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Revive Thy Work, Oh Lord

Congregational Studies
Conference 2013



Revive Thy Work, Oh Lord

**Andrew Charles,
Frank Wroe
Bill Dyer**

**Congregational Studies Conference
Papers 2013**

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The papers are printed in the order in which they were given at the Conference; as usual the contributor is entirely responsible for the views expressed in his paper.



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Photographs by Dr Digby L. James

Foreword

We met in a new location this year, an area steeped in evangelical history. Moorfields was the location of many open-air sermons by George Whitefield, and his friend, John Wesley, established his base nearby, and it was in Wesley's Chapel that we met. The weather was not encouraging for a lunchtime walk, but some braved the rain and visited the Nonconformist burial ground, Bunhill Fields, opposite the Chapel, to see the graves of such notables as John Owen and John Bunyan. Also available for viewing was Wesley's House, and a short walk up the road was the rebuilt Whitefield's Tabernacle, now part of a school.

Our lectures this year were stimulating. Firstly Andrew Charles connected the ministry of George Whitefield with the rise of Congregationalism in his home town of Rotherham. Andrew has often attended Studies Conferences in the past and is a member of Alexandra Road Congregational Church in Hemel Hempstead, which is not affiliated to EFCC or any other external body. So it was helpful to have Frank Wroe speak to us about the Unaffiliated Congregational Churches Charity which administers the funds set apart for these churches. Those preparing for ministry in gospel churches these days have a wealth of options available, both for full time and part time study, as well as opportunities presented by the internet. It was not always so. Bill Dyer described to us the great difficulties involved in training for the ministry in Congregationalism fifty years ago. It is a wonder he survived with his faith intact—a testimony to the power of the Spirit and the good hand of God on so many evangelical men who had little or no alternative to attending a liberal college.

As always, we are grateful to our speakers for the time they spent in preparation in order to give us insights into these different areas.

God willing we will be meeting again next year on 15 March 2014 in Wesley's Chapel, this time to consider the gospel of George Whitefield and its influence on Congregationalism, and the founding principles of EFCC as expressed in its logo: Gospel Truth, Gospel Independence and Gospel Fellowship.

Dr Digby L. James

Quinta Church, Weston Rhyn

Masbrough Chapel and the Evangelical Revival	Date	Date	Walker family and the Industrial Revolution
Birth of George Whitefield.	1714	1715	Birth of Samuel Walker.
Birth of John Thorpe.	1731	1737	Samuel Walker becomes a schoolmaster.
Whitefield commences open-air preaching in England.	1739	1741	Walker brothers make five tons of iron goods at Grenoside, Sheffield.
Wesley at Thorpe Hesley, near Rotherham.	1742	1745	Samuel Walker devotes himself to the iron business.
Methodist preaching house in Sheffield destroyed by the mob.	1743	1747	Walker brothers begin to move their iron works to Masbrough, near Rotherham.
Whitefield preaches at Rotherham in May.	1750	1749	Samuel Walker moves to Masbrough. Walker business valued at £1,800.
John Thorpe converted.			
Whitefield preaches at Rotherham in November.	1752	1750	Walkers become second largest producers of crucible steel.
Whitefield preaches at Rotherham in July and September.	1753	1751	Walkers' annual production 206 tons.
Division in Methodist Society in Rotherham.	1757	1756	Partners' first dividend £140.
Whitefield at Rotherham in October.	1758	1765	Walkers build blast furnace using coke for smelting.
Independent Chapel built at Masbrough.	1763	1769	Samuel Walker builds Masbrough Hall.
John Thorpe dies.	1776	1782	Dividends of £28,000. Samuel Walker dies.
Independent Chapel rebuilt at Masbrough.	1780	1788	Tom Paine visits Walkers to interest them in bridge building.
Biography of John Thorpe published in the Evangelical Magazine.	1794	1791	Walker business valued at £133,035 (£10,000,000 in modern terms).
Dr Edward Williams moves to Masbrough and Independent Academy established.	1795	1796	Bridge over River Wear completed at Sunderland.
Dr Williams dies.	1813	1820	Walker family decides to wind-up the company following disastrous losses on Southwark bridge.
Rev James Bennett appointed pastor at Masbrough.			
Rev James Bennett resigns due to ill health.	1828	1833	Walker family completes sale of all their Rotherham enterprises.
Rotherham College incorporated by Royal Warrant with London University.	1841	1841	Henry Walker resigns as Treasurer of Rotherham College.

Figure 1. Timeline of evangelical revival and industrial revolution in Rotherham

Revival and revolution in Rotherham

How Congregationalism came to an industrial town

J Andrew Charles

In October 1961 I left Rotherham, the town in which I had grown up, and came to London to study civil engineering at Imperial College. In those days Imperial College had hardly any halls of residence and happily I found accommodation at New College, the Congregational Theological College in Hampstead, which let out rooms not required by theological students to students from other colleges affiliated to London University.

At the formal evening meal at New College we had the privilege of occasionally sitting on the top table and conversing with the Rev. John Huxtable,¹ the Principal of the college. On the first occasion that I sat on the top table, the Principal was away and I sat next to the Senior Lecturer, Dr Geoffrey Nuttall.² On finding out that I came from Rotherham, Dr Nuttall engaged me in conversation about the early history of Congregationalism in the town, doubtless assuming that this was a matter of considerable interest to me on which I would be well informed. My ignorance was quickly exposed and Dr Nuttall kindly recommended some reading matter.

Following this disturbing encounter I spent some time in the New College library, motivated principally from a concern that I might again find myself sitting next to Dr Nuttall at dinner. However, over the last fifty years I have developed a genuine interest in the subject, although I have not gone so far as to study archives and original documents and it is as well that Dr Nuttall never knew that I should be presenting this paper.

1. Introduction

The year 1483 should be etched on the memory of all those who had the privilege of being a pupil at Rotherham Grammar School, since this was the year that the school was founded by Thomas Rotherham.³ Born in Rotherham in 1423, Thomas rose to great heights in the land becoming Chancellor of England in 1474 and, as though this was not sufficient to fully occupy him, in 1480 he was appointed Archbishop of York.⁴ He lived in dangerous times, with those sudden reverses of fortune with which the War of the Roses was littered, and on the death of Edward IV he tried to assist Edward's widow and children, which was not appreciated by Edward's brother, Richard.⁵

Deprived of his Chancellorship Thomas was incarcerated in the Tower of London, but was soon released. He took his responsibilities as Archbishop of York seriously and one of his many benefactions was to form the College of Jesus in his home town. He did this in memory of the tuition he had received

as a boy, ‘Lest we should seem ungrateful’ (*Ne ingrati videamur*). The Grammar School was the only part of the college to survive the Reformation.

Some hundred and sixty years later, in the 1640s, another civil war was afflicting England. In this conflict Rotherham was a Puritan stronghold and the people of Rotherham were sympathetic to the Parliamentary cause.⁶ The Royalists were repulsed in a battle on 22 January 1643, but a much larger force menaced the town a few months later on 4 May. Although the townspeople defended the bridge over the River Don and thirty boys from the Grammar School manned the town’s only cannon, the Royalists’ attack was successful, the town was sacked and prominent citizens were arrested. A price of 1000 marks was put on the head of the outspoken Puritan vicar, John Shawe, and the Royalist troops spent three days looking for him without success.⁷

With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the Act of Uniformity in 1662, the then Vicar of Rotherham, Luke Clayton, was ejected from his living. Despite great difficulties, Shawe and Clayton conducted services for dissenters, but the first nonconformist church in the town, like many Presbyterian churches at that time, became Unitarian.

2. Revival in Rotherham

Why consider revival in a small industrial town? Living in over-crowded industrial towns and cities, it might seem much easier and pleasanter to live the Christian life in a rural paradise! In *The invading gospel*, Jack Clemo, the Cornish poet, is at pains to refute such sentimental notions and goes so far as to describe the Apostle Paul as ‘a man who has been detested by nature-lovers all through the centuries’ and affirms that ‘Paul was obviously insensitive to the charms of earthly beauty: one cannot imagine him stooping to admire a flower or pausing to listen to a bird singing’. Clemo also claims that ‘All the great Christian revivals have begun in towns or amid the ugliness of industrialism’.⁸ The timeline shown in Figure 1 shows the interaction of the evangelical revival in Rotherham, which is the subject of this section of the paper, with the industrial achievements of the Walker family, to which reference is made in the next section of the paper.

2.1 George Whitefield in Rotherham

When Methodist preachers appeared in Rotherham in the middle of the eighteenth century, evangelical religion was at a low ebb. One of the early Methodists in the area, William Green, moved to Rotherham in the early 1740s and established a school at Thorpe Hesley which was well patronised by the town’s middle class who recognised an excellent teacher, even if they did not share his evangelical convictions.⁹ The rougher elements were not so tolerant and a violent anti-Methodist mob was readily assembled to greet visiting preachers. Of the Anglican clergymen who took to open-air preaching

in the middle of the eighteenth century, John Wesley (1703–91) and George Whitefield (1714–70) were undoubtedly the most prominent and both men made visits to the town. The situation they faced in Rotherham has been described in the following terms.

Rotherham and its environs had, for a considerable time, been ranked by serious people, among those parts of Yorkshire which were least inclined to favour the spread of evangelical religion; and when Messrs Whitefield, Wesley, and others, attempted to disseminate divine knowledge in that neighbourhood, their persons and message were treated with contempt.¹⁰

At the beginning of May 1750 Whitefield left London on a journey to Scotland, preaching at many towns along the way. Having visited the Countess of Huntingdon at her country estate at Ashby he proceeded to preach at a number of northern towns including Nottingham, Mansfield, Rotherham, Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester. In a letter written to Lady Huntingdon from Leeds on 30 May 1750, Whitefield described the different receptions he received at these towns, making special mention of Rotherham.

Mansfield I hope was taken. After leaving that place, I went to Rotherham where Satan rallied his forces again. However, I preached twice, on the Friday evening, and Saturday morning. The cryer was employed to give notice of a bear-baiting. Your ladyship may guess who was the bear. About seven in the morning the drum was heard, and several watermen attended it with great staves. The constable was struck; two of the mobbers were apprehended, but rescued afterwards. ... I preached on those words "Fear not, little flock." ... after a short stay I left Rotherham, when I knew it was become more pacific. In the evening I preached at Sheffield, where the people received the word gladly.¹¹

Three years later, in a letter to another friend dated 14 July 1753, Whitefield described how on his way to Leeds he had preached in Rotherham and Wakefield.

At the former place, I had been disturbed twice or thrice, and was almost determined to preach there no more. But we are poor judges, for a person there told me that God had made me instrumental in converting his wife and brother, who had been bitter persecutors, but now gladly receive me under their roof. After preaching, a young man was set at liberty, who had been groaning under the spirit of bondage four years; and whilst I was baptising a child, the Holy Spirit was pleased to baptise several, one in particular with a holy fire.¹²

2.2 Conversion of John Thorpe

While Whitefield's endeavours to preach the gospel were treated with contempt in Rotherham and malicious falsehoods were circulated to counteract the good effects of his ministry, an instance of conversion occurred which would have major consequences for evangelical Christianity in the town. One of the most virulent opponents of the Methodist preachers was a

young man, John Thorpe (1731–1776), who was a shoemaker by trade. Together with three of his companions, Thorpe went into an alehouse where they agreed for a wager to mimic Whitefield. There is no reason to believe that these young men were part of the murderous mob that attacked the persons and the property of the local Methodists; their weapon was mockery.

