

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

THE LAST DAYS AT RAWDON and THE FORMATION OF NORTHERN BAPTIST COLLEGE

Reporting on the opening of Rawdon, the **Bradford Observer** said of Dr Acworth, the Principal: 'All he now coveted and prayed for in reference to this institution was...that it might continue year after year, and generation after generation, to supply the churches with men of God; that, kept free from all pecuniary burdens, it might increasingly answer the end of its existence, and, at length, amid the hallelujahs of a recovered and sanctified world, itself cease to be. Till then, O let its motto be "Esto perpetua"'. We cannot write of the last days of Rawdon, as the editor suggested, but only the last days at Rawdon; for the work of the College, inspired by John Fawcett, founded at Horton in Bradford in 1805 and continued magnificently at Rawdon (1859-1964), is carried on at Northern Baptist College.

J.O. Barrett, a Rawdon man and the North Eastern Area Superintendent, told the story up to 1954, concluding: 'That Rawdon may continue to send out for the work of the ministry at home and overseas preachers and pastors of evangelical spirit and sound learning is the prayer of all its friends'. He wrote with feeling because he had struggled, with a few others, to bring the College through one of its most difficult crises. Rawdon had re-opened after the second World War under the leadership of A.C. Underwood and his close friend, L.H. Marshall, both of whom lived for the College. After Underwood's death in 1948 Marshall continued as principal with only one other tutor, E.C. Rust. Enough money was found to modernise the kitchen and make a beautiful chapel out of a lecture room but income was not sufficient to provide another tutor. In 1952 Rust was given leave of absence to lecture in the United States for a year and then accepted an invitation to remain there. In November Dr Marshall was taken ill and died in January aged 71, and W.E. Hough, a Rawdon man who had a temporary appointment covering Rust's absence, became acting principal, whilst Mrs Hough helped to maintain the domestic arrangements, Headingley Methodist College and Leeds University helped with teaching, and senior student, Edmund Pilling, took the Junior New Testament Greek class in Mark's Gospel. In the following months the Rawdon and Guiseley minister, W.B. Harris, taught Classical Greek, Mr Barrett and Howard Williams of Blenheim, Leeds, shared a course in pastoral theology and helped with sermon classes, whilst C.W. Towlson, former head of Woodhouse Grove School, lectured in New Testament Greek and gave coaching in voice production. Many tributes were paid to the memory of Dr Marshall as 'an outstanding Christian character, minister, preacher, teacher and friend...He had a great soul. Its greatness shone in his humility and selflessness. He adorned the teaching of his Lord in all he was and did'. One of his last tasks was the preparation of the Whitley Lectures, which he was unable to deliver personally, but which were published as **Rivals of the Christian Faith** with a memoir by his close friend, Henry Bonser.

The only thing which saved Rawdon at this time was the kind of commitment expressed by Alec Charlton in the Annual Report of 1950: 'Difficulties may lie ahead, but they will be overcome, for many believe that the Rawdon tradition is worth maintaining at any cost'.

The staffing committee met in January and immediately started considering names for a new principal, one member urging them to 'keep in mind the opportunities for a new policy to be developed for the future of the College, possibly arranging courses for lay-preachers and teachers and refresher courses for ministers'.

They also stressed the need for another member of staff, with all three sharing in the administrative work of the college and supported by secretarial assistance for the first time. On 5th March three candidates were interviewed at Blenheim, and eventually the Rev. D.S. Russell was invited to allow his name to go forward to the General Committee. But the minute added 'before he reach a decision, he and his wife be invited to visit Rawdon, and meet a small committee to review in detail the whole situation'. By 20th March Mr Barrett reported that 'Mr Russell had showed a good grasp of the situation' and they had 'endeavoured to give...a full survey of the difficulties and possibilities of the situation'. A letter was received from Dr Russell allowing his name to go forward. Mr Hough was then appointed a permanent member of staff. Mrs Russell was asked to oversee the domestic arrangements of the College and it was agreed that some secretarial assistance be provided for the Principal. The remaining difficulty of providing teaching in New Testament subjects was solved when the Principal designate discovered that Dr G.H.C. Angus, recently retired from the Principalship of Serampore College, India, would be willing to do this for a small honorarium and his board and lodging during term time. This 'temporary' arrangement lasted for 11 years, to everyone's satisfaction! On 8th October the new staff were all inducted by Dr E.A. Payne in a service at Westgate, Bradford.

