

Caleb Ashworth of Cloughfold and Daventry.

IT is a Sunday afternoon in the month of September, in the year 1732. A group of people are assembled around an open-air baptistry in a corner of a field at the foot of one of the Pennine Hills. Nearby is Carr House, the home of Richard Ashworth, the minister of the Cloughfold Baptist Church, a mile-and-a-half away on the other side of the Rossendale Valley. Special interest attaches to the baptism which takes place here on this date over two hundred years ago. Of the nine persons who make their public witness for Christ at least one is a "child of the manse"—Caleb Ashworth. The ceremony is conducted by Alvery Jackson, of Barnoldswick, who has probably walked over the lonely Burnley Moor the previous day to be present. Jackson's diary has come down to us; let him tell the story in his own words.

"September 25th, 1732.—Went to attend a meeting at Cloughfold, where were present Messrs. Ashworth, Wilson, and Henry Wilkinson. Mr. Ashworth invited me to preach a sermon on the occasion, which I did on Acts xxii. 16. After dinner we went to Mr. Ashworth's, and examined and baptised Caleb Ashworth, Martha Ashworth, John, Richard, and Mary Lord, Martha Hardman, Elizabeth and Mary Greenwood, and James Ashworth. May the Lord confirm them."

Richard Ashworth was minister of Cloughfold from 1705, in which year he succeeded the famous William Mitchell, to 1751, this pastorate of over forty-five years being the longest the church has ever had. During the later years of his life he was afflicted with blindness, and was assisted in his work by his son, Thomas Ashworth, who, in turn, became minister of the church following his father's death, until he received a call to the Gildersome church in the year 1755. Richard Ashworth was, at his own request, buried in the garden of Carr House, and the grave is still to be seen there. Parry¹ suggests that "Richard Ashworth, as a sturdy Nonconformist, took a course so unusual as the ordering of his body to be buried in his own garden rather than in the churchyard (i.e. the Parish Church of Newchurch), because it was dictated by a desire to secure the liberty of conduct of the religious services to be performed at his funeral." Such choice of one's place of interment was not, however, so unusual two

¹ *History of Cloughfold Baptist Church* (1876: p. 101).

centuries ago. One such "private" grave is to be seen in Cloughfold village, in close proximity to the church, and yet another on Chapel Hill, a mile-and-a-half away. Parry's suggestion is hardly borne out by the fact that Mr. Welsh, the incumbent of Newchurch at the time, showed his esteem for Richard Ashworth by his presence at the funeral of the latter in Carr House garden. At that time there were no facilities for burials at Cloughfold chapel, the first piece of land for a graveyard only being purchased in the year 1777. The deed for the purchase of this plot of land states that a portion was for the "erection of a stable for the use of the members of the church," and the remainder for use as a burial ground, with the proviso that "for every corpse buried therein fees shall be paid within 28 days to the minister or curate of Newchurch Parish Church as if the burial had taken place there."²

Of those baptised on September 25th, 1732, we are most concerned with Caleb Ashworth, the son of Richard Ashworth. Parry³ states that he was at this time twelve years of age. As a matter of fact, if the date of Alvery Jackson's Diary (quoted above) is correct, and the date of Caleb Ashworth's death and his age correctly given on his tombstone (and there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of these) then he was only in his eleventh year. Of the years immediately following his baptism nothing is definitely known. But it is not too much to assume that in his early 'teens he began to speak and to preach in and around the Rossendale Valley, and probably often occupied his father's pulpit at Cloughfold. His gifts in this direction became so marked that eventually it was decided that he should receive an adequate training for the Christian ministry. To this end he became a student in the Northampton Academy, then under the presidency of Dr. Philip Doddridge, the famous hymn-writer. The date of his taking up residence there is somewhat doubtful. Parry⁴ suggests a date in his early 'teens. "Caleb Ashworth must have commenced preaching very soon after his baptism, for within about six years after we find him settled pastor over a church, having passed in that interval through all the needful preparatory training and college course." This is obviously incorrect, as will be seen from the dates which follow, which have been supplied to the present writer by Rev. W. J. Palmer, the present pastor of Daventry Congregational Church, and which have been taken from the records of that church.

Ashworth's college course at Northampton was evidently marked with exceptional brilliance, for it is recorded that he

² Deed in possession of the church.

³ As above (p. 223).

⁴ *History of Cloughfold Baptist Church* (p. 224).

became Dr. Doddridge's "favourite student." During his college career he must have modified his views on baptism, for at mid-summer, 1746, he accepted an invitation to become assistant minister to the Rev. James Floyd, pastor of the Daventry Congregational Church. Before the close of the same year he became "co-pastor," and a few years later Floyd resigned in favour of his colleague, and Caleb Ashworth became the recognised minister of Daventry church.