Each of these young men was to open the Bible and hold forth from the first text that presented itself to his eye. Accordingly three in their turn mounted the table, and entertained their companions. It fell to John Thorpe to conclude the proceedings. As he climbed onto the table, he confidently asserted ‘I shall beat you all’. The judges were to be the members of the convivial assembly which had met on the occasion. When the Bible was handed to Thorpe he had no idea what part of the Scripture he should make the subject of his address, but he found that he was preaching from the text ‘Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish’ (Luke 13:3).

What happened next to John Thorpe is described in many of the biographies of Whitefield¹³ which largely follow the first published account of Thorpe’s conversion that appeared in the *Evangelical Magazine* in February 1794.

No sooner had he uttered the words than his mind was affected in a very extraordinary manner. The sharpest pangs of conviction now seized him, and conscience denounced tremendous vengeance upon his soul. In a moment, he was favoured with a clear view of his subject, and divided his discourse more like a divine who had been accustomed to speak on portions of Scripture than like one who never so much as thought on religious topics, except for the purpose of ridicule! He found no deficiency of matter, no want of utterance; and we have frequently heard him declare, ‘If ever I preached in my life by the assistance of the Spirit of God, it was at that time.’ The impression that the subject made upon his own mind, had such an effect upon his manner, that the most ignorant and profane could not but perceive that what he had spoken was with the greatest sincerity.

The unexpected solemnity and pertinency of his address, instead of entertaining the company, first spread a visible depression, and afterwards a sullen gloom, upon every countenance. This sudden change in the complexion of his associates did not a little conduce to increase the convictions of his own bosom. No individual appeared disposed to interrupt him; but, on the contrary, their attention was deeply engaged with the pointedness of his remarks; yea, many of his sentences, as we have heard him relate, made, to his apprehension, his own hair stand erect! When he left the table not a syllable was uttered concerning the wager; but a profound silence pervaded the company.¹⁴

John Thorpe immediately left, without taking notice of anyone present, and returned home in deep distress. Immediately he had announced the text,

he had known conviction of sin and been truly converted. Such was the strange and unexpected result of his mimicking George Whitefield.

The first published account of John Thorpe's conversion, which appeared in the *Evangelical Magazine* some seventeen years after his death strongly affirmed the reliability of the account.

While, on the one hand, we are free to confess that we are not much inclined to credit every account of the marvellous conversions, which are said to take place in some religious circles; yet, it must be allowed, that there occur, in the various dispensations of Divine Providence, some instances of this nature, to which the refusal of our belief might be justly imputed to an unreasonable incredulity. There are circumstances attending the conversion of Mr Thorpe, the authenticity of which, however singular, may be relied upon, as it was from himself that our information was immediately derived.¹⁵

2.3 Calvinistic Methodists

Following his conversion John Thorpe joined Wesley's Methodist Society at Rotherham and in 1752 became an itinerant preacher sharing this preaching ministry with William Green. This was no easy role as there was violent opposition from those who hated the Methodists and also difficult situations within the society.

When Wesley was in the Rotherham area early in 1753 he records in his journal how he was told of a ten-year old girl, Elizabeth Booth, who had begun to have fits involving uncontrollable rage, bitter cursing and blaspheming with involuntary laughter, trying to throw herself into the fire or out of a window, and falling into a trance and lying down as if dead. The girl frequently spoke as if she was another person, saying to her father 'This girl is not thine, but mine. I have got possession of her, and I will keep her'. In the intervals between these fits she cried out to God for mercy. Wesley gives the following account.

John Thorpe, of Rotherham, had often a desire to pray for her in the congregation; but he was as often hindered, by a strong and sudden impression on his mind that she was dead. When he came to Woodseats, and began to mention what a desire he had had, the girl, being then in a raging fit, cried out, 'I have made a fool of Thorpe!' and burst out into a loud laughter. In the beginning of May all these symptoms ceased; and she continues in health both of soul and body.¹⁶

At this time John Thorpe was a young man in his early twenties, who had been converted relatively recently. He not only faced violent opposition from those outside the Methodist Society, but also had to deal with this apparent case of demon possession within one of the congregations. Preaching was not for the faint-hearted in those times of revival.

John Thorpe came to share Whitefield's Calvinistic beliefs. When Wesley discovered that Calvinism was growing in Rotherham, he attributed this to Thorpe's influence and moved him to a work over a hundred miles away. However, banishing Thorpe to another part of the country did not solve the problem and he was dismissed from the Methodist connection. In 1757 the Methodist society in Rotherham split. William Green's wife lamented this division: 'Satan hates to see the brethren dwell together and he found a way to sow discord, first among the preachers and then among the members.' Alexander Mather, a notable Methodist preacher who was later greatly used in Sheffield,¹⁷ was sent to Rotherham and met John Thorpe, but reported that Thorpe has 'declared open war against us'.¹⁸

Not only was there a significant doctrinal difference between Whitefield's Calvinism and Wesley's Arminianism, involving deeply held convictions on both sides of the argument, there was also a major practical difference in that, unlike Wesley, Whitefield did not organize his followers into local societies. No Calvinistic Methodist denomination was formed in England, although there was such a denomination in Wales. The newly formed society of Calvinistic Methodists in Rotherham had 16 members and in 1758 decided to constitute themselves as an Independent or Congregational Church. John Thorpe accepted the invitation to be the pastor and the new church adopted the 1658 Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order. In 1763 Masbrough Independent Chapel¹⁹ was built. John Thorpe was the pastor of the Church until his death in 1776 at which time the Church had 45 members. By the standards of those times, this was not a huge increase and it has been suggested that his move from moderate to high Calvinism inhibited his usefulness.

He left a widow and several children, including a son who was in the pastoral ministry. A daughter had died in her fifteenth year. He has been described as 'a laborious and successful minister, beloved in life, lamented in death'.²⁰

2.4 Masbrough Independent Church and Rotherham Independent Academy

By the time of John Thorpe's death, the congregation, which must have been much greater than the church membership, had become too large for the chapel and a new chapel was built in 1780 which seated 1000 people (Figure 2). A further advance was made in 1795 when Dr Edward Williams left Carrs Lane Church, Birmingham, to become the pastor of Masbrough Independent Church. Dr Williams was one of the leading moderate Calvinistic ministers of the day and was involved in the formation of the London Missionary Society. He was also one of the editors of the new Evangelical Magazine where the account of John Thorpe's conversion was published in 1794.



Figure 2. Masbrough Chapel in Victorian times (Courtesy of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Archives and Local Studies Service)

In November 1795 an academy for the training of ministers was established with Dr Williams as the tutor. The academy placed great emphasis on practical evangelism, but the need for orthodoxy was also stressed. In accepting the appointment as tutor, Dr Williams stated his conviction that the great need of the day was for truly pious, devout and sound ministers and he expressed his pleasure that the academy committee was aware that ‘scholarship is essentially secondary to the evangelical grace of regeneration’.²¹ In his letter of acceptance of 20 August 1795 he wrote: ‘I am fully assured that an unconverted ministry is the bane of the Christian cause, and the dead weight of the churches. The evil occasioned thereby is beyond calculation.’²²

Calvinism was central to the foundation of the Rotherham Independent Academy and if John Thorpe’s high Calvinism was still present at Masbrough, Edward William’s moderate Calvinism may have caused some concern. The academy committee did question Williams about the teaching in one of his books, but he was able to satisfy them. The rules of the academy were unambiguous:

No person shall be chosen tutor or sub-tutor but such as are of most approved piety, learning, diligence, fidelity, and Calvinistic Independent dissenters; and if they who are chosen should afterwards depart from their once professed Calvinistic principles, the subscribers shall be at liberty to dismiss them.²³

However, the purpose of the academy was not just to combat theological error, but rather to preach the gospel to ignorant and, indeed, pagan people.

Following the death of Dr Williams in 1813, Rev James Bennett came to Masbrough and during his pastorate Congregational Churches were established in the Rotherham area at Greasbrough, Kimberworth, Rawmarsh and Swinton. The students of the Rotherham Independent Academy, which soon became known simply as Rotherham College, helped to gather congregations in these localities.

3. Revolution in Rotherham

The title of this paper is ‘Revival and Revolution in Rotherham’ and the interaction between revival and revolution is now examined, looking first at a political revolution which might have occurred, but did not, and then at the industrial revolution which had such a profound effect on England. In the preface to his book, *Civilization*, Professor Niall Ferguson identifies the need to transcend the boundaries erected by academics between ‘economic, social, cultural, intellectual, political, military and international history’,²⁴ and in understanding the evangelical revival in Rotherham it is important to understand the background of the social upheaval produced by the industrial revolution.

3.1 Political revolution

The year 1789 will always be associated with the beginning of the French Revolution. Although within a few years the revolution was overturned in France, it unleashed anti-Christian ideas and forces that have profoundly influenced world history. It has been claimed that it was the eighteenth century evangelical revival that saved England from the horrors of a political revolution of the sort that engulfed France in 1789. In his *History of the English people*, the French historian Élie Halévy expressed this view in the following terms.

Men of letters disliked the Evangelicals for their narrow Puritanism, men of science for their intellectual feebleness. Nevertheless during the nineteenth century, Evangelical religion was the moral cement of English society. ... Evangelicalism was thus the conservative force which restored in England the balance momentarily destroyed by the explosion of the revolutionary forces.²⁵

In view of the atheistic course that the French Revolution took, it may seem surprising that many nonconformists seem to have had some sympathy for the revolutionaries at the beginning of the French Revolution. Doubtless the memory of persecution and the civil disabilities that they still suffered influenced such nonconformist thinking. In Rotherham, the Walker family, who were the leading industrialists, had close business links with Tom Paine, the author of *The Rights of Man*. Figure 3 includes a selection of the Walkers

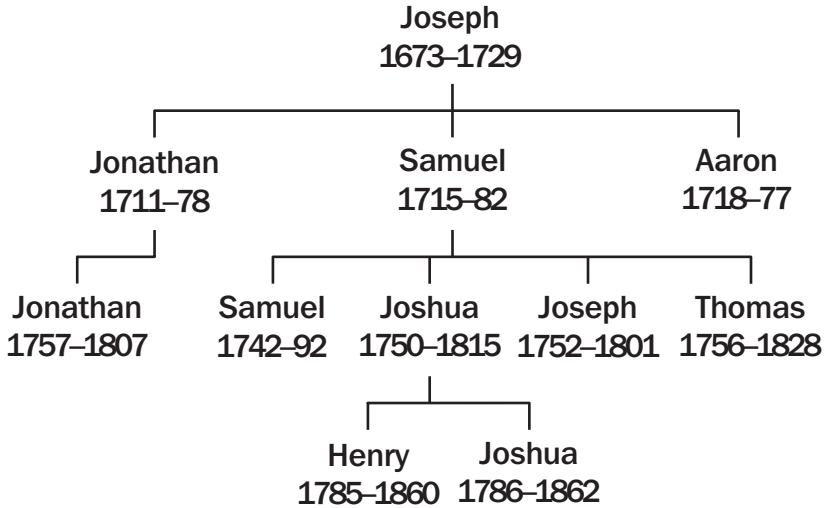


Figure 3. Some of the members of the Walker family

who were most involved in the family business in the period we are considering.

