

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

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

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



Buy me a coffee

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



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

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

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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

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

Bristol Baptist College—the 250th Anniversary.

NONCONFORMITY rests upon personal conviction, not upon inherited tradition. Therefore an educated ministry is a necessity.

When the Universities were closed to Nonconformists by the ejection of ministers in 1662, the difficulty of supplying instructed ministers was soon felt; and the need became greater year by year as the older generation passed away. To supply this want, the way readiest to hand was to place young men with able ministers who could direct their studies and prepare them for pastoral work. Many of those ejected employed themselves in teaching, so that their help was readily available. This plan was followed both by Congregationalists and Baptists, but it soon became clear that a more complete and permanent system was needed.

As early as 1675, the London Baptist Ministers called a meeting to devise a plan for "providing an orderly standing ministry, which might give themselves to reading and study, and so become able ministers of the New Testament." The result of this meeting we do not know. Apparently nothing effective was done. The churches were poor and harassed by oppressive laws. Their meetings were liable to be broken up by the civil authorities. Their leaders were often imprisoned, and some ministers even died in prison, as Mr. Hardcastle of Broadmead, Bristol. Baptist, Independent and Presbyterian Churches were struggling for their very existence. Concerted action for any purpose was difficult; but, as has often happened, the enterprise of an individual outran the caution of a representative assembly. Only four years after the London Meeting, Edward Terrill made a will, leaving his property to the minister of Broadmead on condition that he should devote three half-days a week to the instruction of young men, not exceeding twelve in number, in the original languages of Scripture.

Terrill was an Elder of Broadmead church, and the writer of the first portion of the *Broadmead Records*. He believed that better times would come, although he did not live to see them, and he left his property, subject to a life interest for his wife, to secure an educated ministry. Is there not something inspiring in the faith of Edward Terrill, a man who had been fined and imprisoned for his religious convictions but who nevertheless

Bristol Baptist College—the 250th Anniversary 293

provided for the training of a ministry for those who should come after him? He believed that the truths that he held dear were the best legacy he could leave to posterity, and surely a better investment for the Kingdom of God was never made.

Edward Terrill died in 1685 or 1686; but we do not know when, by the decease of his widow, his bequest became available for the purpose which he directed.

The accession of William III. made the way clear for Nonconformity, but, although the teaching of students was considered at the Baptist Assembly in London in 1689, no immediate action was taken. Soon after, we find the church at Plymouth (now George Street) sending a contribution towards the education of Richard Sampson, a young man whom they had placed at Bristol under the tuition of Mr. William Thomas, one of the ejected ministers. Mr. Sampson became pastor of the Baptist church at Exeter in 1692. He is the first of whom we know that studied at Bristol.

The earliest traceable application of Terrill's fund was when, in 1710 or 1711, Caleb Jope became co-pastor with the Rev. Peter Kitterell at Broadmead and also tutor.

Matters, however, did not proceed satisfactorily, so in 1720 we find Bernard Foskett appointed as Mr. Jope's successor. Foskett was born at Woburn (Bedfordshire) and trained for the medical profession. At the age of seventeen he was baptised at Little Wild Street, London; subsequently, under the influence of his life-long friend, John Beddome, he became minister of the Baptist church at Henley-in-Arden, whence he was called to Broadmead as tutor, and also as assistant to Peter Kitterell. Foskett was a Puritan. His portrait shows a man who had to fight for his convictions in stern times—one to whom life was duty rather than happiness.

Hugh Evans, his colleague and successor, describes him as an exemplary Christian, and an ardent student, generous to those in need and often using his medical knowledge for the relief of sufferers. Upon his students he strongly impressed the importance of conscientious work and the seriousness of the ministerial charge.

Foskett presided over the College for thirty-eight years. During that time its work became firmly established. The students were supported from various sources. In 1717 the London Particular Baptist Fund and the Bristol Baptist Fund were instituted for the education of ministers and other purposes. Both of these and sometimes private benefactors sent men to the College.

No list survives of the students taught by Foskett. We are told by Hugh Evans that "most of them approved themselves

truly serious and with great reputation filled many of our churches"; but for us their record is lost. We rightly value out-standing leaders, but the greater part of the church's work is done by men whose names and achievements are unknown.