David Russell was God's man for a huge task. Although only 36 he was able and experienced and his confidence was infectious. He set himself a very high standard and expected it of others, believing only the very best was good enough for the high calling of the Christian minister. His lectures on the Old Testament, especially the prophets, made his hearers want to preach and his teaching on homiletics showed them how to preach. In the sermon class on Saturday mornings (always an ordeal for the student whose turn it was to preach), after students and a tutor had offered their criticisms the Principal would, in his words, 'Dot a few "i's" and cross a few "t's" managing to balance what had been said and give some encouragement. His two-year course in pastoral theology was illustrated from experience and often expressed his concern for the integrity of the minister and the revitalizing of the Church Meeting. On a summer's afternoon it was not unknown for the Principal to break off his intense study for a short spell of equally intense activity in the garden. Students were supposed to put in some time there, too, but it was a struggle to keep the 7 acres tidy. The constant changes in domestic staff caused greater headaches. In other pursuits too the staff made their mark. The 1954 **College Magazine** told how in one cricket match 'its notable features were a score of 25 not out and three hard but cleanly taken catches by our Principal'. In the match against former students Dr Angus scored 45 not out. However, Mr Hough reported to the October meeting of the committee in 1954 that the Principal was in hospital after 'a misfortune on the sportsfield' - a painful back injury. The students' magazine was less discreet: 'Sammy Student's Log...13th October. The staff and students turned out this afternoon for a practice match. The men were keen and the motto was: "If you can't get the ball - get

the man." Our Principal is now confined to bed'.

It cannot have been an easy time for Mrs Russell taking up new responsibilities, a lonely place to live during vacations with a young family to care for. Her homely manner enabled her to fit into the fellowship at Cragg Baptist Church, where she and her husband were loyal and much appreciated members. When an unwelcome visitor prompted the family to acquire a dog, Bruce became part of the College community too. Mr Russell returned from one preaching engagement with a pair of doves given to him by his hosts. Soon there were many white doves living in the loft above his garage and enhancing the idyllic setting of the College as they strutted around the courtyard. The new chapel, its furnishings a reminder of the men who had done so much to make the Rawdon tradition, was at the centre for worship. The thrice-a-term communion was presided over by the staff in turn and morning and evening prayers by either a student or member of staff, with the Principal setting a fine example of thorough preparation and simple dignity in worship.

It had already been decided to mark the Ter-Jubilee of the College by launching an appeal for £5,000 to renovate the building. Under the new leadership this was now increased to £15,000 to endow a new chair as well. The Ter-Jubilee Committee affirmed the important principle of not intruding into other college's spheres of influence and only appealing to churches outside the northern and midland constituency if there was some Rawdon connection. A film strip telling the Rawdon story was produced and widely used. Later this was superseded by a coloured slide presentation, **The Call of God**, with emphasis on recruitment for the ministry. The celebrations began the following summer with a Saturday open-day which, in spite of poor weather, was such a huge success that this became an annual event incorporating the annual meeting in the afternoon, tea in a marquee served by local churches, and evening meeting with guest speaker and valediction of leaving students. Attendance at these days rose to over a thousand. The new principal soon won the response of northern Baptists by his vigorous advocacy of the College with his warm personality and ready wit. Like his predecessors he was in big demand as a preacher. He was also concerned to improve the image of Rawdon in the south and was quite cross with some of his students when they wrote to the **Baptist Times** criticising the Metropolitan Tabernacle for rebuilding on such a large scale. The sequel was that when he apologised to the minister of the Tabernacle he was invited to preach there! When in 1958 Mr Russell engaged in a preaching tour of the United States under the auspices of the British Council of Churches, he also addressed the Baptist World Alliance Youth Congress in Toronto. To the amusement of his students he returned with nothing so common as a doctorate but with the honour of being made a Kentucky Colonel. The Yorkshire Association benefited from the experience as he addressed their Autumn Assembly with the challenge to growth. Elected to the Association presidency in 1962, he led a successful 'teaching through preaching' programme on 'Creation and Re-creation' taken up by most of the ministers and lay preachers.