Opinions about the French Revolution rapidly polarized and in the Birmingham riots of July 1791 the property and meeting houses of Radical Dissenters were a particular target.²⁶ England was soon at war with the French Republic and matters became very serious. In 1795 James Montgomery (1771-1854), the young editor of the Sheffield newspaper, *The Iris*, was in prison in York for three months having been accused of unlawfully seducing and encouraging his Majesty's subjects 'to resist and oppose his said Majesty's government and the said war'.²⁷ During a further imprisonment of six months in 1796, resulting from his critical comments on an incident in which the militia fired on an orderly crowd, another young man, John Pye Smith (1774-1851), took over as acting editor of *The Iris*. When in January 1797, Pye Smith applied to enter Rotherham Independent Academy the committee agreed to admit him but warned him that 'they disapproved of too much openness and decision in political sentiments'.²⁸ In later life both these men were prominent and highly respected leaders within nonconformity; James Montgomery became one of England's best known hymn writers and for many years was chairman of the Rotherham College Committee; John Pye Smith was president of Homerton College.

3.2 Industrial revolution—the Walker family

The remarkable changes which occurred in Rotherham in the second half of the eighteenth century were largely associated with three brothers, Jonathan, Samuel and Aaron Walker. If John Thorpe was a key figure in the evangelical revival in Rotherham, Samuel Walker (Figure 4) was a key personality in the industrial revolution in the town.

Samuel Walker started out as a schoolmaster, but soon became involved in the newly developing iron industry. In 1741 he built a cupola and made five tons of castings during the first year. By 1746 the business had greatly expanded and Samuel and his brothers moved their activities from Grenoside in Sheffield to Masbrough in Rotherham. In 1757 the brothers were able to purchase a large estate from the Earl of Effingham where they could build a foundry and two blast furnaces. By this time they had about 500 employees and were the leading industrialists in the town.

It was also in 1757 that the newly formed Society of Calvinistic Methodists began meeting in a schoolroom belonging to the Walkers. When the members of the Society decided to constitute themselves as a Congregational Church, Samuel Walker was one of the two deacons. In 1763 Masbrough Independent Chapel was built with funds provided by the Walker family and when the chapel building was found to be too small Samuel Walker offered to build a larger chapel at his own expense, apart from £300 which had been bequeathed by his brother Aaron, who died in 1777. The new chapel which was built in 1777–80 seated 1000 people, although the 1801 census showed that the combined population of Rotherham, Masbrough and Kimberworth was only 6500. Samuel Walker also built a mausoleum where the the Walker family were buried.

When the academy for the training of ministers was established at Rotherham in 1795, Joshua Walker (Figure 5), a son of Samuel and a deacon at Masbrough, was appointed treasurer and personally provided the money for the erection of the academy building (Figure 6). Jonathan Walker, Joshua's cousin and brother-in-law, and Thomas Walker,²⁹ Joshua's brother, were also involved with the founding of the academy. When in 1841 Rotherham College, as it became known, was incorporated by Royal Warrant with the University of London, the treasurer, Henry Walker, a son of Joshua and grandson of Samuel, resigned on the grounds that the College had departed from the object and operation of its founders.³⁰ It would seem that scholarship was no longer 'secondary to the evangelical grace of regeneration'.

In 1876 the College acquired new buildings at a cost of £26,000. Twelve years later the College was closed and the ministerial students were moved to Bradford. In 1888 the Feoffees of Rotherham bought the College for £8,000. The loss of £18,000 would be equivalent to more than one million pounds in



Figure 4. Samuel Walker (Courtesy of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Archives and Local Studies Service)



Figure 5. Joshua Walker (Courtesy of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Archives and Local Studies Service)

today's money! The College buildings then became the home of Rotherham Grammar School.³¹

From a very small beginning in 1741 the Walkers' firm grew in the iron trade and the Walker family became the leading industrialists in Rotherham.³² In the mid-1770s the American War of Independence resulted in a great increase in the demand for cannon; in 1775 the Walker business produced 40 tons of guns and this reached a peak of 1220 tons in 1781.³³ Subsequently Tom Paine interested them in bridge building and the second iron bridge ever to be built,³⁴ which was over the River Wear at Sunderland, was cast at Masbrough.

An indication of the wealth of the family can be deduced from the dividends the partners received. In 1774 their firm paid dividends of £12,250,



Figure 6. Rotherham Independent Academy (Courtesy of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Archives and Local Studies Service)

but in 1782, twelve days before the death of Samuel Walker, there were dividends of £28,000³⁵ (in current values this would be of the order of £2,000,000). Readers of Jane Austen's novels may get an indication of the magnitude of this wealth by recollecting that the very wealthy landowner, Mr Darcy, had an income of £10,000 a year and that his not quite so wealthy friend, Mr Bingley, had to manage on only £5000 a year, yet was still able to buy a country estate.³⁶

Construction of the Southwark Bridge (Figure 7) commenced in 1814, but this bridge was a financial disaster and in 1820 the Walkers decided to close their Rotherham businesses. Immediate closure would have been disastrous for the town and the Walkers phased their departure, with the final winding-up taking place in 1833. Many of the factories and workshops were sold to employees, some of whom were members of Masbrough Independent Chapel.

4. Interaction of evangelical revival with the industrial revolution

That true revival is a God-given phenomenon and not a human contrivance is well illustrated by the remarkable effects that followed the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield in eighteenth century England. Furthermore, a



Figure 7. Southwark Bridge (Courtesy of Institution of Civil Engineers)

more unlikely conversion experience than that experienced by John Thorpe can scarcely be imagined.

One consequence of revival being a work of God is that it is opposed by fallen humanity and by the devil. This is illustrated in Rotherham in the violent opposition of the mob, the sad division among the Methodist brethren and the occurrence of demon possession. We might sum up these three types of opposition as the world, the flesh and the devil. Despite all these hindrances, some 50 years after John Thorpe stood up to give his impersonation of George Whitefield, a large church and a training college for ministers had been established in Rotherham; a strange consequence of such buffoonery, but surely a most remarkable example of the grace of God.

While the God-given nature of the revival has to be emphasised, it is also relevant to note the human circumstances in which it occurred. The progress of the evangelical revival from the mid-eighteenth century onwards and the great increase in the numbers within the dissenting denominations which accompanied the second evangelical awakening in the early years of the nineteenth century were closely linked to the industrial revolution which transformed many parts of England in those years. The drift from the country into the industrial towns and the consequent enormous increase in the urban population is shown in Figure 8. The relationship between the industrial

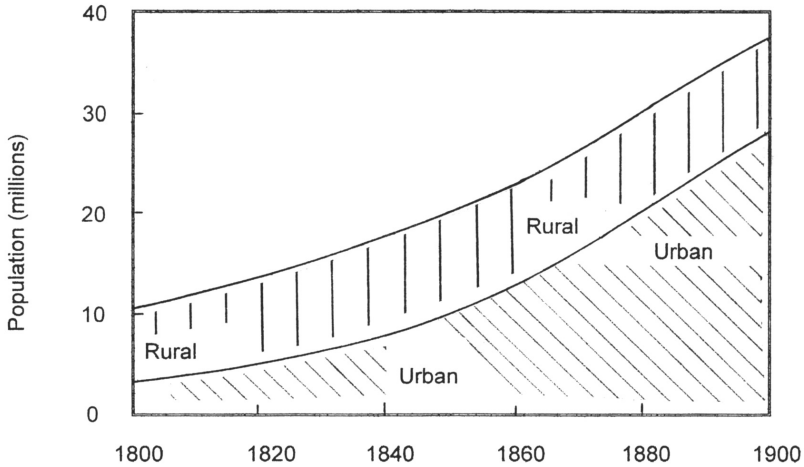


Figure 8. Growth of urban population in Great Britain in nineteenth century

revolution and the evangelical revival is well illustrated in the history of Rotherham, where the Congregational churches owe their foundation to two human instruments; John Thorpe and Samuel Walker.

By 1800 Great Britain was the most industrialised state in the world and the massive migration into the rapidly expanding industrial towns caused vast social upheaval. It has been described as a period of economic chaos and social neglect.³⁷ Large numbers of people uprooted themselves from country villages and small towns and the social and religious structures of those places. They then found themselves in an entirely different and in some ways more hostile environment. Huge opportunities for the gospel resulted from this and open-air preaching reached people who were likely to be more open to the gospel message than they would formerly have been. The period between 1790 and 1840, which have been described as a second evangelical revival³⁸ and the 'boom years of Congregationalism',³⁹ correspond to the period when the industrial revolution resulted in this huge increase in the urban population.

While the social upheaval associated with the industrial revolution prepared the ground and facilitated evangelical revival the large expansion in nonconformity also aided the industrial revolution as described by a civil engineering historian.

The part played by Non-conformists in the first dynamic phase of Britain's Industrial Revolution was immense ... Non-conformists were barred from the Universities until 1870; in the eighteenth century the learned professions were closed to them, while, because they were prevented from trading in the older corporate towns and cities, they tended to set up their businesses in the

Midlands and the North. Non-conformity was then punishable by fines and imprisonment, ... A refusal to conform in such circumstances requires great determination, individuality and strength of mind. ... That the Industrial Revolution originated in the Midlands and the North is usually explained in terms of natural resources. That it was also due to the recognition and successful exploitation of those resources by men of the highest calibre and initiative who had been virtually outlawed by the Establishment is seldom recognized.⁴⁰

In more recent times, the linkage between evangelical revival and social upheaval has been seen in countries such as China and Cambodia where large numbers of people have turned to the Lord Jesus Christ in the traumatic times associated with Marxist political revolutions. In Japan, where no such traumatic changes have happened, the progress of the gospel has been very slow. It would seem that our sovereign God is pleased to use such times of suffering and upheaval, events attributable to human malice and wickedness, for the furtherance of the gospel.

In all great works of God in revival there will be some mixture of error. It seems improbable that the vast increase in nonconformist numbers at the end of the eighteenth century and during the first half of the nineteenth century was all attributable to evangelical conversions. Nonconformist churches filled a vacuum caused by the collapse of old social structures and, in places such as Rotherham, a new wealthy class of industrialists supported ministerial training and large scale chapel building. Some of the growth in numbers was probably due to people joining the church of their employer in days when it was not uncommon, and doubtless prudent, for employees to adopt the religious affiliation of their employer. My great-great-grandparents, John (1795–1859) and Sarah Duke (1799–1850), were received into membership at Masbrough Independent Church in 1842.⁴¹ It may be significant that John Duke was employed by John Barber⁴² who built the Independent Chapel in Kimberworth in 1824 and was a prominent member of Masbrough Independent Chapel.

The founders of the church at Masbrough were Calvinistic Methodists who became Calvinistic Independents. They had little choice since Whitefield did not organize his followers in the way that Wesley did and there was no Calvinistic Methodist denomination in England to which they could affiliate. Paul Cook writes:

The Congregationalists or Independents, with the notable exception of Philip Doddridge and a few others, had largely opposed the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century, choosing to remain detached, cool and respectable. But they were extensively revived in the early nineteenth century so that by the time of the 1851 census their estimated adherents numbered over half a million. Owen Chadwick, however, reckoned their strength as nearer three quarters of a

million, being especially influential in the new industrial cities and urban areas.⁴³

If the events at Rotherham are reasonably typical of the wider situation, it can be concluded that the great expansion of Congregationalism in the early years of the nineteenth century was far more a product of Calvinistic Methodism than of the earlier Puritan Independency. This suggests that the preoccupation with the English Puritans, which is so marked in some circles today, may be a little overdone and more attention should be given to the Calvinistic Methodists.