A few of them we know. Among Foskett's students was Benjamin Beddome, son of Foskett's life-long friend, John Beddome, minister of the Pithay Church, Bristol. Benjamin Beddome wrote many hymns; one by him is familiar to us:—

Father of mercies, bow Thine ear,
Attentive to our earnest prayer;
We plead for those who plead for Thee;
Successful pleaders may they be.

For fifty-five years Beddome was pastor of the church at Bourton-on-the-Water. Under his ministry John Collett Ryland, afterwards minister at Warwick and Northampton, was converted. Thus we can trace a stream of influence from Foskett, through Beddome, to John Collett Ryland, and thence to Dr. John Ryland and to Samuel Bagster, who was a pupil in the school kept by John Collett Ryland and the founder of a printing firm, noteworthy for its issue of Bibles. So, like the streamlets from the Cotswolds, which Beddome and Ryland knew so well, making the Thames and flowing to the sea, influences from the college class room went forth to bless the world in countless ways. To endeavour to trace some of these would be an inspiring and instructive task, but the limits of this paper forbid more than a few references.

Bristol's earliest daughter-college was planted in America by Morgan Edwards, a student under Foskett, who after some English pastorates was invited to the Baptist church at Philadelphia. As a historian he gathered particulars of American Baptist history and founded Rhode Island College, which afterwards became Brown University and celebrated its hundred and fiftieth anniversary recently.

The link between the College and her daughter institution is seen in the gift of duplicate volumes from Bristol College Library to Rhode Island College in 1785.

Foskett died in 1758, and was succeeded by Hugh Evans, one of his students and for many years his assistant. Dr. Rippon, himself a student under Hugh Evans, speaks of him as an earnest scholar, less austere than Foskett, and one whom all his students regarded as a friend and father. His son, Dr. Caleb Evans, was his colleague and succeeded him as President in 1779. Under these the College was reorganised in 1770 and placed on a firmer financial basis. In the appeal for support it was thought needful to defend the education of ministers against the charge of interference with the work of the Holy

Spirit; it is to the work of our Colleges that we owe our escape from this mistaken view.

From the reorganisation of the institution in 1770 its annual published reports begin.

Shortly after this, the College was removed from Barr Street, Bristol—its earliest known home—to North Street, where it occupied two houses which are now business premises. In the garden behind these a room known as the Gifford Museum was erected in 1780.

Dr. Andrew Gifford, whose father and grandfather had been ministers of the Pithay Church, Bristol, was the minister of Eagle Street Church, London, and an assistant librarian of the British Museum. He gathered a large collection of manuscripts, pictures, coins and other treasures, which, together with his library, he gave to the College. In this gift was included an important collection of Bibles, among which are the only complete copy of the first edition of Wm. Tyndale's New Testament of 1525 and first editions of the principal translations of the Bible into English, also some volumes printed by William Caxton and Wynken de Woorde, and valuable Latin and Greek editions of Scripture by Erasmus, Stephens and others. The collection also has a holograph letter of Oliver Cromwell and a contemporary miniature of the Protector by Cooper. About the same time Dr. Thomas Llewellyn, a scholarly minister, who had been a student under Foskett, bequeathed his valuable library and the bookcases containing it to the College. The books and treasures included in these gifts are carefully preserved in the College.

The early part of the eighteenth century was not a time of spiritual prosperity. Toleration had been gained, but there was little religious enthusiasm. Deistical, antinomian and other controversies absorbed much of the energy of the churches. Indifference to religion abounded. The membership of Baptist churches appears to have declined. Nevertheless, during this dull time men were being prepared under Hugh and Caleb Evans, who worthily shared in the new enterprises which opened when the Evangelical Revival of Whitefield and Wesley came.

Among these was Dr. Rippon, for sixty-three years the minister of Carter Lane, London. To improve the service of praise, he compiled "Rippon's Selection" of hymns, which was widely used in Baptist and Congregational churches; and as a denominational historian he compiled the *Baptist Register*, our earliest publication dealing with contemporary events in English and American Baptist churches. Rippon was one of the founders of the Baptist Union, and its ardent supporter in the difficult days of its infancy.