Unfortunately the Ter-Jubilee appeal fell far short of its target reaching barely £9,000. Some gave generously, the church members at Quibocolo and Lukolela in the Congo sending £55 from very meagre resources. However all the money was invested and a new tutor, the Rev. W.E. Moore, came to serve his Alma Mater in 1956, sharing the New

Testament work with Dr Angus and teaching Church history. The general income increased steadily, largely due to the indefatigable efforts of the Principal. Conferences helped balance the budget and made wider use of resources. In 1952 the total income was £4,963: £1,016 from churches and subscribers, £1,165 from students grants, £450 from students' personal contributions and the remainder from endowments. In 1964 it had risen to £11,138: churches and subscribers giving £1,868, grants £2,201 and University students living in the College £2,213. Expenditure in 1952 was: educational and administrative £1,756, domestic £2,537. In 1964 the figures were £3,675 and £5,485 respectively. After the three year Ter-Jubilee effort a 'Friends of Rawdon' scheme was introduced, subscribers receiving three communications a year to maintain interest, the Annual Report, a bulletin and the students' magazine, quite an ambitious production which achieved a considerable circulation in the churches. It will be noticed from the figures that collections and subscriptions did not increase greatly. The highest figure was £2,050 in 1962 but this fell slightly during the last two years at Rawdon. It was possible over the years to spend considerable amounts on repairs and improvements. Most of the building was re-slatted, though unfortunately the central turret was found to be unsafe and had to go. New bathrooms were installed in both wings and the heating system changed to automatic coal-fired boilers. Central-heating was extended to the library, replacing two Victorian stoves. Rawdon students each had a bedroom and a study heated by coal fires, students paying for their own coal, though some with blocked chimneys had electric fires (with meters) fitted. The writer remembers the pleasurable activity of sawing logs to augment the coal. The great gale of 1962 toppled a few chimneys and some mature trees, which provided an abundance of exercise and fuel. Bedrooms, lecture rooms and the common room were refurnished, a house bought for the new tutor and the tennis courts re-surfaced. Students themselves carried out several improvements including surfacing the drive with tarmac, installing new lighting in the library and converting one of the two fives courts into a table-tennis room.

Student numbers fluctuated from year to year, from 21 in 1953 to a peak of 31 two years later and falling to below 20 in the last two years. Of 76 accepted during the period, 21 were from the Yorkshire Association, 5 from the Northern and 3 from Lancashire. The other 47 were from almost all parts of the United Kingdom. On leaving Rawdon, 17 settled in Yorkshire, 8 in Lancashire and Cheshire and 3 in the Northern Association, whilst, continuing the missionary tradition, 3 went to serve overseas. In 1962 Cynthia Allegro, a former ballet dancer who had then become a deaconess, was welcomed as the first woman student and an undoubted civilizing influence. The next year Marjorie Forster was welcomed and at the end of the year married the Senior Student. For varying lengths of time students from Germany, Italy, Spain, Jamaica and Southern Rhodesia were welcomed into the College.