Acknowledgements

An interest in the subject of this paper developed over many years and I was helped and encouraged by several people and in various ways that are too numerous to mention. However, as I relate in the introduction to the paper, my initial interest was stimulated by a conversation with Dr Geoffrey Nuttall more than fifty years ago.

Acknowledgements of help received and major sources used in the preparation of the paper are appropriate and, indeed, necessary.

A number of the figures are from the collection of the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Archives and Local Studies Service (figures 2, 4, 5 and 6) and from the archives of the Institution of Civil Engineers (figure 7). Permission to reproduce these images is gratefully acknowledged.

The CD-ROM version of the *Works of George Whitefield* (Weston Rhyn: Quinta Press, 2000) has been of great assistance in preparing the paper.

Much of the information concerning Rotherham College (Independent Academy) has been derived from the Reverend Kenneth Wadsworth's history of the Yorkshire United Independent College, which describes two hundred years of training for the Christian ministry by the Congregational Churches of Yorkshire. I inherited a copy of this book from my father.

Notes and references

- 1 Rev. John Huxtable was a leading ecumenist and became the first Moderator of the United Reformed Church.
- 2 Dr Geoffrey Nuttall died on 24 July 2007, aged 95. In a lengthy obituary in *The Daily Telegraph* (14 August 2007) he was described as being 'among the leading historians of English and American Puritanism'.
- 3 Thomas Rotherham's family was also known as Scott and it has been suggested that it was his father who changed the family name from Scott to Rotherham.
- 4 Stuart Charnak, *Thomas Rotherham—Archbishop of York, Chancellor of England (1423–1500)*, pp. 14–15.
- 5 Thomas Rotherham, Archbishop of York, appears in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Act 2, Scene 4.
- 6 Freda Crowder and Dorothy Greene, *Rotherham, its history, Church and Chapel on the Bridge* (Wakefield: SR Publishers, 1971), p. 8.
- 7 Vernon Thornes, *The English Civil War in South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire (1642–1649)* (1993), p. 5. Anthony P Munford, *A history of Rotherham* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2000), p. 63.

- 8 Jack Clemo, *The invading Gospel—a return to faith* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1986), pp. 72–73.
- 9 Stan Crowther, *Rotherham's early Methodists*, text of talk given to many local organisations, booklet prepared for publication by Peter Hawkridge, Secretary of Rotherham District Civic Society, p. 10.
- 10 *Biography of the Reverend John Thorpe, late Pastor of the Independent Church at Masborough, near Rotherham*. Evangelical Magazine, vol. 2, February 1794, p. 45.
- 11 George Whitefield, *Works*, vol. 2 (CD-ROM Weston Rhyn: Quinta Press, 2000), p. 357.
- 12 *Ibid.* vol. 3, pp. 25–26.
- 13 Robert Philip, *The Life of the Reverend George Whitefield, MA* (3rd edition 1842); J P Gledstone, *George Whitefield MA, Field Preacher* (1900); Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield* (1876); J R Andrews, *The Life of George Whitefield* (4th edition 1879). Available on *The Works of George Whitefield* (CD-ROM, Weston Rhyn: Quinta Press, 2000).
- 14 *Biography of the Reverend John Thorpe*, p. 46.
- 15 *Ibid.* p. 45.
- 16 John Wesley's *Journal*, Tuesday 5 June 1753.
- 17 Paul E G Cook, *Fire from heaven—times of extraordinary revival* (Darlington: EP Books, 2009), p. 60.
- 18 Crowther, *Rotherham's early Methodists*, p. 14.
- 19 Masbrough is sometimes rendered as Masborough or, more commonly, Masbro'. The Independent Church was usually referred to as Masbro' Independent Chapel.
- 20 J B Wakeley, *Anecdotes of George Whitefield* (10th edition first published 1879; reprinted Weston Rhyn: Quinta Press, 2003), p. 105.
- 21 Kenneth W Wadsworth, *Yorkshire United Independent College* (London, Independent Press, 1954), p. 76.
- 22 *An account of the Rotherham Independent Academy, which was opened November 5, 1795*. www.rotherhamweb.co.uk/academy
- 23 Wadsworth, *Yorkshire United Independent College*, p. 75.
- 24 Niall Ferguson, *Civilization* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), pxxvii.
- 25 Quoted by G M Trevelyan, *Illustrated English social history*, vol 4, the nineteenth century (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), pp. 36–37.
- 26 Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar men* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), pp. 435–449.
- 27 Paul S Taylor, *James Montgomery—a man for all people* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2010), pp. 46–50.
- 28 Wadsworth, *Yorkshire United Independent College*, p. 63.
- 29 In *Walker—a world famous firm and a remarkable Rotherham family* (p. 50), Vernon Thornes writes that Thomas Walker, having moved to Manchester, was 'indited for treason, but the jury acquitted him under Fox's Libel Act of 1792'. This seems to relate to a Thomas Walker who was born in Manchester in 1749 and became a successful cotton merchant. He was a prominent abolitionist and promoted the work of Tom Paine. His house was besieged by mobs on several occasions and he was put on trial in 1794. He does not appear to be connected to the Rotherham Walker family.
- 30 Wadsworth, *Yorkshire United Independent College*, p. 97.
- 31 H Wroe and W H Green. *Rotherham Grammar School (1483–1933)* (1934). Republished in 1983 as Part 1 of The Thomas Rotherham legacy (1483–1983): a history of Rotherham Grammar School and Thomas Rotherham College, p. 10.
- 32 Anthony P Munford, *Iron and Steel Town—an industrial history of Rotherham* (Sutton Publishing, 2003), pp. 18–57; Vernon Thornes, *Walker—a world famous firm and a remarkable Rotherham family* (1991), 83pp.
- 33 Munford, *Iron and Steel Town—an industrial history of Rotherham*, p. 40.
- 34 The first iron bridge to be built in the world was erected over the River Severn at Ironbridge by Abraham Darby III in 1779. The bridge over the River Wear was opened in 1796.
- 35 Vernon Thornes, *The Making of Rotherham* (1987), p. 36.

- 36 Jane Austen, *Pride and prejudice* (first published 1813).
- 37 Trevelyan, *Illustrated English social history*, vol 4, p. 36.
- 38 Cook, *Fire from heaven*, p. 18.
- 39 Peter Robinson, *Congregationalism's boom years*, 2006 Congregational Studies Conference (Beverly: EFCC, 2006), pp. 7–23.
- 40 L T C Rolt, *Victorian engineering* (London: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 170–171.
- 41 G D Matthews, *The Dukes of Kimberworth*, unpublished note, c1985.
- 42 John Barber's uncle, James Barber, was one of the trustees of the original chapel at Masbrough.
- 43 Cook, *Fire from heaven*, pp. 22–23.



*New Inn Congregational Church, near Pontypool, South Wales
(from the Evangelical Movement of Wales website: www.emw.org.uk)
The minister, Graham Cooke, has spoken at previous Congregational Studies Conferences*



*Alexandra Road Congregational Church, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire
(from the church website: www.arcchemel.org.uk)
Dr Andrew Charles, who gave the first paper at this year's conference, is an elder here*

Two Unaffiliated Congregational churches

Origin & History of the Unaffiliated Congregational Churches Charity

Frank Wroe

Introduction

I attended Greenacres Congregational Church in Oldham from being about 3 or 4 years old and over the years became more and more involved with the Sunday school & church. Greenacres is a 1662 church.

Uniformed organisations, youth club, Sunday school, youth class 1974 I became Youth Leader for the church (four weeks to cover for illness remained for nine years developed young people from the class to eventually take over from me.

Became a church member in 1971, deacon in 1980 and remained a deacon for about 11 or 12 years. I was Church Secretary for five years in the mid-1980s.

Throughout the 1950 and 60s I was, of course, completely oblivious to the turmoil about the proposed changes to the life and order of Congregational Churches within the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

In addition, I was also unaware of the campaign that was taking place locally and nationally to assure churches that there was an alternative to the 'Proposed Bases for Union', a campaign being organised and run by a number of people from the newly formed Congregational Association, which included a number of people from Greenacres and other Congregational Churches in Oldham. The campaign involved letter writing and a number of people following those letters up by visiting churches to address church meetings and fringe meetings, with the object of assuring churches that there was a credible alternative to the proposed union, that was 'to remain Congregational and retain the autonomy of the local church.'

As we know the campaign had some success in concentrated pockets. In Oldham for example there were 18 churches listed in the 1965/66 Congregational Year Book. By 1975 ten of those had rejected the Union and joined the Congregational Federation and today there are still six Congregational Churches in Oldham five in the Federation and one completely independent having first joined the Federation and then withdrawn in 1996.

As well as becoming a church member in 1971, I was also married that year and my wife and I played an extremely small part in the campaign, we addressed and stuffed envelopes with information for church secretaries I guess. I don't suppose that there are many people can say that they spent part

of their honeymoon addressing envelopes to church secretaries, we did and after 42 years we still seem to be doing it from time to time.

I have been involved with the Federation in a number of roles; Member of the General Purposes Committee and later its chairman, member of the Federation Council, member of the Finance Committee. During the early 1990s I played a large part in visiting churches in Scotland who were trying to decide what to do about the situation, which was developing over the proposed formation of the Congregational Union of/in Scotland, shades of 1950s/60s in England & Wales. By this time I seemed to have been promoted so fortunately no envelopes to address!

I was elected National President of the Congregational Federation in 1996/97 only the fourth lay person in the 24 year history of the Federation to be elected President.

I am a product of the Congregational Federation Integrated Training Course, starting the foundation module in 2000, then had a one year rest, which lasted for 6 years, but eventually completed the course in 2010 when I graduated from Winchester and was then ordained at the church where I'd been pastor since May 1999.

I saw the position of Clerk to the Unaffiliated Congregational Churches Charities (hereafter UCCC) advertised in *The Congregationalist* in the summer of 2000 and with the support of my deacons and the church meeting decided to apply.

John Franks was the clerk at the time and Alan Tovey was the Chairman of the Trustees, the interviews were held at the Congregational Federation offices in Nottingham on a very hot day in July, if I remember rightly. As Chairman Alan ran the interview panel, which was made up of one representative from the three groupings from the Trustee body; Unaffiliated Churches, Congregational Federation and EFCC, represented by Alan as Chairman and Brian Cook.

The panel interviewed all the candidates and then that evening recommended my appointment as clerk to the Trustees. Since then I always considered both Alan and Brian and indeed the whole of the EFCC to be extremely shrewd men with a real talent for spotting individuals with exceptional talent, ability and modesty!

Background

I intend to resist the temptation to fill this presentation with figures and percentages about churches in this or that area including listing a great number of Welsh chapels with completely unpronounceable names, which did or didn't go into the URC or affiliate to either the Congregational Federation or EFCC in 1972.

I could also be in danger of completely losing both of us as I attempt to explain the finer details of the County Union and college schemes following the adoption of the URC Act 1972 and the ultimate involvement of the charity Commission as these schemes were apportioned and sealed. Obviously there is going to have to be some of that but I have attempted to keep it to a minimum.

Most of the historical information I have regarding the background to the setting up and the early days of the UCCC comes from a 37 page book written in 1996 by John Franks, who was the first Administrative Clerk appointed in 1979 and retired in 2000, the book is called *Stewards of God's Bounty*.

John asked both Rev. ES Guest (EFCC) and Mr John Wilcox (CF) to write individual forewords for the book. Stan Guest took a page, John Wilcox almost two pages!