Another notable group of Bristol men were those who took part in the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society. Among the thirteen who met in 1792 and formed the society in Mrs. Beeby Wallis's house at Kettering were four former students, Dr. John Ryland, John Sutcliffe, Samuel Pearce and Thomas Blundell, also one, then a student in College, who borrowed the half-guinea which he contributed to that first collection of £13 2s. 6d.; he afterwards became Dr. William Staughton of Columbian College, Washington. Of John Sutcliffe and his academy at Olney, there is an interesting account in the *Baptist Quarterly* for April. On the death of Andrew Fuller, Dr. Ryland and another Bristol student, James Hinton, of Oxford, became co-secretaries of the Baptist Missionary Society. Since the commencement of the society more than a hundred Bristol students have become missionaries.

The religious awakening of the latter half of the eighteenth century led to establishments of other Baptist Colleges in England. Many ministers kept schools, and some of their pupils were specially prepared for the ministry, as was the case in Sutcliff's academy; but more colleges were needed.

In 1804 the Northern Education Society was formed, and a year later Horton College (afterwards Rawdon) was established, and a Bristol student, Dr. William Steadman, became its first President; in 1837 he was succeeded by Dr. Acworth, also a Bristol man. In 1807, to meet the needs of Wales, and owing to the difficulty of teaching Welsh-speaking students at Bristol, Micah Thomas, a Bristol man, founded the college at Abergavenny, which was subsequently removed to Pontypool and later to Cardiff. Robert Hall wrote the appeal for funds to establish Stepney College. Another student, Solomon Young, was one of the early Presidents of Stepney College (now Regent's Park). In all, forty-two Bristol students have become Principals or tutors of colleges at home or abroad.

Dr. Caleb Evans was succeeded by Dr. John Ryland, who for thirty-two years sustained the double office of pastor of Broadmead and Principal of the college. His strenuous industry and untiring energy were shown both in the college and in his labours on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society. During his Presidency the college was removed to Stokes Croft, to allow of more students being accommodated. The new building was begun in 1806, but difficulties connected with the French war delayed its completion until 1812. Its site was then in the suburbs, and pleasant fields stretched beyond it to the little village of Horfield; now it is a busy part of the city.

Among the distinguished men of this period is Joseph Hughes, a Bristol student who later became a tutor of the

college and assistant at Broadmead. These two offices were usually combined. He afterwards ministered to the church at Battersea, and became one of the founders and the first secretary of the Religious Tract Society. When the Rev. Thomas Charles of Bala laid before the Tract Society the great need of Bibles in Wales, Hughes suggested the formation of a society for that purpose. Thus the British and Foreign Bible Society came into being, and Hughes was its first secretary.

Among eminent Bristol preachers the first place belongs to Robert Hall. Under the patronage of Dr. Ward's Trust he studied at Bristol under Dr. Caleb Evans, and at Aberdeen University. His influence by voice and pen extended far beyond denominational limits. Even in his student days he showed conspicuous ability, and at their close he was appointed assistant at Broadmead and tutor of the College. About five years later he removed to Cambridge, where for fifteen years he exercised a remarkable ministry in that university city. After a pastorate at Harvey Lane, Leicester, he returned to Bristol. It is interesting to notice that the chief disputants respecting open and closed communion, Robert Hall and Joseph Kinghorn respectively, were fellow students in college.

A noteworthy contemporary of Robert Hall was John Foster. Hall excelled as a preacher; Foster, as an essayist. Hall drew great crowds as a popular orator; Foster ministered to small churches, but wielded an enormous influence with his pen. Most of Foster's ministerial life was passed at Downend, a small village about six miles from Bristol, but his essays and his contributions to the *Eclectic Review* put him among the foremost literary men of his day.

During Ryland's presidency Joshua Marshman came to Bristol as teacher in a school supported by Broadmead, and after attending classes at the College went out to Serampore, forming one of the notable trio—Carey, Marshman and Ward.

Dr. Ryland was succeeded as Principal by Mr. Thomas Steffe Crisp. He is described as a retiring man who never willingly took a public position, but one who never shrank from what he felt to be his duty.