The connection with Leeds University weakened during this time, most students studying for either the London B.D. or Diploma in Theology. Pre-sessional lectures and occasional visiting speakers on various aspects of ministry supplemented the courses. Preaching on almost every Sunday provided experience, the opportunity to see a variety of churches and visit many homes. The neighbouring

orthopaedic hospital and old men's home provided opportunity for pastoral visiting. Every year saw students engaged in evangelistic missions and for a few years an open-air witness was maintained in the centre of Bradford which resulted in an organised debate with the secularist society. At least one summer vacation had to be spent on a student pastorate and from 1961 students in their penultimate year were linked with a neighbouring church as Student Assistants, which meant attending the full range of meetings and activities and being involved in some work with the minister. The close community which the situation of the College provided and the variety of background and outlook of its students was an education in itself. Life was regulated by a detailed constitution, and charring Body meetings was a good preparation for life to come. Annual conferences with other theological students (Methodists at Headingley, Methodist deaconesses at Ilkley, Congregationalists at Bradford and Anglicans at Mirfield) provided ecumenical contact and debate but this group became smaller as the Bradford and Ilkley Colleges closed. Students from the University gladly took up vacant places at Rawdon and they, of course, contributed to the community and the treasury. One of the liveliest social events of the year was the annual football match with Manchester College for the Townley Lord 'Cup', the day concluding with the host College giving a concert, invariably a hilarious evening.

The staff made a good team. W.E. Hough, lecturing in Philosophy, Theology, Ethics and Baptist History and Principles, loved to provoke deeper thought and the questioning of assumed positions whilst he rattled the money in his pocket and wrapped himself round the lectern. He was always very approachable and appreciation of him grew with the years. When he retired, on the formation of Northern College, he continued to serve on its governing body and support its work for twenty years until shortly before his death. Dr Angus had a quiet saintliness and ascetic life-style. One winter's morning as students came shivering along the corridor to the chapel he remarked 'One is able to get a really cold bath these mornings'. He made good use of the new tennis courts where he played as well as anyone. His lectures were always up to date with the latest scholarship and his termly missionary prayer meetings fed with the latest news from the B.M.S. and the world Church. Observant and perceptive, he was usually aware of what was happening in the College. Dying in Ceylon in 1966, at the age of 76, whilst spending a period of service in the island at the pressing request of his former students, he was buried, probably as he would have wished, in Colombo. W.E. Moore had much original thought and insight into the New Testament, often passionately propounded because it was related to his pastoral heart and social concern. In the chapel his evening prayers had a mystical quality: once after slowly reading from an epistle he began to pray 'Paul what did you mean when you said...'. His preaching was often dramatic and compelling. **Stronger than Rome**, a new and attractive approach to the Epistle to the Romans in dialogue form, came from his pen in 1963 and was warmly commended by Professor Kingsley Barrett. David Russell's first book, **Between the Testaments**, was published in 1960.

Many lay people, former students and other ministers gave devoted service on College committees and as officers. N.S. Lunn, a Huddersfield architect, served as treasurer and gave his professional services from 1947 up to the amalgamation. J.G. Hobbs, then minister at Westgate, succeeded the venerable Alec Charlton as secretary in

1953 and served Rawdon and Northern diligently until 1976. Mr J.W.H. Still, of Bradford, was connected with Rawdon from 1925 when he assisted his father, Rev. W.K. Still, the College's Financial Secretary. He succeeded his father in 1947 and served as treasurer of the new College until his death on Easter Day 1975. In 1955, for the first time, a woman, Mrs J. Barritt, of Leeds, was elected to the Committee.