The book is full of facts and figures, but I think that the main story of the UCCC really concerns the men who, in the early 1970s recognised that there was going to be a number of Congregational Churches who were not going to do anything about being involved in unions and remain independent. It seems that many had made it clear that they were not going into the URC, but on the other hand were not going to affiliate to either of the continuing Congregational groupings, namely EFCC or the Congregational Federation.

This, of course, proved to be the case.

In his forward to John Franks' book John Wilcox recalls how; 'When the results of the vote were announced in 1972 nearly 600 churches were listed as "non-uniting" churches.' He goes on to say that; 'During the next few years more than 100 of these non-uniting churches decided to join the URC, whilst nearly 20 churches which originally joined were allowed to secede. The effect of these changes was to reduce the number of continuing Congregational churches (including those not listed in the 1971-72 Year Book) to about 550.'

He also points out that included in the 550 were 24 churches which had withdrawn from affiliation in 1966 when the Congregational Union in England and Wales changed its name to the Congregational Church in England and Wales. The 24 had, of course, formed themselves into an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches. John Wilcox recalls that; 'After 1972 these evangelical churches decided to make their fellowship into a distinctive group of Congregational Churches.'

However what was to be done about the 100 or so churches that in the past had been part of the Congregational Union as well as the Union Schemes of the Counties where they were situated and as such they should be entitled to a share of the apportionment of these funds.

As Rev. Stan Guest points out in his forward, ‘The Charity Commission certainly thought so and as a result an allocation of funds was made for the benefit of the “Unaffiliated” churches.’

So just what is an Unaffiliated Congregational Church?

‘An Unaffiliated Congregational church is the term used by the Charity Commission to define a continuing Congregational church, which has not joined the Congregational Federation or an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches.’

However there are other stipulations, which an Unaffiliated Congregational Church must meet and these are clearly outlined in the Charity Commission Scheme sealed on 4 January 1977.

1. Definition of Unaffiliated Congregational Churches

In the Charity Commission Scheme the expression “Unaffiliated Congregational Churches” means:

- a. Congregational Churches which were in membership with the former Congregational Church in England and Wales or were members of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in the year 1966 and which on the 31st December 1975 were not member churches of the Congregational Federation or of an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches and
- b. Congregational Churches in England and Wales formed after 5th October 1972 which are not members of the Congregational Federation or of an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches.

Deciding which churches were to be considered ‘Unaffiliated’ after 5 October 1972 became a long and complicated process. John Franks recalls that; ‘From 1972 to the end of 1976 discussions and negotiations were carried on between the Charity Commissioners, representatives of the United Reformed Church and the continuing Congregational churches to ensure that when the scheme was finally sealed on 4 January 1977 it provided a fair basis on which each of the four bodies to benefit from it could build a structure most appropriate to its needs.’

It seems that there were 148 churches on a list that had been compiled for the purpose of working out the percentages to be used for the first apportionment calculations. However by 1977 it was readily recognised that the list was out of date because much of the information had been started to be gathered pre-1972 and a great deal of movement of churches had taken place in the intervening five years.

Some on the list had actually gone into the URC, a number were included by mistake and others had closed, but no one knew about it. Three had initially remained unaffiliated then affiliated to the Congregational Federation,

but by 1977 had left the Federation and were again recognised as unaffiliated. At least three churches had been omitted in error from the list. At least 23 had affiliated to the Congregational Federation and 13 had affiliated to the EFCC.

You see the difficulty with facts and figures!

If you are still with this then you will have worked out that by 1977 there were 112 churches listed as unaffiliated.

From the latter part of 1977 until early 1979 two ministers undertook to visit as many of these 112 listed churches as possible in an attempt to get some sort of idea as to the health of the churches. During the latter part of 1977 and early 1978 Rev. Reg Cleaves of the Congregational Federation visited some of the 30 listed churches in Wales and Rev. Gordon T Booth from the EFCC visited 86 churches throughout England during 1978/79 whilst on sabbatical. Gordon took Gertrude, his disabled wife, with him, and they camped in a tent.

Both produced detailed reports of each church and John Franks remarked that the report from Reg Cleaves; 'was of considerable benefit to the Trustees in their deliberations as to how best to utilise their resources for the benefit of the churches.'

Gordon Booth's report contained very detailed information as he made an assessment of each church; 'strengths and weaknesses, their Trust position and whether EFCC or the Federation would be most likely to benefit from any church which considered, eventually, affiliation. He also gave information about the extent of and condition of the buildings of the various churches.' This was an extraordinary task on Gordon's part.

As the reports were assessed the Trustees decided that they would appoint a Peripatetic Minister to make personal contact with the churches in order to offer advice and guidance as well as financial help from the Trustees, where appropriate when a church had particular pressing needs. John Franks was the first appointed to that position in 1979, Later that year John was also appointed as the first Administrative Clerk to the Unaffiliated Trustees.

By 1992 the work load of the Administrative Clerk had grown to such an extent that another Peripatetic Minister, Rev. R W Michel, was appointed. This was a post he held the next five years.

Following his departure the only contact churches had was once again via John Franks, until 1998 when three more Peripatetic Ministers, later named Church Support Workers, were appointed: Rev. Norman Bonnett (Southern England), Rev. Malcolm Coles (North of England and the Midlands), both EFCC ministers, and George Stephens (Wales) from the Congregational Federation. George was already the Congregational Federation Church Support Worker for the Wales Area.

Their work was invaluable to me as I began working for Trust as they toured the UCCC churches over a period of ten years (or in George's case eight years), preaching and dispensing advice about available grants and how to complete the increasingly detailed grant application forms that I had introduced.

In addition there were the documents for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks to be discussed and then completed the UCCC Trustees insisted that all UCCC churches should be made fully aware of the vital importance of what were then CRB checks for all ministers, Sunday school staff and relevant church personnel. Subsequently, the Trustees decided that no grants would be made to a church which did not have appropriate CRB checks. The three Church Support Workers were on hand to deal with this in the first instance and would involve me when more complex information was needed. By this time we had established a very good system for CRB checks through the children's department of the Congregational Federation dealing with the Churches Agency for Safeguarding.

From 2001 to Present Day

When I was appointed Administrative Clerk in 2001 I took over an extremely well run, well organised operation. However John Franks worked with paper and a Remington typewriter. So understandably the accounts were hand written and recorded in an account book. It took me almost 18 months to computerise the accounts into a form which I was comfortable with and then four years ago these were developed further when the UCCC accountant wrote a very simple accounting programme for the UCCC which really makes life less complicated throughout the year but especially at the year end.

The Charity Commission Scheme sealed in 1977 mirrors the schemes sealed for the two other Congregational groupings (EFCC and CF) as well as the URC, although the URC has two or three other funds for the education of children and the relief of poverty.

There are seven main Trust fund headings under which the investments are made, income is obtained and grants are awarded:

- General Purposes
- Maintenance of the Ministry
- Church Extension
- Welfare
- Education
- Homes for Retired Ministers
- Ministerial Training

In 2001 and in addition to the seven main Trust funds there were also 23 active County Union Schemes from which eligible churches benefitted. Over the previous 24 years a number of inactive County Union Schemes had been

wound up but these 23 still had to be accounted for. There were some anomalies like the Scheme for Cheshire General Purposes Fund. It was in a healthy condition with a good return on investments, income that could be used for any purposes in the Cheshire Churches.

However there is only one church that could benefit from that fund, Bradley Congregational Church, a small country church with a membership of about ten. They meet once every two months or so, but three main services keep them afloat financially: Anniversary, Harvest and Carol Service. As far as I know they hold regular church meetings, their building and grounds are in very good condition and the church secretary, who died at the end of 2012 in his late 80s and whose grandfather or great grandfather was a founder member of the church, was always on the ball with legislation and accounting requirements. The remaining congregation have since met, appointed a new secretary, and have agreed to carry on as a fellowship knowing that the UCCC Trustees are able to help them if they need to call on them to do so.

There is a slight problem though because Bradley isn't actually in Cheshire any longer! With boundary changes it is now in Shropshire and has been, I think, since the 1970s, and there was no active County Union Fund for Shropshire. It was this scheme that eventually led to the Trustees really looking at the usefulness of County Union Schemes and so in 2005 I was asked by the Trustees to contact the Charity Commission in order to begin the process of winding up the Cheshire Fund. This happened in July 2005 and the investments amalgamated into the National General Purposes Fund.

By 2008, under instructions from the Trustees, I had, with guidance from a specialist solicitor and the UCCC accountant, wound up the other twenty two County Union Funds and had been able to either distribute the expendable income to churches within the relevant county boundaries or amalgamated the funds into the relevant Trust Funds of the main scheme that is the original seven main Trust Funds. So we had, in effect, written a new scheme for Unaffiliated Churches, one that is more easily managed.

At the end of 2012 a further streamlining of income from the investments took place by pooling everything under the General Purposes investments heading, but awarding grants and apportioning income under each of the original seven trust fund headings.

You may recall that in 1977 there were 112 listed Unaffiliated Churches. In 2001 there were 69 and today there are either 60 or 61 listed churches (I'm not sure about the status of one of the listed churches: open or closed). Yes it is a declining number, yet it is not all bad news, because of the eight or nine churches that have left the list over the last twelve years only three have closed; the rest have moved to affiliate themselves to other bodies.

Now here is an interesting point: these affiliations are not the EFCC, nor to the Congregational Federation, not even a move to join the URC, but to affiliate to either the Baptist Union or the FIEC.

From time to time the Trustees are reminded that the UCCC is not a denomination, but simply a body which is responsible for the distribution of funds to an agreed number of listed churches. So the main consideration at any Trustee meeting is to look at where the particular trust funds can be used to bring the greatest benefits to churches and their fellowships, which qualify as Unaffiliated Churches.

In return the listed churches need to be assured that they can rely on the nine trustees that, whilst being stewards of the resources, they are duty bound by the Charity Commission to always act in their interests.

In 1977 John Franks records that: ‘the first grants to be allocated were small and the churches in a position to request help in the first year or two were few. It was a major task contacting all the churches to advise them of the availability of help. There were only the seven trust funds and only three of these (General Purposes, Maintenance of the Ministry and Church Extension) were able to help actual churches. The Homes for Retired Ministers and Welfare Funds were specifically for ministers, retired ministers and dependants of ministers. The Education Fund was for the benefit of the children of ministers: and the Ministerial Training Fund for the benefit of members of Unaffiliated Churches who were in training for or wished to begin training for the ministry.’

The whole situation changed as lists of unaffiliated churches became clearer and as John and later the Peripatetic/Church Support Workers toured these churches. The awarding of grants has become easier for the Trustees as, with the amalgamation of the County Union Schemes into the main scheme, they don’t have to rely on the boundary restrictions for the use of funds.

Today the Trustees still award grants for Maintenance of the Ministry, Ministerial Training, Building Work (which are ever increasing as the buildings get older), regular payments for Retired Ministers and Ministers Widows, hardship grants, Education Grants for the children of ministers.

In a chapter on using the resources John Franks remarks that: ‘It is worth recording too that some of our funds can be used to help other than unaffiliated churches if there is a surplus in any year. Accordingly EFCC and Congregational Federation churches have been helped considerably with the cost of building and repair work on their premises.’ This was especially true when there were still County Union Schemes. If there was a surplus in one of these funds, and no unaffiliated church could benefit, non-affiliated churches (EFCC or Congregational Federation) benefitted in that year.