In the year 1751 Dr. Doddridge died in Lisbon, where he had gone in search of health. In his will he designated Caleb Ashworth as his successor in the principalship of the Academy. Ashworth, being unwilling to give up his pastoral charge, would only accept the appointment on condition that the Academy should be removed from Northampton to Daventry. This suggestion was adopted by the Coward Trustees, a small body of Independent ministers and laymen, who acted as governors of the Academy, and in November of the following year the change was made accordingly. Ashworth held the dual position of Pastor and Principal until his death in 1775. Fourteen years after his decease the Academy moved back to its original home in Northampton.

For the accommodation of the students Ashworth considerably enlarged the already roomy manse of the Daventry church. The present writer recently paid a visit to this old town, and found the church and manse practically the same as it was in Ashworth's day. The pulpit from which he (and Doddridge before him) preached; the "long room" behind the pulpit, where lectures to students were given; the manse with its fourteen rooms, wonderful oak rafters, and stone-floored kitchen, where the principal and his students took their meals together; and the old-time church garden, are all unspoiled. Traces of old Roman paving have been found beneath the floor of the manse, and a cannon ball, probably dropped by the soldiers of Cromwell when passing through Daventry after the Battle of Naseby, was dug up in the garden a year or two ago. The pastor, Rev. W. J. Palmer, is a keen student of Nonconformist history and the possessor of a valuable library of literature dealing with our Free Churches. Before taking up the pastorate of the Daventry church he was minister of the Dronfield Congregational church, the history of which he has written and published. He would welcome any visitor interested in the Daventry church or Academy.

For a full account of the Daventry Academy under Ashworth the reader is referred to *English Education under the Test Acts*, by H. McLachlan, M.A., D.D.⁵ It is interesting to note that

⁵ Published by The Manchester University Press (1931) see p. 152, &c.

the author of this work was himself for a short time a scholar in the Sunday School of the Cloughfold Baptist Church.

During his principalship Caleb Ashworth received the unsolicited degree of Doctor of Divinity from the Marischal College, Aberdeen.

Daventry, like Northampton, was an Academy open to lay students as well as to those who were taking up the ministry amongst the dissenters, hence the curriculum was a wide and varied one. How varied can be seen from a plan of a five years' course which is preserved in Dr. Williams' library, and quoted by Dr. McLachlan in the work previously referred to :

SUBJECTS.

Year	Languages	Mathematics and Philosophy	Theology	Miscellaneous
1st	Latin Greek Hebrew	Euclid Geography Logic		
2nd	Latin Greek Hebrew	Algebra Trigonometry	Pneumatology	'A few Lectures on Civil Government'
3rd	Hebrew	Conic Sections Natural Philosophy	Evidences and Moral Duties of Christianity	
4th		General Anatomy	Doctrines of Christianity	Ecclesiastical History Lectures on Preaching
5th			'Sacred Criticks'	Jewish Antiquities

Further: "In some part of the course we read Lectures on Oratory. The French language is taught, when desired, and every student designed for a learned profession takes his turn in Orations and other public exercises." All students, we learn, "immediately on coming" learnt Rich's Shorthand, and generally had a "few private lectures on Behaviour."

Parry (again erroneously)⁶ says "Dr. Ashworth left nothing behind him except two sermons—one on the death of Dr. Watts, the other on the death of Rev. Samuel Clark." The sermon on the death of Isaac Watts was preached from the text 2 Sam. iii. 38, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this

⁶ *History of Cloughfold Baptist Church* (p. 225).

day in Israel?" and was published under the title *Reflections on the Fall of a Great Man*. The sermon for Rev. Samuel Clark (of Birmingham) bore the title "The Regard Christian Congregations owe to their Deceased Ministers represented and urged from Heb. xiii. 7."

In addition to these two sermons noted by Parry a third has been preserved—preached after the death of his predecessor in the pastorate at Daventry, Rev. James Floyd.

Dr. Ashworth used lectures previously given by Dr. Doddridge, but in many cases re-wrote and improved them. In New College Library there is, for example, a copy of Doddridge's Lectures on "Jewish Antiquities" improved by Ashworth and written in shorthand. He himself was the author of *A Treatise on Trigonometry*, published in 1768. A minute of the Coward Trustees (September 27th, 1768) authorises "the sum of £14 be presented to the Rev. Dr. Ashworth at Daventry for his expense in printing a Treatise of Trigonometry for the use of his students, and that he be desired in consideration of this allowance to retain 100 copies at the disposal of the Trustees for the future service of students at their academies."

