Clark,” 618.

50. See “Job Orton.” ODNB.

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*Caleb Ashworth of Daventry*

the Abstract of Title to two messuages in Sheaf Street to Caleb Ashworth in 1752 it is recorded that “the said two Mess/es Cottages or Tenements thereby granted & released were pulled down & one large Mess/e or Tenement which had been ever since then was used as an Academy for the education of Ministers of the Gospel was erected upon the Site or Ground whereon the said two Mess/es Cottages or Tenements stood.”<sup>51</sup> The Coward Trust, named after the Congregational benefactor William Coward and composed of Congregational ministers and laymen,<sup>52</sup> from which Doddridge’s students, among others, had benefited, advanced £100/0/0 towards the cost of the academy building. Further funds accrued from the lease in June 1752 of two cottages in Sheaf Street to John Guyse of Heatherstone Street, Bunhill Fields, London, for “the sum of five shillings of lawful money.”<sup>53</sup> At the same time, on 24 June, Ashworth and Guyse entered into a “Deed of Covenant to levy a ffine with Declaration of the Use” of the properties, which led in turn to a final agreement between them, dated All Souls Day 1752, under which Guyse paid Ashworth £100/0/0. John Guyse (baptized in 1677) was now minister at New Broad Street Congregational Church, London, and a Coward Trustee. He was thoroughly committed to the gospel, and equally thoroughly convinced that too many ministers were not proclaiming it faithfully—notably “Arians” such as Samuel Chandler. He sallied forth against the Arians in his Coward Lectures of 1728, Samuel Chandler rebutted him, and a lively controversy preceded eventual personal, but not doctrinal, reconciliation.<sup>54</sup> Following Guyse’s death in 1761, the two Daventry properties were released to Ashworth on 29 June 1762. The conveyance was managed by Edward Webber of Leadenhall Street, London, and the agreement was between himself and his wife, Joanna, granddaughter of Guyse, and Caleb Ashworth. Under this agreement Ashworth received £307/0/0.<sup>55</sup> For a final reference to property, we may note that on 22 June 1764 Ashworth and William Bazlee, as trustees of the meeting house, entered into an agreement concerning alterations to that 1722 building, which included the provision of a gallery at the south-west end.<sup>56</sup>

51. NRO MS.NPL 1125.

52. For Coward (1647/8–1738) see ODNB; Thompson, *A History of the Coward Trust*.

53. NRO, MSS NPL 1332, 651.

54. See Sell, *Hinterland Theology*, 110–13.

55. NRO, MS NPL 656.

56. NRO, MS NPL 655. Side galleries were added c. 1820. So Stell, *An Inventory of Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting-Houses in Central England*, 138.