This is particularly relevant today especially in the area of training because over the last two years the Trustees have been working closely with the Congregational Federation Integrated Training Course, now validated through Winchester University, for the training of ministers and those interested in ministry. The course is modular and applicants are encouraged to take the modules on Congregational principles and Congregational history as a minimum.

Future

The 1977 Scheme says that Trustee body will be nine plus a clerk: three appointed by the Congregational Federation, three appointed by EFCC, and three elected by and from Unaffiliated Churches. The Congregational Federation and EFCC Trustees are appointed by the Council of the Congregational Federation and the Committee of the EFCC respectively and serve for four years. The Unaffiliated Trustees are appointed by ballot of all UCCC churches, first asking for nominations, then profiles of those nominated are sent to all the churches, and appointment made of those three receiving the most votes, who then serve for five years.

Nine people elected in different ways to oversee the work of the charity, by distributing funds by way of grants.

It is interesting to speculate what might have happened if the URC Act had not happened or if the vote gone the other way. Would the Union have then united and grown stronger in their diversity, eventually putting splits behind them rather than splitting off into smaller units as we have now. It is impossible to tell because if it wasn't that I'm sure some other aspect of theology or practice would have caused splits. However there is something that is really intriguing and always fascinates me and is in many ways pleasing, that when the Trustees of the UCCC meet to discuss charity business and make decisions.

In general and despite a number of theological differences, they do manage to work together for the benefit of these churches that did nothing about joining a particular Congregational grouping in 1972. If nothing else it shows that at least nine representatives from continuing Congregational groupings can at least work together for the benefit of the wider Congregational church, by attending to some of the pressing needs church buildings, ministry and training of just 60 churches.

In the future the reality is that there will be fewer and fewer UCCC churches, fewer and fewer Ministers resulting sadly in a greater isolation for those remaining UCCC churches, an isolation that makes them vulnerable to influences that are outside the Congregational tradition as some of the more extreme branches of theology take over, sometimes dominated by just one

person or a small group of people by overriding the authority of the church meeting, and take a fellowship in the way *they* want to go.

However there is always an opportunity to buck the trend, but to do it now we must learn how to share and preach the gospel and together we must work hard to show that Congregational history and principles not only have been important in the past but continue to be so in the present and are vital for the future if Congregationalism is to be of a wider relevance.

After 36 years the UCCC Trustee body shows that co-operation not only can be, but actually is, a successful formula. Churches served on the one hand without the formation of a complicated structure and on the other had without people remaining firmly anchored to their own particular Congregational grouping.

Without the continued co-operation of the three Congregational groupings, the decline could be swift and sadly not always brought about by churches closing but by these very churches which made a stand in 1972 becoming ever fewer or ever more isolated or simply moving away to other theological practices.

In discussion

Several points were raised and discussed in the discussion which followed.

A Church which had affiliated to another body (whether it be EFCC or the Congregational Federation) but had now left would not be considered an Unaffiliated Church. But if a new Congregational church was founded that was not affiliated to any denominational body, it could apply to be considered an unaffiliated Congregational church.

The current unaffiliated churches are not uniform in theology or practice. Some are Reformed evangelical, some are liberal, some are charismatic, some are traditional. The UCCC has no view on this, as long as the churches follow congregational principles. Individual Trustees may have views on these differences, but do not apply their own views in making decisions about grants. So grants are made, for example, for the support of women ministers, even though some Trustees disagree with that. The Trustees are aware that they have to act in accordance with what is laid down in the Trust Deed.

It is the opinion of many that when the Trust was established it was anticipated that all the unaffiliated churches would opt to affiliate to either EFCC or the Congregational Federation. This has not happened, and there seems little likelihood of it happening. The funds of the UCCC are generous and churches would probably lose out financially if they affiliated.

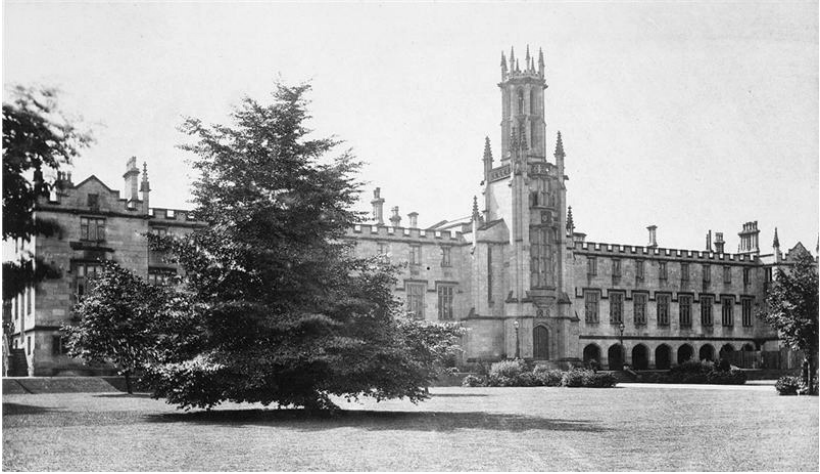
Regarding the closure of churches, UCCC has no involvement in the sale of property or disposal of funds. That is the responsibility of the churches' custodian trustees who must disperse the funds in accordance with the terms of the Trust Deed. Often the Deed will say that the funds should go to the

nearest surviving Congregational Church, which may, or may not, be an unaffiliated one. So none of these funds come to the UCCC.

The UCCC is not a denomination. The churches which remain unaffiliated chose not to be part of a denomination. So UCCC has no role in church disputes, though in some situations it may refuse to give grants until a dispute is settled.

The Trust can give advice for the benefit of churches. One church was having difficulties with its custodian trustees, who were preventing important repair work being carried out on their premises. The church wished to they could replace the trustees, but didn't think they could. One of the UCCC Trustees pointed out that the URC Act 1972 gave provision for non-uniting churches to appoint trustees of their own choosing. The church meeting voted to dismiss the trustees and appoint a trust body as custodian trustees. The Charity Commission was informed, the problem trustees were dismissed and the trust body became trustees. Subsequently extensive work has been carried out on their property for the benefit of the church.

An apparent anomaly is the fact that some unaffiliated churches are Countess of Huntingon Connexion Churches. This occurs because CofH churches were members of the Congregational Union of England and Wales prior to 1972, and those that did not affiliate to another body were still considered to be unaffiliated.



Lancashire Independent College, Manchester, about 1870



Lancashire Independent College, Manchester (from an old postcard, about 1900)

The experience of ministerial training, then and now

Bill Dyer

When I first joined the EFCC Committee about 1980 almost all the Committee who were ministers had been trained at one of the original Congregational colleges. I am now the only remaining committee member (co-opted) who attended one of those colleges.

The Northern College building in Whalley Range, Manchester, where I was trained, was a spacious Victorian building capable of providing both bedrooms and study rooms, and all the necessary facilities for about 80 students. This impressive building was an unmistakable reminder of former days when God's Word was believed and honoured, when the gospel thrived in our northern Congregational Churches, and when large numbers of men were trained for the ministry. But liberalism did terrible damage, the glory departed, and for many years, as John Legg has said 'Evangelical Congregationalism became virtually extinct'. By the 1960s and 70s the upkeep of the building had become too expensive. It was sold to become the headquarters of the boilermakers' union. A few years later it again changed hands and now serves to train Islamic mullahs! What a tragic judgement upon liberalism!

In my day the College served as a student hall of residence for Manchester University. This provided a good student experience because we had access to the university facilities, including a large Christian Union. About half our students were ministerial candidates and the other half were reading general subjects in the university. Priority for these places was given to young men from Congregational churches, though few showed signs of spiritual life.

In previous days James Roby in particular had had a hugely influential ministry in that part of the North West. But during my student days in the 60s, though Congregational churches were still numerous, most were in a poor state spiritually. Nonconformist 'cathedrals' that once seated up to a thousand now had just a handful who generally sat either right at the back (projection of voice was essential) or in the choir stalls. Whilst leading in prayer you could clearly hear the disinterested sound of whispering and rustling of sweet papers coming from the choir stalls behind the pulpit!

By the 1950s fewer men were coming forward for training and so the Yorkshire and Lancashire Independent Colleges merged, and the Yorkshire principal Dr Hubert Cunliffe-Jones became Associate Principal with Dr Gordon Robinson in the joint Northern College, Manchester.

My time at College was very much at the end of an era. Dr Gordon Robinson retired at the end of my last year and Dr Cunliffe-Jones was soon given the prestigious chair of doctrine at the University.

Nottingham College and New College London closed within a few years, and Northern College merged with the Methodist, Baptist and Unitarian colleges in Manchester. Denominational power politics, led by John Huxtable the Congregational Union General Secretary was driving the changes which resulted in the formation of the URC. From our perspective as students the reasoning seemed to be that independency no longer worked and therefore greater centralisation (control over the structures, finances and churches) was necessary. The real need, of course, was not structural change but spiritual regeneration of the churches, but liberalism was incapable of delivering that.

My journey to Northern College followed my conversion to Christ after years as an ungodly farmer. Some months after conversion I discussed my growing sense of call to the ministry with our Congregational minister. Even though I was such a recent, unchurched and theologically illiterate Christian, he arranged for me to become a member of the church and then set in motion the Congregational route to theological college. When seeking training there was no question of distance learning. It was assumed I would commit to do a full residential college course. The colleges were independent of the denomination and had inherited funds and bursaries, and some ongoing income from the churches, sufficient to supplement student grants and cover most of the cost of fees and accommodation.

I had to be interviewed and recommended by my local church, then at district level and finally by the southwest province. At each interview I could only give my testimony and speak of my desire to spend the rest of my life telling others about the God who had become so real to me and had transformed my life. I had only been a Christian a few months and had very little understanding of the Bible, theology, church life or Congregationalism. Yet after each interview I was recommended, and soon found myself preparing to be interviewed at Northern College, Manchester. About June our minister said, 'If you are going to college in September you ought to do some preaching', and he made arrangements for me to preach in some small village chapels. The first I shall never forget. I had never taken part in any form of public worship, never read the Scriptures or prayed, let alone lead a service or preach. I took the whole service, and the grace of God and the freshness of my conversion experience carried me through.

When it came to the big day at Northern College we had exams to sit and an interview with the college staff and governors. Again I shared my testimony. One asked, 'Mr Dyer, just because you can grow turnips and mangels what makes you think you can undertake an academic university

course?’ I replied that I could only do it with God’s help, and I added, ‘I can do no other’. One of the governors reacted thinking I was saying I was incapable of doing anything else. Someone had to explain that Mr Dyer meant God’s compulsion was so strong it left him with no option.

Looking back it is alarming that I was accepted for training when I knew so little and was so ill prepared. In the light of this I suppose it was inevitable that unsuitable people would be accepted. One who was clearly unsuitable, failed after years of training to receive a call to a church and tragically became a bitter atheist.

The first evening at college a group of us were getting to know each other when one student said ‘I’m a liberal’ and an Irish lad said ‘I’m a conservative’, and I was so ignorant I thought they were talking politics! I didn’t know there was more than one kind of Christian! As the first week-end approached a message went around that the freshers who had done some (basically any) preaching were expected to join the preaching list right away and would be allocated churches to preach at on the coming Sunday. I had only preached a handful of times before starting at college, and might have been preaching any kind of heresy, but on that first Sunday I found myself at Bradford in the morning and Wakefield in the afternoon, and at Pickering all day the following Sunday. These were my first introductions to Yorkshire, which was eventually to become my home. My third Sunday was at ‘The Octagon’, one of the huge Manchester ‘cathedrals’ with a tiny congregation. Here I was faced with leading communion. I was confused because there was wine but no bread, only plates with little white dots. When I handed these plates to the servers I said ‘I assume there is some bread underneath’. I thought the dots were a pattern on the top of plate covers—I had never seen wafers before!