He was also the author of a Hebrew Grammar. This was published (anonymously) at Cambridge in 1763, and was intended for the use of students at Daventry, but was afterwards adopted as a textbook at other academies. This work bore the lengthy title, "The Principal Rules of Hebrew Grammar, compiled from some of the most considerable Hebrew Grammars, and particularly adapted to Bythner's 'Lyra Prophetica'; with complete Paradigms of the Verbs." The "Advertisement" in the book states that "This Abstract was made, and a few copies of it printed, only for the use of the compiler, and a few persons whom he has occasion to instruct in the rudiments of Hebrew." As early as 1785 the book was out of print, and a request for its reprinting was apparently never met, with the result that only very few copies remain at the present time. One of these is in the Library of the Unitarian College, Manchester.

As a further indication of Ashworth's gifts it may be mentioned that he also wrote "An Introduction to the Art of Singing, and a Collection of Psalm Tunes." This was published in 1760, and copies are rare. One has recently been acquired by the City of Manchester, and may be seen at the new Reference Library ("Watson Music Library" section). This work is interesting to all lovers and students of music, as it contains the first printed edition of the tune, now known as "Yorkshire," sung to the words "Christians, awake." This tune had been composed by John Wainwright, organist of the Manchester Cathedral, about 1760. In Ashworth's "Collection" it appears (page 66) under

the name "Mortram." The words of Dr. Byrom's well-known hymn do not appear—the heading of the tune showing that it was intended to be sung to "Watts' Version of the 50th Psalm," and, for this purpose, the ending has been slightly altered. In accordance with the custom of the period, the melody is in the tenor.

Of Dr. Ashworth's ability and learning many of his contemporaries speak in the highest terms. The reputation won for the Academy in its Northampton period under Doddridge was more than sustained under Ashworth during his twenty-five years' Presidency (1752-1775). He died, at the comparatively early age of fifty-four, on July 18th, 1775, from dropsy of the chest, and was succeeded by Thomas Robins, an old student of both Northampton and Daventry, then in the ministry at West Bromwich. He was laid to rest in an altar tomb in the Daventry Parish Churchyard.

On the grave there is the following inscription :

Here rest in Hope

The Remains of the Revd. CALEB ASHWORTH, D.D.

Pastor of a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters
and Director of the Academy in this town.

He died

July 18th, 1775. Aged 54.

With indefatigable application, with genuine and well-regulated zeal, and with growing reputation and success, he exerted his eminent abilities and extensive acquaintance with sacred and human literature in the service of his Great Master, and in promoting the interest of Learning, Religion, and Charity.

"Blessed is that servant whom when his Lord cometh shall find so doing."

A funeral sermon for Dr. Ashworth was preached by Rev. Samuel Palmer, of Hackney, the author of *A Protestant Dissenters' Catechism*, and *The Nonconformists' Memorial*.

In addition to the brother, Thomas Ashworth, previously mentioned, yet another brother of Caleb Ashworth entered the ministry. John Ashworth eventually became the minister of a Baptist Church at Nantwich, and later, in 1740, of the more famous White's Alley General Baptist Church, London. His ministry there was only a short one, as he was called to the higher service in 1742. On October 31st of that year his funeral sermon was preached by Dr. James Foster, minister of Paul's Alley Baptist Church, Barbican. From this funeral oration it is apparent that much of the ability which characterised his

more famous brother Caleb was also shown by him. The aged pastor of Cloughfold, Richard Ashworth, had thus the joy of seeing three of his sons follow their father's footsteps and enter the Christian ministry.

Parry, at the time of his writing *The History of Cloughfold Church* (1875), states that there were at that date fourteen descendants of Richard Ashworth members of that church, and thirteen members of other Baptist churches. There has never been a time since when the name "Ashworth" has not appeared on the Church Roll, and to-day there are nine members bearing the name, but it is impossible to say if any of these (or other members of the church) have sprung from this illustrious family.

JAMES S. HARDMAN.

The Wakefields, by S. J. Ford. (Rankin Press, Ltd., 3s. 6d.)

One of to-day's needs is that our early denominational records should be re-written with force and insight, that the twentieth-century Baptist may know something of his heritage. Much lies buried in lengthy tomes, and ofttimes the writing is not particularly interesting. The Broadmead Records, retold with vividness and set in the background of modern historical research, would surely thrill.

In this novel of seventeenth-century Baptists, the Rev. S. J. Ford has woven much of the early history of Broadmead. He reproduces the life and activities of the Puritans, and many of the historic personages of the fifty years, 1638-88, march across his pages. We wish that the book could find its way into the hands of every Sunday School teacher.

Information Wanted. A correspondent is making an architectural study of the Meeting Houses in England from the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth. He desires information of any Baptist buildings of this period which are architecturally of interest. Particulars which may be useful should be sent to the Secretary (Mr. Seymour J. Price, Westbury, Creswick Road, Acton, W.3).