Two notable men were fellow students under him—Dr. F. W. Gotch, afterwards tutor and Principal of the college, and Dr. Benjamin Davies, afterwards tutor at Regent's Park College. Both of these had the honour of being members of the Old Testament Revision Committee, which was a worthy tribute to their distinction in Semitic studies.

In 1836, the year before Dr. Gotch became Principal, the College was accepted as an Affiliated College of London University. At that time only students of institutions thus recognised

were allowed to sit for London University Examinations. This restriction has long ago been abolished.

Of the students who studied under Dr. Gotch some are still with us, and bear witness to his sound scholarship and the regard in which he was held by all of them.

To follow the influence of the College in the lives of its alumni is a pleasing pursuit, but the time at our disposal compels us to abandon it.

Dr. Gotch was succeeded by Dr. Culross, whom all his students loved as a friend and revered as a saint.

The late Dr. Henderson ably presided over the College for twenty-nine years. Many ministers and missionaries who were students under him, bear witness to the inspiration and evangelical fervour of his teaching, and to the earnestness with which he urged personal effort for winning the men outside the churches, which he himself so successfully practised during his ministry at Coventry.

During the Principalship of Dr. Henderson several important changes took place. The Congregational "Western College" was removed from Plymouth to Bristol in 1901, and the two institutions arranged to share their classes. By this the staff of tutors was doubled without increased cost; and also larger classes promoted healthy rivalry among the students. This fellowship has worked harmoniously to the mutual benefit of the colleges, and still continues.

In 1910, the Bristol University College, where the students had for many years attended classes in Arts, was constituted Bristol University. Of this, the Baptist and Western Colleges became Associated Colleges, so that their theological classes are recognised for the preparation of students for a Bachelor of Arts Degree, with a special theological curriculum, similar to that of the London University Bachelor of Divinity.

A further change was the removal of the College to Tyndall's Park, close to the University. The foundation stone of the new building, designed by Messrs. Oatley and Lawrence, was laid in 1913 by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Robinson. The war and the part taken by the students in the work of the Young Men's Christian Association and army service in France, led to the postponement of the opening until 1919, when it was opened by Mr. Herbert Marnham, who was that year the President of the Baptist Union. In connection with this task, so happily completed, mention must be made of the work of the late Dr. Richard Glover, Honorary Secretary of the College for forty-six years; of Mr. Edward Robinson, J.P., who has been its Treasurer since 1885, and of Dr. W. J. Henderson, the Principal of the institution.

Dr. Henderson retired in 1922 and Dr. C. D. Whittaker succeeded to the Presidency. Illness necessitated his retirement and Dr. Arthur Dakin became Principal in 1924, and he is now vigorously carrying on the work in which so many distinguished leaders have preceded him.

Under the blessing of God, the College has had a great past, and it rests upon future generations to make its work in the coming days, by God's help, worthy of its history.

Henry Miller of Warbleton, 1729.

THE Millers of Kent and Sussex were a family greatly enriched under James I., and bearing arms. One branch settled at Winkinghurst, two miles north of Hellingly, twelve miles north of Beachy Head. Henry was bred an attorney in London, and afterwards with Mr. Raines of Coneyburroughs in Barcombe, a great conveyancer and court-keeper; but not liking the practice of the common law, he only practised conveyancing. He married Mary, widow of Thomas Dean, and eldest daughter of Robert Tapsfield of Framfield. Their eldest child, Mary, married Robert Mercer, who settled at Ifield, and they had six children including Joseph and Thomas.

There was a county lady named Fuller whose son John afterwards was elected M.P. for Sussex in 1713. She became interested in baptism, and arranged a debate on the question in the Waldron parish church. This could hardly have taken place till the Toleration Act, on general principles; we do know that king William did authorize such proceedings; and we do know that Miller went; he was born in 1666.

The disputants were John Tattersall, A.M., the rector, and Matthew Caffin, an Oxford man, now Elder of the General Baptist church at Horsham, an accomplished debater. One result was that both Madam Fuller and young Miller were convinced, and were soon baptized on profession of their faith. Miller stopped practising law, says Crosby, and began studying divinity.

There were evidently other converts, and they gathered into a church, known from two of its meeting-places, at first as