Sometimes we were notified in advance that there was a baby to be baptised, but on other occasions we were only informed in the vestry just before the service started. Equally there might be new members to welcome. One of the students was informed in the vestry that a woman had come to be ‘churched’. He had no idea what this meant or what he should do but was unwilling to reveal his ignorance. During the service he asked her to come and stand at the front. He then raised his hand in front of her and said, ‘Woman, be thou churched!’ And then asked her to return to her seat. As far as I know both she and the church were well satisfied!! Basically we were expected to preach every Sunday, either in the North of England or in North Wales.

When it came to our studies, the lectures were divided between the university and the college. The first Old Testament lecture by Dr Edgar Jones was designed to set the tone for the whole college course. He told us we were going to take the Bible out of its protective glass case and examine it honestly and critically. The very liberal ‘Oesterley & Robinson’ was to be our textbook

for Old Testament studies, and the one-volume Bible Commentary by the liberal Methodist A.S. Peake (1911) was a standard reference book for the whole Bible. We were quickly introduced to the liberal theory of 'J, E, D, P' as the different strands of authorship of the Pentateuch, and exposed to the outdated critical views of 19th century liberals like Ewald. Often it seemed the greatest attention was given, not to the actual content of the books of the Bible but rather to the historical background and to question traditional understanding and authorship. For example, to convince us that Isaiah had several authors and that Nehemiah was written before Ezra.

The New Testament was subjected to similar liberal interpretation. We were led to understand that Edgar Jones not only didn't believe in hell, but that he was convinced that Jesus didn't either, and that the references to hell in the Gospels were not the words of Jesus but added in later by the authors. Therefore in public reading of Matthew 25, for example, he felt justified in leaving out the references to hell.

I naïvely went along with everything the college taught. But after some time I became aware that three students were different. It was said they were intellectually dishonest because they believed the Bible literally, and they were not very nice because they didn't believe in a God of love, but rather a God who sent some people to hell. At a certain level this group were held at arms length, but I gradually became aware that perhaps I had more in common with them, particularly in their experience of God.

It was about this time that I met Christine, my future wife, who was from a Pentecostal family. For the first time I saw real Christianity lived out in her godly, Bible-believing family. This helped to cement my commitment to conservative evangelicalism, though it was some years before I embraced Reformed convictions.

For the liberals, love not holiness was God's core attribute. Love was the yardstick against which everything was measured, determining what was to be believed or rejected. The problem was that the liberal understanding of love seemed, not so much the amazing love of a reconciled sin-hating God, who had bought his people at incredible cost, but rather, a watered down version more like an extension of mere human love. Penal substitution was out. The Cross demonstrated that no matter how bad we were, God still loved and accepted us. Universalism was in. 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive', was blatantly taken out of context in a sermon by one of the students.

Liberalism provided no agreed systematic theology or body of doctrine which could be taught with authority from the Bible, so lectures focused on the history of doctrine with little clear contemporary application. The goal of the college seemed to be to develop, within a very broad Bible basis, the

students' ability to think for themselves and draw their own theological conclusions, and to have confidence in what they believed and the ability to preach and teach it clearly. Consequently we knew little of what the lecturers themselves believed, and belief among the students varied greatly on issues like the Virgin Birth, miracles, the Resurrection of Jesus and his Second Coming. Even the staff seemed to have little understanding of the theology of infant baptism. With such confusion we evangelicals left college with massive gaps in our knowledge, but also with much to 'unlearn', which also posed difficulties. I'm not certain that any of my evangelical contemporaries maintained their conservative convictions long-term.

In theory liberalism affirmed liberty of conscience about what you believed and practiced, but of course there were inconsistencies. Belief in the Trinity and in the divinity of Christ were, I think, non-negotiable, as also were traditional biblical morals. A student was expelled when his fiancée became pregnant. And liberty of conscience didn't easily extend to evangelicals. It was regarded as self-evident that there was no rational basis for holding conservative evangelical convictions. No matter what your convictions when you started the course, it was almost assumed that by the end you would have wholeheartedly embraced liberal teaching. The only serious attempt to explain the continued existence of evangelical dinosaurs was that some people are so constituted they can't live with uncertainty. They need 'fundamentalist' dogmatism and absolute certainty.

Being scrupulously fair to the staff, they genuinely didn't know how to handle the embarrassment of still having evangelicals in their college in the 1960s.

Towards the end of our course we asked the Lancashire Moderator how the denomination viewed those of us who were evangelicals and he told us we were an embarrassment. Later, when the staff discovered my fiancée was from an Elim Church, they tried to persuade me to become a Pentecostal minister on the grounds that my wife might be unhappy in a non-pentecostal church and that would undermine my ministry.

To understand the theological landscape of the 1960s we must remember that evangelical scholarship had been at a low ebb for years and there were very few conservative books in print to challenge liberal assumptions.

However there were signs that the tide was beginning to turn and the evangelical dinosaurs were coming to life again. There were a few conservative university professors like F.F. Bruce who were respected in academic circles, and as students we became aware that men like E.J. Young and John Murray in America were genuine scholars. Ken Kitchen, a conservative but rather abrasive lecturer at Liverpool University published his first book on the Old Testament. One of my evangelical friends lent it to Dr Edgar Jones our Old

Testament lecturer, but as it described liberals as ‘fat heads’ and used other abusive terms, he was not impressed and wrote in the margin in pencil ‘very unscholarly!’

The Inter Varsity Fellowship of Christian Unions was quite strong by the 1950s and 60s, and IVF published the *New Bible Commentary* and the *New Bible Dictionary*, and also Lloyd-Jones’s *Sermon on the Mount* and Stott’s *Basic Christianity*. Tyndale Press produced Leon Morris’s scholarly *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* and by the time I started college in 1963 had started producing the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries series, but this venture took years because of the shortage of evangelical scholars. We were aware of almost no contemporary Old Testament conservative commentaries. However, the Theological Students Fellowship had come into being and evangelical scholars like JI Packer made themselves available to help conservative students who were coming under pressure in liberal colleges. It was common knowledge that the congregations attending the preaching of Dr Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel were by far the largest in Congregationalism. And also, Francis Schaeffer’s formidable intellect was beginning to challenge liberalism, and we heard him speak to a packed audience at the university Christian Union.

Some liberals did view with alarm this growing influence of ‘fundamentalism’, as they called evangelicalism, and SCM Press published Gabriel Hebert’s *Fundamentalism and the Church of God*. This was providential because it moved Packer to respond with his landmark *Fundamentalism and the Word of God*, a powerful defence of historic conservative evangelicalism.

But our college was at the liberal end of liberalism and disinterested in any serious defence of evangelicalism. Rather, the response of our staff was to discipline one of our students for wasting his grant on books by Packer and Lloyd-Jones, and our principal walking into a student house meeting with a big smile on his face and singing ‘I’m f/u/n/d/y’—and everybody laughing and cheering. For most in our college biblical Christianity was just a big joke and really not worthy of serious consideration. However, great respect was shown to the General Secretary of the British Humanist Association who was welcomed to the college and introduced to the students!

The tragedy of liberalism was not only its distorted view of Scripture, but also its spiritual impotence to regenerate and transform lives. I well remember being asked at college why it was that radical conversions only took place in evangelical churches. The social gospel was predominant in the churches and it is not difficult to see why Francis Schaeffer described liberalism as ‘humanism in religious language’.

The college reflected the low spirituality of the churches. Morning and evening prayers in the chapel were largely formal and lifeless. Though I never

heard it stated, we understood that prayer meetings were banned, so students praying together was unknown. When seeking guidance the principal told me not to rely too much on prayer!

In most denominational colleges, liberalism still reigned—but John Robinson's *Honest To God* published by SCM Press in 1963 was a step too far, even for many liberals. Robinson, who was Bishop of Woolwich, spoke of God as 'the ground of our being' and questioned the validity of traditional credal statements. Dr Cunliffe-Jones felt it necessary to respond with a special lecture refuting Robinson's ideas. He believed Robinson had actually lost his faith and become an atheist, but was too emotionally and culturally tied to Christianity to admit his atheism.

Cunliffe-Jones, an Australian, was respected by all the students, including evangelicals, as a man of weight and humanity. I have often wondered whether his family roots in Australia were evangelical and had come under the influence of men like Lionel Fletcher. I never remember him mocking evangelicals. Though a convinced liberal himself he encouraged those who believed in hell to preach it. He vigorously maintained that the resurrection of Jesus was a matter of history not science. Did it happen? 'If it did so much the worse for those who can't explain it!'

Once during a lecture he suddenly realised he was way over the heads of his audience. He smiled warmly, 'Oh, all that really matters is that you love Jesus!'

He had great regard for 'the blessed Augustine' and doubted that we have progressed very far beyond him in our understanding.

Looking back, despite obvious failings the college offered some important positives.

We were expected to know the content of Scripture

A rolling examination programme ensured that every student was examined on the content of every book of the Bible.

Big emphasis on preaching

Training was provided in voice control and projection. Each year every student led a service in the chapel and preached to a member of staff and fellow students. The sermon in particular was scrutinised in the class which followed, and this could be brutal. The highest standards of presentation were expected. Clear thought, clear diction, appropriate illustrations and telling application. Interestingly it was expected that most sermons would climax with the death and resurrection of Jesus. The sermon had to be submitted to the member of staff in advance together with what you expected the sermon to achieve. The success or otherwise of your expectation was rigorously examined. This

discipline was excellent training for clear persuasive communication, and preaching every Sunday provided abundant practical experience.

Student pastorates

We were encouraged to use some of our long summer holidays to pastor churches which were without a minister. This provided invaluable practical experience and a foretaste of the challenges ahead.

Ministerial priorities handed down from a more spiritual past were still assumed.

We were urged when in the ministry to guard our mornings for prayer, study, and sermon preparation, and to be zealous in pastoral care, hospitality, and in home and hospital visitation.

The college did not seek to produce academics

It sought to produce hard working pastors who would lead their churches conscientiously, care for their people, and have a social concern for their communities.

In this I think the college largely succeeded.

During my first couple of years in the ministry we attended the Congregational Union May meetings at Westminster Chapel. Things were moving towards the formation of the United Reformed Church and the leadership was pressing for a liberal statement of faith, particularly that the Bible only 'contained' the Word of God. Each year Stan Guest, who became General Secretary of EFCC, bravely argued for a clear statement to be included that the Bible 'is' the Word of God, in line with our historic Congregational statements of faith. Each year his contribution was dismissed with hissing which echoed around the galleries. In stark contrast was the standing ovation given to the liberal scholar C.H. Dodd for his part in the production of the 'New English Bible'.

In God's kind providence, not only did he bring me to evangelical convictions while in a liberal college, but by experiencing liberalism's aberrations and impotence, God equipped me to confront it in my pastorate. Like many evangelicals of my generation, my early years in liberal churches were a constant battle until the gospel gloriously triumphed.