At intervals 'Manchester' had featured in the story of Horton and Rawdon. When the work was founded in 1804, it was 'The Northern Education Society' and some advocated Manchester for its home. In 1855, when the move from Horton in Bradford was being contemplated, a property was actually bought in Manchester but then sold again. In 1890, when Principal T.G. Rooke died, amalgamation was discussed and at the turn of the century a scheme to unite Rawdon, Nottingham and Manchester was carefully worked out, but failed again. In 1955 a Priorities Sub-Committee was formed to recommend the priority of claims on the Ter-Jubilee Fund. It considered the domestic staff problems, necessary renovations and the relationship with other colleges in order to make economic use of resources. Finally it recommended the appointment of another tutor but also the further consideration of the future of the College. The General Committee asked the committee to continue as the Policy Committee. It met three more times that year and authorised the Principal to have informal discussions with representatives of Manchester College. The options included: exchange of students for special courses, amalgamation at either Rawdon or Manchester, moving to Leeds for closer liaison with the University, co-operation with other denominations at Leeds or Bradford or remaining as at present and building up work as a Theological Seminary. The committee, however, was unable to recommend any long-term policy at that stage. In 1961 the committee was requested to meet again. The domestic situation seemed almost insoluble and the siting of the College was no longer academically suitable. The clear choice seemed to be either to approach Manchester or find a new independent site. It was finally decided after prolonged discussion to recommend the former with a bold imaginative scheme for a new college in a new building. The General Committee agreed to this with one against and one abstention. The Manchester officers welcomed the suggestions and discussions went on apace.

Many difficulties and different ideas about the new building and its funding and staffing were faced and thrashed out. Reading the minutes it becomes quite clear that the final success of the scheme owes much to D.S. Russell and his following of his own oft-given advice to be 'as wise as serpents and harmless as doves'. When the General Committee met in June 1962 there was considerable doubt and opposition to the scheme on several grounds and the recommendation to the special meeting of subscribers at Blenheim in October had to be put in the name of the Policy Committee, not the General Committee. Nevertheless the case was strongly presented to the special meeting by the Principal and the motion of support for the scheme moved and seconded by two esteemed Rawdon men, J.G. Hobbs and F.W. Bond. After the debate there was a time of prayer and the vote by ballot resulted in 98 in favour of the scheme and 17 against. The next month the Committee met and, in the light of that vote, proceeded. J.B. Middlebrook agreed to organise an appeal for £50,000 for the building fund. A similar scheme already followed by the Congregationalists

made negotiations with the Minster of Education and the Charity Commissioners easier. It was agreed that the two Principals should act jointly, sharing duties and responsibilities and that George Farr and Ernest Moore would be Tutors. Building plans were adopted and the foundation stone laid in October 1963. With pride, thanksgiving and sadness, Rawdon closed in June 1964. The old students met there for the last reunion to say farewell, some availing themselves of the offers for sale of books surplus to requirements in the amalgamated library. The building proved difficult to sell, but eventually the College of Trinity and All Saints in Horsforth acquired it as a hostel. It has since been converted into luxury homes.

A service of dedication to mark the commencement of the new College was led by the President of the Baptist Union, Dr L.G. Champion, on 1st October 1964 in the new Dining Hall and the buildings were officially opened on 16th June 1963 by Dr E.A. Payne, Secretary of the Baptist Union. The first stage of the building consisted of a block of 36 study bedrooms, a new library linked to Manchester's old chapel (encased in matching bricks), dining hall and kitchen with 2 flats above and houses for the Principals. When the scheme began it was thought that it would be ten or fifteen years before the second half could be built but the wise decision was taken to raise more capital and loans and to proceed before rising costs made it virtually impossible. It was also obvious that the design asked for completion. On 11th November 1967 a great service of thanksgiving was held to mark the completion of the buildings, the address being given by the new secretary of the Baptist Union, Rev. Dr D.S. Russell. It seems remarkable now that the whole scheme was completed for a little over £180,000. The appeal reached its target, Rawdon was sold for £15,000, the sale of investments and legacies received amounted to £68,000 and the Baptist Union Ter-Jubilee Fund contributed £20,000. Visible reminders of the Rawdon tradition were provided by chapel furnishings brought over the Pennines but the combination of two lots of furnishings was not really very satisfactory and the re-ordering of the chapel when Principal Taylor arrived has provided a worship centre more suitable for these days. The Good Shepherd window remains, Dr Acworth's bust is in the entrance, former Principals of both former Colleges look down on the library scene, but surely the real continuity is in the pioneering of new ways of ministerial training, for which Northern has become justly famous, and in its wide vision of the Kingdom of God. *Esto Perpetua.*

DAVID B. MILNER