Present day training

In comparison with the 1960s, evangelicals training today have immense advantages; a choice of sound colleges and courses, an abundance of contemporary commentaries and systematic theologies and books on almost every contemporary challenge we face. The Internet provides access to books and lectures by many of the world's most able evangelical scholars. Colleges provide not just residential training but also distance-learning courses. It is now popular to do correspondence courses with colleges in Australia and

America. A considerable number of local groups of churches and gospel partnerships and the Evangelical Movement of Wales run courses which combine distance learning with residential days or weeks. In the 60s it was almost assumed that younger men would prepare for ministry in residential colleges. Today men can study, mainly at home in their spare time, and complete comprehensive theological courses, while continuing secular employment to support their families.

Limited available finance means that increasing numbers are choosing this route for ministerial training. Doubtless for many this is the only possible route, but we need to question if it is necessarily the best route.

Part-time study takes many years to cover the same ground as a full-time course of 2 or 3 years

And many do not achieve the level of training they really need. The editor of *The Evangelical Times* has difficulty finding ministers who are competent to review theological books, and feels strongly the standard of training for most men needs to be raised.

The ministry depends mainly upon effective spoken communication

Whether preaching, pastoring or envisioning the church, college training provides constant spoken interaction with stimulating discussion, debate, disagreement, where doctrines and concepts must be clearly and persuasively expressed.

College training provides constant stimulation

From both staff and fellow students, where iron sharpens iron and spurs people on to dig deeper and think more clearly. Colleges also arrange church placements during training for hands on experience.

College training is communal

A communal environment builds the confidence to maintain good friendly relationships despite inevitable disagreements and personality clashes. Probably more ministries shipwreck through defensiveness, personal insecurities and inability to maintain relationships than through major doctrinal differences.

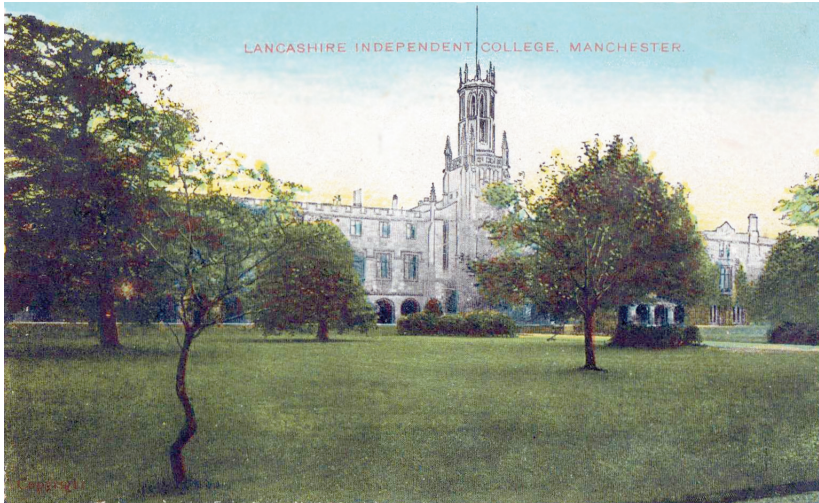
College training, involves sacrificing security of career and income

It demonstrates serious commitment to a lifetime calling, and preparation for something really big ahead.

We can thank God modern students don't have to fight the hostility of liberal colleges and churches, but the increasing hostility of the liberal secularists may prove an even more destructive enemy.

Progressive colleges are now training students to understand contemporary culture and to relate the gospel to a fast-changing world.

If ministers are going to be able to equip their churches to evangelise sceptical 21st century secularists they must be provided with the very best available training. Today's students must be trained to the level of their ability; we simply cannot justify squandering their God-given potential. This may mean EFCC setting uncomfortable priorities, and making hard choices. It may mean withholding funds from some legitimate causes in order to wisely invest in the future leaders of our churches.



Past Congregational Studies Conference Papers

1981

- Alan Tovey* Robert Browne: The Morning Star of Congregationalism
Derek O. Swann The Church Meeting
Peter Seccombe John Angell James

1982

- John Legg* Children of the Covenant (available as a booklet)
Alan C. Clifford The Christian Mind of Philip Doddridge
David Boorman The Origins of the London Missionary Society

1983

- Hefion Elias* PT Forsyth—Prophet of the 20th Century
Michael Boland Oliver Cromwell
Neville Rees Prayer Life of the Local Church

1984

- Gordon T. Booth* The Hymn Writers of English Congregationalism
E. S. Guest John Robinson (1575–1625)
Geraint Fielder RW Dale and the Non-Conformist Conscience.

1985

- R. Tudur Jones* Walter Craddock (1606–1659)
R. Tudur Jones John Penry (1563–1593)
Peter Golding Owen on the Mortification of Sin

1986

- Peter J. Beale* Jonathan Edwards and the Phenomena of Revival
Derek O. Swann An Earnest Ministry
Peter Collins Thomas Wilson

1987

- Digby L. James* John Cotton's Doctrine of the Church
Michael Plant Richard Davis and God's Day of Grace
Bryan Jones Lionel Fletcher—Evangelist

1988

- Guynne Evans* Richard Mather—The True Use of Synods
Alan Tovey That Proud Independency
Gilbert Kirby The Countess of Huntingdon

1989

- Gordon T. Booth* Josiah Conder—Hymn-writer and Compiler
John Legg The Use and Abuse of Church History
George Hemming Savoy, 1833 and All That

1990

- John Semper* David Bogue—A Man for All Seasons
Leighton James Griffith John—The Founder of the Hankow Mission
Ian Rees Jonathan Edwards on the Work of the Holy Spirit

1991

- A. Kelly* What Makes Churches Grow
E. S. Guest Joseph Parker—The Immortal Thor of Pulpitdom
Peter Seccombe RW Dale—Standing Firm or Drifting Dangerously

1992

- Arthur Fraser* When Evolutionary Thought and Congregational Thinkers Meet
David Saunders Living Stones—Our Heritage, Our Future
John Little John Cennick—Conflict and Conciliation in the Evangelical Awakening.

1993 Some Separatists

- Alan Tovey* A Reforming Pair—Henry Barrow and John Greenwood
R. Tudur Jones John Penry

1994 Perseverance and Assurance

- Ian Densham* Sherwood, Selina and Salubrious Place
Norman Bonnett John Eliot—Son of Nazeing
Guy Davies Thomas Goodwin and the Quest for Assurance

1995 Ministers and Missionaries

- Peter J. Beale* The Rise and Development of the London Missionary Society
Derek O. Swann Thomas Haweis 1734–1820
Brian Higham David Jones—The Angel of Llangan

1996 Freedom and Faithfulness

- E. S. Guest* From CERF to EFCC
Digby L. James Heroes and Villains—The Controversy between John Cotton and Roger Williams
John Semper Edward Parsons—Influence from a Local Church

1997 From Shropshire to Madagascar via Bath

- Robert Pickles* The Rise and Fall of the Shropshire Congregational Union
Philip Swann William Jay—Pastor and Preacher
Noel Gibbard Madagascar

1998 Eternal Light, Adoption and Livingstone

- Gordon T. Booth* Thomas Binney, 1798–1874
Gordon Cooke The Doctrine of Adoption & the Preaching of Jeremiah Burroughs
Arthur Fraser David Livingstone

1999 JD Jones, Lloyd-Jones and 1662

- Peter Williams* J. D. Jones of Bournemouth
John Legg God's Own Testimony: Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones' Doctrine of Assurance
Mervyn Neal The Great Ejection of 1662

2000 Origins, Theology and Unity

- Ian Harrison* John Wycliffe, Father of Congregationalism?
Bryan Jones John Owen's Evangelical Theology
Kenneth Brownell Robert and James Haldane and the Quest for Evangelical Union

2001 Grace 'tis a Charming Sound

- Gordon Cooke* At One? A History of Congregational Thinking on the Atonement
John Hancock Philip Doddridge 1702–1751: Missionary Visionary
Neil Stewart Baptism in the Congregational Tradition

2002 Lovers of the Truth of God

- Michael Plant* Congregationalists and Confessions
E. S. Guest The Geneva Bible
John Semper William Huntington

2003 Jonathan Edwards

- Robert E. Davis* 'What Must I do to Be Saved?' Jonathan Edwards and the Nature of True Conversion
Robert E. Davis A Father of the Modern Mission Movement
Robert E. Davis Jonathan Edwards and Britain: 18th Century Trans-Atlantic Networking

2004 Revival!

- Derek Swann* Congregationalism and the Welsh Revival 1904–05
Cyril Aston James Montgomery—Sheffield's Sacred Psalmist
Eric Alldritt The Greater Excellence of the New Covenant

2005 Missionaries and Martyrs

- Peter Taylor* John Williams, Apostle to Polynesia (1796–1839)
Brian Higham David Picton Jones
Neil Richards The faith and courage of the Marian Martyrs

2006 Challenge, Memories and Adventure

- Peter Robinson* Congregationalism's Boom Years
Peter J. Beale The Doctor—25 Years On
David Gregson The Adventure of the English Bible

2007 Courage, Covenants and the Cessant

- Peter Seccombe* Gilmour of Mongolia
David Legg Bringing up Children for God
Lucy Beale Selina Countess of Huntingdon 1707–1791

2008 Independence in Practice and Theory

- Arthur Fraser* Congregationalism and Spiritual Renewal in the Scottish Highlands
Joseph Greenald Congregational Independence 1689–1735: Standing Firm in an Age of Decline
John Semper The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, 1658

2009 The Fruit of Faith

- Ian Shaw* Andrew Reed (1768–1862): Preaching, Pastoral Work, and Social Concern
Gordon Cooke The Cambridge Platform (1649)
Tony Lambert Robert Morrison (1782–1834), first Protestant missionary to China

2010 Growing in Grace

- George Speers* History of Congregationalism in Ireland
Robert Oliver Cornelius Winter of Marlborough (1741–1808)

2011 Truth, faithfulness and zeal

- Michael Plant* John Owen on the Attestation and Interpretation of the Bible
Neil Stewart History of Latimer Memorial Congregational Church, Beverly
Digby L. James Thomas Barnes

Recordings of papers from 1989 onwards can be found at www.efcc.co.uk

EFCC *publications*

Telling Another Generation

This book contains a symposium of papers originally written to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of EFCC, and as a tribute to Stan Guest, who has been closely involved in the work of EFCC ever since its formation, and retired as secretary of the Fellowship in 1989.

Serving as a Deacon by John Legg

‘Diaconates might find it useful to supply each member with a copy of this work’—*Evangelicals Now*.

Evangelical & Congregational

A brief survey of Congregational history, church order, confessions of faith, the ministry, worship and sacraments. Includes *The Savoy Declaration of Faith*.

After Conversion—What? by Lionel Fletcher

A reprint of the forthright and biblical advice to new Christians by Lionel Fletcher, one of Congregationalism’s foremost pastors and evangelists.

Children of the Covenant by John Legg

The biblical basis for infant baptism.

Signs and Seals of the Covenant by CG Kirkby

A biblical review of the doctrine of Christian baptism.

***EFCC also has available these books about
Congregational church government***

Wandering Pilgrims by ES Guest

A review of the history of Congregationalism from its formative years to the present day. The author was involved in the negotiations between those churches which joined the United Reformed Church in 1972 and those who did not.

Manual of Congregational Principles by RW Dale

The definitive work of Congregational church government.

Christian Fellowship or The Church Member's Guide by John Angell James

A practical manual for church members to learn their duties and responsibilities.

Visible Saints: The Congregational Way by GF Nuttall

An historical study of the growth of Congregationalism in the years 1640–1660 by a highly respected scholar of church history.

All these items are available from the Office Manager, The Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, PO Box 34, Beverley, East Yorkshire, HU17 0YX

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